Interactive Marketing: E-mail - Tomorrow's Tool for Online Purchases

Marcus Oldby, Theodor Öberg

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Preface

This bachelor thesis in business administration with a focus on international marketing were conducted and finalized in the spring of 2017 at the Halmstad University. During this period a lot of questions has been asked, hair torn off, and laughs made. This has resulted in a thesis which could provide a future area of research and development in one of the most used communication tools; both professionally and casually.

A great deal of gratitude to all those who have taken their time and effort to help collect individuals to interview, to the respondents of the survey, all opponents who commented and suggested improvements on this thesis, as well to Spritz and Mrs. Schnitzer in San Francisco for their time to answer our interview questions.

Without the guidance and help of the supervisor, Navid Ghannad, this would not have been possible to finish. A humble thank you for all discussions as your suggestions have been crucial to keep this thesis feasible and on track.

To you who reads this thesis, we hope it is beneficial for your interests.

Marcus Oldby
San Francisco, United States of America
May, 2017

Theodor Öberg
Halmstad, Sweden
May, 2017
Abstract

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Date: 2017-05-23
Degree: Bachelor
Authors: Marcus Oldby and Theodor Öberg
Supervisor: Navid Ghannad
Examiner: Thomas Helgesson

Purpose: This thesis aims to gain a better understanding of how customers behave with e-mail and spontaneous online shopping and in which degree prospects or customer would be affected by functions in interactive e-mails.

Literature review: The theories used in this thesis are not adjusted or intended for interactive e-mails but for similar subjects that are relevant to discuss within the purpose. The literature has been thoroughly searched to find suitable authors and subject which were applicable. With the help of these sources there has been constructed keywords and key phrases which are important to improve future advancement within the subject of interactive e-mails.

Method: The method used is based on qualitative interviews with an extension into the quantitative to gain a better understanding of how widespread or generalizability one interviewed individuals opinion and perspective were. Since there is a lacking background for interactive e-mail, the initial interview was with a business conducting interactive marketing to gain a better understanding in the industry.

Results: Interactive e-mail is an exciting area of development. As the younger generations make a stand on the market with demands of more mobile friendly solutions and faster payment options the interactive e-mail could supply with the solution to improve external communication from the companies while gaining a greater interest, better response rate, and a more frequent interactive communication – feedback – with the customer. These aspects rely on the improvements in personalization of newsletter and promotional e-mails to gain the initial interest from the customer. While personalization is heavily focused today not enough is done to persuade and improve the perception of promotional e-mails. Several sources show dissatisfaction with the current state of e-mail and its generic content; while still several studies has for a long time pointed out the importance of personalization.

Conclusion: The possibilities to develop one of the most used marketing channels are in line with the expectations and demands from the newer generations. Secondary sources are clear to point out the importance of fast browsing, faster payment options, and even faster delivery options to keep the satisfaction and the positive attitude from generation Y. This thesis concludes the possibilities to develop interactive e-mail to gain a greater interest, engagement and response rate from a younger generation while hinting the possibilities for further studies and research within the subject. The area is yet undiscovered and while more research could be done it is provided slight guidance to important aspect to succeed with increasing impulsive buying tendencies and positive attitudes. This in turn could result in enhanced impulsive buying behaviour with a greater feeling of gratification if done correctly – gaining both more satisfied customers.

Keywords: Interactive E-mail, Interactiveness, E-mail, Impulse Buying Tendency, IBT, Impulse Buying Behaviour, IBB, Spontaneous Shopping
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

One of the most relied on and used tool for online digital marketing is electronic mail (e-mail) (Charlton, 2014; Kivilis, 2015). In addition, it is the most common reason to go online in Sweden (SCB, 2016). With every company having their own list of prospects, leads and customers the vast amount of e-mails sent out each day is incomparable with any other digital marketing channel (Malamut, 2016; The Radicati Group, 2017). As a traditional form of digital communication and marketing it has almost served its purpose by getting ignored in the modern society where mobile and desktop applications, or apps, with push notifications as well as fast websites serve the purpose of up-to-date news and fast browsing. These rather old, static e-mails do however represent a large return on investment (ROI) for companies (Barnes, 2002; Watjatrakul & Drennan, 2005; "The New Rules of E-mail," n.d.; "Marketing Research Chart:", 2013) and thus refusing to let go of its position as an efficient source for mass communication.

As a marketing strategy e-mail forces information to the customer and represent what will be referenced as push-method (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). However, to push information to the customer is not as effective as letting the customers come to the business willingly, also known as the pull-method (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). With pure interest the customers actively embrace messages and acts willingly when engaged by the pull-method. Push, on the other hand, might be seen only as a moment of irritation and a negative attitude might reflect back to the sender if not done with caution (Moth, 2014). Not only get a negative response, or even worse with bad word-of-mouth, but also lose a prospect and customer when they hit the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of the e-mail (Marketingsherpa, 2015).

With the development of apps for mobile devices impulsive purchasing went even faster, and the customer expect it to (Bourne & Sitecore, 2016). The e-mails have not developed more than the addition of tracking links, for benefits to the company and not the customer. The development has in such stagnated or even went in the wrong direction for e-mails with harder algorithms against spam which affect the legitimate e-mails as well ("How does each spam filter," n.d.). The apps and websites have, however, a major limitation; each company has its own app and its own web page. The customer must change from one page to another – changing layouts and design each time the app or web page changes. If one would reduce the need of change the comfort of repetition and familiarity increases (Zajonc, 2001).

The combination of the both, the push market strategy and static e-mails, might seem to be outdated and not a suitable way to reach customers or gain leads and sales compared to an app or a web page in referral to previous research. With the possibility to gather several e-mails to same client (e.g. "Add your other email accounts to Outlook.com - Outlook", n.d.) while the use of several different e-mails could have its own inbox, one e-mail address leads to the same client regardless of content in the e-mail or the sender; and often several e-mails lead to a general inbox, e.g. Apple Mail, Outlook, Gmail. For the consumer, the content changes with every e-mail but the client and window stays the same. No need to reload another full screen window or effort to type another web address with loading time. The comfort of fast changing content with minimal effort suits the opportunity for fast updates of new arrivals and spontaneous shopping. This is where the interactive e-mail makes its mark.
1.2 Interactive e-mail

Interactive is defined as “An interactive system or computer program is designed to involve [emphasis added] the user in the exchange of information” ("Interactive Meaning in.", n.d.). An interactive e-mail is today not something one might be used to in their inbox. Rather it is what one be used to as a web page or specific store app. It contains descriptions and pictures, which might be assumed, but also object that change upon interaction. Interactive e-mails are an e-mail marketing strategy which purpose is to create a two-way interactive communication, mutually between customers and companies (Zhang, 2015). This can be explained as a channel where customers can engage with companies by expressing their thoughts when responding to company’s e-mails, show interests by making purchases (Zhang, 2015).

Click on a headline or link and the content changes to represent the headline without opening a web browser window. Hover over an image of clothing and see the side, the back and on a model without any clicks at all. Press a button and see how the content changes to represent the action. See how the basket gets filled by adding products. This is not anything hard to imagine since this is the common work of well-developed web page and mobile app but for a newsletter e-mail this is new possibilities. The mass customization combined with direct ability to shop straight through the e-mail; no hyperlinks to each product and static content. The customer gets presented items which are similar to previous orders or new arrivals and can add, continue and get directed to the payment options directly.

1.3 Impulse Buying

As more and more of the world-wide web (WWW) streamlines to offer smooth feedback and transitions so does the checkout system evolves with function as one-click ordering ("Amazon.com Help: About 1-Click Ordering", n.d.). With this follow an even smoother and increased impulse buying behaviour which is triggered by easy access of products, easy purchasing, lack of social pressures and effortless delivery, even if there is no store clerk to sell items (Jeffrey and Hodge, 2007; Verhagen and van Dolen, 2011).

High involvement in a specific product-category increases the impulse buying tendency (IBT) and with it an increase in the impulse buying behaviour (Jones, Reynolds, Weun, & Beatty, 2003). By being highly involved in a product-specific category the consumer is more likely to purchase on impulse regardless of general-IBT (Jones, Reynolds, Weun, & Beatty, 2003)

Rook (1987, pp. 191) defines this impulse behaviour as “Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately.” Impulse buying could be considered as a combination of four components: unplanned purchase, exposure to stimulus, “on-the-spot”-decision, and involves one or both of emotional/cognitive reaction (Piron, 1991). These two definitions of impulse buying behaviour could as well reflect an online shopping opportunity since they reflect a consumer perspective of emotions and thoughts rather than business strategies.

Other studies have made classifications of impulse purchases and in such categorize different kinds of impulse behaviour which Stern (1962) divided into four: pure-, reminder- suggested-, and planned impulse buying. These will affect the consumer differently and should be looked upon the same way.
1.4 Problem discussion

Static content and hyperlinking in combination with loading time is not what today's internet users are used to (Brettel & Spilker- Attig, 2010; Posnick-Goodwin, 2010; Nielsen, 2010). With constant mobility, users, prospects and customers expect full connectivity with responsive layouts and interactive content (Bourne & Sitecore, 2016). This has been standard for the WWW quite some time; yet it has not been adopted in one of the most used and convenient way of advertising, both for the company and its targets (Baron, 1998).

Even with regular use of e-mail marketing such as newsletters, the interactive content is today missing out in many aspects. The concept of interactive e-mails and its potential benefits might be underestimated by companies (CMO Council, 2015), however many customers are willing to adjust to the changes it will bring (Magnetic & Retail TouchPoints, 2015). How would customers perceive interactive elements in their inbox? Could the interactive e-mails make a stand and provide more information, increase the engagement, and beautify the concept of e-mails? Furthermore, could a full-fledged substitute for hyperlinking provide interesting aspects which could result in a higher IBT and in long term, a higher IBB?

1.5 Purpose

This thesis aims to gain a better understanding of how customers behave with e-mail and spontaneous online shopping and in which degree prospects or customer would be affected by functions in interactive e-mails.

1.6 Research Question

How well are interactive elements perceived and could interactive e-mails gain a greater interest and engagement from the customers?

1.7 Delimitations

This thesis does not regard eventual functionality issues with e-mail clients, such as Gmail, Apple Mail, Outlook etcetera, but defines the possibility of interactive e-mails for a consumer perspective within the Swedish culture. Any tangible solutions of technological development of such e-mails will not be discussed.
2. Literature Review

2.1 The Effect of Interaction

To have interactive elements of a web page has shown to have a great effect on telepresence, the sense of being in an environment (Steuer, 1992), and social presence which affect a positive emotional state (Khalifa and Shen, 2012; Khalifa and Shen, 2004; Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000). Swayne (2016) also states that companies that have interactive elements in their external communication are more likely to gain better response from customers. Swayne cites Holly Ott, who is a doctoral candidate in mass communication, that according to researches there is a higher level of appreciation and positive perception among customers receiving e-mails in an interactive way, and more frequently from companies. In addition, the introducing and steadily increasing workforce, generation Y, expect interactivity (Williams & Page, 2011).

One must consider the results of Rook (1987) and the aspect of product animation. As described by the study, relatively few – 6 percent – visualized and described their purchase as something otherworldly; they became hypnotized, mesmerized or spoken to by the product itself. As Rook responded this aspect was not regarded by the study and hence not asked for, but willingly described by the responder.

Interactive elements in e-mails could include a diverse variety of actions. It could be simple image effects to visual menus which were changed upon action – click/tap, hover with mouse pointer, or automatically changing content also known as animation (“Disney on Ice”, 2015; “Brrrr-ista blended smoothies”, 2015).

2.2 E-mail’s Possibilities

In today’s digitalized world it is key for every company to be digitally present in an online environment (Ernst & Young, 2011). As mentioned earlier, e-mail has long been a traditional tool for companies to run their communication both internally and externally (Charlton, 2014; Kivilis, 2015). But as technology constantly develops and new devices emerge, enabled to get synchronized with mobile applications, this also means that new ways of communication strategies and channels take shape. In order to optimize the use of e-mail it is therefore important to focus on content (Bourne & Sitecore, 2016; Magnetic & Retail TouchPoints, 2015; Marketersherpa, 2015). According to Hampel, Close Sheinbaum and Kang (2017) the key with e-mail as an effective marketing tool is to combine style and the interactive nature.

The devices that we use to open, respond or discard e-mails have changed since the first e-mail was sent in 1971 (“First Network E-mail sent,”, n.d.). Today’s generations use their mobile phone for “around the clock connectivity”. Based on the total market share of e-mail clients, 50 percent is allocated to pure mobile application (“E-mail Client Market Share,”, 2017), i.e. opened on mobile platforms such as Apple iPhone, Google Android, Apple iPad.

These devices mark the way of the consumers use and are expected to receive their e-mails. They are on the move, needing the information with them, and, according to Magnetic and Retail TouchPoints (2015), the information needs to be personalized and customized to fit every receiver’s interests. According to the report, 78 percent expect personalized promotions in their e-mail client. To put this in context only 30 expected this kind of customized advertisement on their desktop PC browsing the internet; 21 percent expected this on the
mobile counterpart – same percentage answer it for social media. A follow-up question determined which the most frustrating advertisement were (multiple choice); 47 percent answered "E-mail from advertisers that promote products I am not interested in" and 32 percent "E-mails from retailers that are generic and aren’t personalized to my preferences". 21 percent of US internet users unsubscribe due to the fact of "The e-mails are not relevant to me"; 17 percent because of "The content of the e-mails is boring, repetitive and not interesting to me" (Marketingsherpa, 2015). These metrics clearly points in the direction to interactive, personalized, e-mails.

With the combination of new generations high demand for interactive layouts and fast responses, their trust and enjoyment comes with well-developed digital media (Hartemo, 2016). Being able to interact with the content is in such crucial for success for any digital store (CMO Council, 2015). This could apply to e-mails. Interaction is crucial for keeping the trust for the new generations compared to previous (Obal & Kunz, 2013). To be able to engage with the e-mail in such that the content changes one might embrace the message even more and this will be beneficial to the relationship between the lead or customer and the company.

Besides adapting to the technology and devices companies also face the big challenge of understanding consumer behaviour and emotions. This is another aspect that must be in consideration when forming interactive marketing in terms of e-mail communication; which will be further discussed later.

2.3 Impulse Buying

Verhagen and van Dolen (2011) describe impulse buying behaviour as an urge which might be irresistible and might make the customer feel out of control of its actions. The purchase take part without a thoughtful consideration in terms of why and for what reason.

Stern (1962) divided this impulsive buying behaviour, IBB, into four broad classifications: (1) pure impulse buying. The traditional view of impulse buying behaviour. One’s purchase does not reflect the normal buying behaviour. By definition, this might not represent a large amount of impulse purchases. (2) reminder impulse buying. Reminds the customer of a previous moment where one thought about purchasing the product. The at-home stock might be running low or previous advertisement showed the benefits of switching. This classification defines when the customer get a sudden realization of previous buying decision was made. (3) suggestion impulse buying. At first time encounter, without previous knowledge of the product and thus differs from reminder impulse buying, the customer is intrigued to purchase by visualizing its benefits. In contrast to pure impulse buying where the customer is emotionally engaged this category of behaviour is rationally evaluated at point of sale (POS) and thereby extinguishes itself from pure impulse buying. (4) planned impulse buying. Where the customer has a specific purchase in mind but will evaluate and compare once at POS regarding special offers, discounts or other purchases.

The customer which act impulsive are less likely to consider what consequences the purchase might have (Rook, 1987). Eisenberg (2007) presents the impulsive behaviour on a customer as spontaneous. The characteristics of this certain customer has a personal attitude and the customer’s consuming desire is characterized as being clear action with simple steps. This impulsive and spontaneous behaviour is skeptical towards traditional details, waiting and when one must deal with many different options. Eisenberg (2007) means that the key for
companies is to act expressively in a personal way, but also be aware of providing trending options.

Bourne and Sitecore (2016) showed how the development of mobile usage reflect on expected online functionality till 2019, with multiple-choice questions. 35 percent expected applications and websites to be more personalized; 33 percent expected faster payment methods; 27 percent expected “on-the-move”-ordering with faster delivery. These top three answers indicate a demand from customers of speedier ways to browse and complete transactions online which the industry must adapt to.

According to Clover (1950), research of IBT and behaviour has been in the loop for about sixty years, stated back in 1950, which means that studies of buying behaviour has an even longer historical background. However, initially researchers focused on product attributes and their influence rather than customer behaviour. As Rook (1987, p. 196) says “The data from this study suggest that people vary in their impulsive buying propensities. It is useful to think of consumer impulsivity as a lifestyle trait.”. IBT can be highly connected to consumer personality. IBB is the act of the tendency the consumer experiences. Many studies have concluded the result of high impulsive buying tendencies and its effect on IBB (e.g. Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Earlier research and psychologists means that it is a deep-seated drive in the human brain which is known as loss aversion. The loss aversion phenomena are the tendency to be more concerned about the prospect of losing something than the prospect of gaining something (New York Magazine, 2015). IBT has always been an increasing trend in the retail market which eventually have led to that IBT nowadays is a general phenomenon for all kinds of product categories (Hansen & Olsen, 2006).

2.4 The Role of Emotions

The importance of positive emotions for an impulse behaviour has been concluded by several studies (Khalifa & Shen, 2012; Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). As determined, "perceived value for money", "interesting offers" and "adjusted according to the consumer’s interest" are ways to gain positive attitude and therefore contribute to the overall objective of gaining impulse buying behaviour. In addition, combined with the positive effect of shopping enjoyment and visual fun effects show an increased positive attitude (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). The same study shows a positive correlation between browsing time and positive affect. Surprisingly, "ease of use" does not contribute to the positive effect. This would not be beneficial for the usage of interactive e-mail to gain impulse buying behaviour since the objective is to reduce browsing time and focus on rapidity of decision-making, as validated by Dholakia (2000). However, this might be the results of "ease of use" be classified as a basic factor (Verhagen & Van Dolen, 2011) and be an underlying factor.

The immediate gratification which comes after the purchase varies depending on customer and can play a vital part of how one feels after acting on this impulsive behaviour (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). However, the typical generation Y is likely to need this confirmation (Perine, n.d.). By placing an object of interest in view of the customer, it becomes less motivated to wait for the item (Mischel & Grusec, 1967; Mischel et al., 2010; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991), i.e. if the customer has visual contact of the product it becomes harder to withstand the impulsive behaviour of immediate satisfaction rather than delayed satisfaction. If one were to describe products with features that were upon consumption, e.g. taste or consistency, it becomes harder to withstand immediate temptation (Mischel et al., 2010). This could be beneficial for the description within interactive e-mails. Instead of focusing on tangible facts one might describe consumption situation, e.g. a social gathering where one’s
outfit stands out from the rest, and leave the tangible facts to the webpage, e.g. exact measurements and fabric blend (Park, Kim, Funches & Fox, 2012).

According to Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega and Jimenez-Martinez (2016), the level of customer involvement with the company through interactive communication in engagement channels, such as e-mail, is a critical aspect for understanding customer’s perception and emotions of the brand and products. However, knowledge about how emotional states may influence the customer’s level of involvement or engagement in the channel, in this case in e-mail, is limited (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2016).

2.5 The ABC Attitude Model

The ABC attitude model describes the combination of three different components that create an attitude towards an object. These three components are by themselves not of significant importance but as together they construct the hierarchy of effects (Solomon, Bamossy, Gary J., Askegaard, & Hogg, 2014) and eventually identifies a certain attitude towards an object. The ABC attitude model emphasizes the interrelationships between the components of knowing, feeling and doing. The attitude outcome is a so called learned tendency of how a person’s attitude looks like towards the object (Khan Academy Medicine, 2014).

The Hierarchy of Effects is a concept that aims to describe the relative impact that all of three attitude components have (Solomin et. al, 2014). The concept has three different attitude outcomes, depending on how the components sequence of affection, behaviour and beliefs look like. In figure 5.1 below the three different hierarchy models are presented.

Figure 2.1 The Hierarchy of Effects. (Salomon et. al, 2014)

One definition of attitudes describes it as evaluations of ideas, events, objects or people (Long-Crowell, n.d.). As we all know, attitudes are generally either positive or negative, but in some cases uncertain and difficult to evaluate. However, Long-Crowell (n.d.) explains that each attitude has three components that are represented in this so-called ABC Attitude Model:

Affective component – refers to how a customer feel about a certain attitude object. When referring to the affective component, there are several attitude objects from the research that would be applicable to this model; e.g. traditional e-mails (hyperlinked e-mails), interactive e-mails, devices in terms of computer laptop or smartphones/tablets, but also the actual interactive content such as reviews, purchases and navigation/orientation in e-mails.
**Behavioural component** – refers to person’s intentions to do some behavioural action regarding an object (Solomon et al., 2014). Worth mentioning, that is also underlined in the literature regarding the behavioural component, is that intentions do not necessarily result in an actual behaviour or behavioural pattern. This is also something that should be kept in mind in relation to the empirical findings.

**Cognitive component** – The cognitive components refers to how we form thoughts, beliefs or some sort of knowledge about an attitude object, subject or topic.

### 2.6 Push method

Newsletters and promotions are not in the same way advertisement as traditional TV commercials or the radio counterpart. This source of prospects and consumers are not forced to accept the e-mail but have agreed to do so. As traditional media was mainly dependent on push-method communication between the company and its customers, creating a one-way communication channel and limits customers’ possibility of interaction (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Meyer, & Johnston, 2006). A push-method of marketing is a method where the business give the consumer no choice but to watch the commercial. One might argue newsletter subscription is not a push-method of marketing, but since the consumer and target of the advertisement have no control of when to receive the message and be exposed of it this should not be considered as anything less than a push-method (Chaffey et al., 2006). As an internet advertisement channel, it is considered a more pleasant type compared to other (Radbata & Kubenka, 2012).

### 2.7 The Communication Process Model

The Communication Process Model is a model that describes the process of several sequences messages pass from the sender to the receiver. This model contains different subcomponents that all create the three different communication types; linear, interactive and transactional communication. This paper focuses on two of them: linear and interactive; as the third, transactional communication model refers to physical face-to-face communication. This communication model will not be relevant for empirical research background nor analysis.

#### 2.7.1 Linear Communication Model

The Linear communication model, also known as the transmission model, is a one-way communication sequence between the sender and the receiver. In this model, the sender sends a message through a channel, or medium, to the receiver. The channel in this communication model could be anything that carries the message to the receiver, such as traditional mail, e-mail, people, etcetera. In this model the message always goes in a one-way direction, from the sender to the receiver. This is also why it is called the linear model because it only runs in a linear fashion (Fish, 2015). This is close to what is called a push-method of marketing. This model has no way to identify the feedback received from a message. Moreover, this type of communication has no direct need for immediate feedback (Eunson, 2012).

Another factor that is also involved in this model is the so-called noise. The factor of noise can be anything that sidetracks the receiver from understanding the message clearly. This factor is derived from the old days where TV broadcasts and telephone communication often were disturbed because of poor signal reception. Nowadays noise factors can be anything that might have a negative effect on how the message is sent through a certain channel (Fish, 2015).
The linear communication model was founded and designed back in 1949 by two significant gentlemen: Warren Weaver and Elwood Shannon. Back then, they were using the model towards the back then current technology such as the telephone. It is well known that back then the communication technology was not like it is today with poor signal and reception causing a lot of noise cuts in communication. Nowadays it is different where we have a whole different technology that is way more developed especially in terms of interactivity (Fish, 2015). Today people are able to see each other through FaceTime, receive a confirmation if your message is sent, read, when someone is responding but also in relation to noise factors, where we can see when the connection is bad during a phone call or when messaging. However, the linear communication model is still considered valuable and relevant in many aspects, e.g. within marketing when investigating how a certain message is being delivered to the customers, in sales, etc.

Figure 2.1 *Interational Model of Communication.*

### 2.7.2 Interactive Communication Model

The interactive model differs from the linear model in how the receiver approaches the message. In this model there is an interaction, i.e. messages going both ways. The sender sends out the message and the receiver responds back to the sender, e.g. by giving an answer or other response (Eunson, 2012). This communication model works more like a cycle where both parties that are involved receive information, as the model name suggests – it allows the sender and the receiver to interact with each other in terms of giving information and receiving feedback (Eunson, 2012). Moreover, in this communication model both the parties that are communicating acts as the sender as well as the receiver. In many cases there is another factor added to the interactive communication model, the so-called field of experience (Fish, 2015). The field of experience refers to that both sides that are communicating have different depth of knowledge, culture and background that influences the way they communicate, but also the way they understand a certain message. In the interactive communication model where the part of field of experience is included show how the two sides overlap and merge together, indicating where the most valuable communication takes place.
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Methodological limitations
This thesis should include a representative of every user segment using e-mails. However, this is not feasible and must be narrowed down to adjust for the extent of this thesis. Thus, there is a delimitation to include only the major generations within the workforce in this thesis; frequently referred to and known as generation X and Y. Within eight years the latter is estimated to comprise three-fourth of the US workforce (Winograd & Hals, 2014; Strohm, 2014). This indicate a period with people born from 1965 to 2000 (Sox, Campbell, Kline, Strick, & Crews, 2016) but limited from 1967 to 1999. This is to only include the Swedish population between the ages of 18 to 50 and get a representative group of the workforce which all are regarded as adults.

The qualitative research method, individual interview, has not been fully utilized as of no data saturation has been reached (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Boddy, 2016). However, as these interviews are somewhat homogenous this could argue that there have been enough interviews since the answers started to reoccur frequently.

3.1.2 Choice of Method
There are two methods a study can be conducted: qualitative and quantitative (Jacobsen, 2002; Patel & Davidson, 2011).

To accomplish this purpose and with limited previous studies regarding interactive e-mail the choice of methods are limited. Since interactive e-mails have not been widely adopted by business’ they are not self-explanatory to what they are; nor is it obvious how it would...
function. Another limitation is the uncertainty of a clear layman-definition of the chosen subject as well as limited examples. To only conduct a quantitative survey with the aspect to provide confirmation and validity of previous studies would be futile due to the fact of limited previous research as well as low validity due to no conventional definition and visualization of the concept.

Explaining why the prospects and customers would perceive interactive e-mail would not be constructed on a valid source of how they interact as they do, i.e. it would not explain previous studies. Another aspect of choice of research method is the available time; this thesis was researched, conducted and analyzed during a four-month period. An explanatory study is time consuming while a descriptive study is less so (Jacobsen, 2002). Thus, to provide the data to proceed with a quantitative survey there must first be a qualitative study; the choice of a qualitative method must also be a choice of descriptive before an explanatory due to limited previous research and available time.

Triangulation

This thesis uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods to overlap the risk of weakness in of each research method and strengthen the research; non-generalizable and absence of depth respectively. Together with the addition of previous research theories, conclusions and models – this makes up a so-called triangulation.

The complex solution to the situation where one method does not completely cover the main subject, triangulation may be the answer. Jick (1979) summarizes that triangulation is the concept of applying more than one research method into the study. It is the combination of a qualitative and a quantitative study method and thus overlapping the weaknesses between the two categorizes. Several other authors agree and do see triangulation as something that should be broader available and used for research, as well as increase the accuracy of the study (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012; Mathison, 1988; Hussein, 2015; Doyle, Brady & Byrne, 2009; Denzin 1978).

Denzin (1978) suggests several different kinds of triangulation. By his definitions this thesis applies primarily to methodological triangulation; which also is the most common. This implies the usage of more than one research method or data collection method.

By using triangulation this thesis aims gain a stronger validity. According to Morse (1991) there is two possible ways to conduct triangulation. (1) The researchers can choose to conduct a qualitative study first as a predecessor to a quantitative survey, or the researchers can choose to conduct a quantitative survey preceding the qualitative study; inductive or deductive method respectively. Thus, the predecessor influences the successor. Either way these two research methods are used results in triangulation; more specifically, sequential triangulation. (2) The researchers can choose to conduct both research methods individually and simultaneously; also known as simultaneous triangulation. As further argued in the article, triangulation is not done to speed up the research or to make it more convenient for the researchers. Short term benefits of this is non-existent – even reversed so; adding more work to the research. However, to cite Morse (1991, p. 122) “But the long-term gains achieved from such thorough groundwork are immiscible”. This thesis does apply more than one research method as well as more than one data collection method.

In the literature there are some important aspects discussed about risks and cons about using qualitative-quantitative triangulation. One may say that when using the two strategies, one tend to be the leading and prioritized theory in relation to the research, and the second
selected strategy to generalize the enquiry (Bryman, 2015). Same study also states that quantitative method strategies always rest upon qualitative conceptual framework, which is something kept in mind throughout this research. When using a qualitative-quantitative method, Olsen (2004) suggest that firstly all questionnaire surveys are inherently based on an in-depth qualitative enquiry. Olsen (2004) also describes that the contrary approach, quantitative-qualitative strategy, is more problematic. This because the approach requires that the researcher/s have a set of skills as well as they actively seek out qualitative research questions based on the first stage of the research.

Based on the observations and existing theory, this research is aiming to conduct qualitative-quantitative strategy method. By conducting a quantitative method and observing the findings from it, this thesis can determine whether the occurrence of the specific answers from the qualitative interviews applies to the whole population or not, i.e. that the quantitative method acts as a supplement to the qualitative interviews (Jick, 1979). This is also a superior choice of order and conduct according to Jick (1979, p. 606):

“It should be underscored that the quantitative results were used largely to supplement the qualitative data, rather than the reverse which is far more common in organizational research. The surveys became more meaningful when interpreted considering critical qualitative information just as other statistics were most useful when compared with content analyses or interview results. Triangulation, in this respect, can lead to a prominent role for qualitative evidence (just as it also should assure a continuing role for quantitative data)”

By choosing to conduct a qualitative descriptive research method and follow up the results with a quantitative method, this thesis get the foundation of information provided to which it can answer the purpose more thoroughly and generally than with only one limited method; providing validity to the findings with triangulation.

3.1.3 Gathering of Data

As stated previously within this thesis, there is no previous research about interactive e-mails conducted as a published article, book or case study. This limit applicable studies and theories.

Primary Data

Data which did not exist previously and therefore created is defined as primary data (Jacobsen, 2002; Hox & Boeije, 2005). This type is often highly specific to a study or situation and must, in many cases, be collected each time a study is conducted due to its uniqueness.

Several different methods can be used to gather primary data which comes directly from the population; individual-/telephone interviews, focus groups, online-/phone-/personal surveys, experiments, observations among others (Jacobsen, 2002; Hox & Boeije, 2005). These types of data are either qualitative or quantitative and has its own strengths and weaknesses as discussed previously. This thesis used two of these as methods for data gathering: individual interviews and online survey; qualitative and quantitative respectively.
**Businesses**

A single company was interviewed to provide an insight to what the actual senders want to accomplish with interactive e-mails. This has rarely been done before but there are some previous interviews which will be further discussed in secondary data. This primary source of data provide validity to the secondary sources if data is repeated, as well to give a foundation. To provide primary data from this perspective the company Spritz SF in San Francisco, USA was interviewed.

Spritz SF is an integrated and interactive marketing agency with the vision of combining digital and traditional marketing with creative, powerful design. By doing this, Spritz SF specialize in identifying and implementing current trends into personalized marketing ("Interactive Marketing, Branding Agency;", n.d.).

This limits the perspective with only qualitative individual interview as gathering method. However, as this perspective is not in focus in this thesis but only to provide a background to how the business want the e-mails to be perceived, it covers the purpose with only a qualitative approach.

A limitation must be considered as the company is not established in the Swedish market. As the company was not interviewed specifically about how consumers perceive different methods but only what the business wants to achieve when choosing interactive elements. As well, both markets – USA and Sweden – are what to be seen as western cultures and thus be adequate surrogates between preferences. However, this must still be noted and considered in the discussion and the conclusion.

**Consumers**

Consumers have been reached by the usage of qualitative individual interviews as well as quantitative online surveys. The qualitative approach, individual interview, is described by Jacobsen (2002) as reserved for when the researcher want to get a deep knowledge about a specific situation. However, this choice of method is complicated; the interviewer needs to be competent, the participant might want to impress the interviewer or the interviewer might affect answers by unconscious behaviour. These are some of the risks regarding solicited data according to Hox and Boeije (2005) and Hays and Singh (2011). These unconscious behaviours has been limited to voice as these interviews were conducted digitally. This has limitations as well, but limits the physical, unconscious behaviour.

The purpose of the qualitative method is to conclude specific behaviour and thinking of how the consumer would perceive the interactive e-mail. With individual interviews there is no discussion but only the researcher/s asking to follow up questions to interesting behaviour or unexpected answers. As Boddy (2016) motivates, there are no specific number for how many interviews a study must conduct. An example used in Boddy’s (2016) article is the discovery of penicillin which was a single case study while Guest et al. (2006) found that 12 interviews covered 92 percent of their study’s findings, while just six covered a substantial amount to provide an insight. As Guest et al. (2006) concludes, if the interviewed population is somewhat homogenous a smaller n can be used to achieve a greater generalizability and coverage of the population.

The results of the multiple interviews will be the foundation for the quantitative online survey which will validate to see if the occurrence of the opinion or behaviour is limited to this
thesis or could apply to the population. The purpose of the online survey is in such to see if the results are generalizable.

To visualize the concept and idea of interactive e-mails to the consumers, i.e. interviewed persons, gets presented upwards to six graphic interchange formats, known as GIFs, which visualize how an e-mail could be used both as a way to give more information but also a full-fledged substitute to hyperlinking.

The total population size amount to 4 270 319 individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 regarded as Swedish citizen 2016 ("Hitta statistik", n.d.). With a confidence interval of 10 a total number of representative respondents must amount to or exceed 96 ("Sample Size Calculator", n.d.).

By interviewing both a business and the consumers this thesis provide a perspective of what the business’ want the perception of interactive e-mails to be and, primarily, how the consumers perceive it. This could provide guidance for further studies.

Secondary Data

Contrary primary data and its specific construction to each research, secondary data is not specific for another research. Once data is mentioned from a previous research or source, it becomes secondary data (Hox & Boeije, 2005).

Majority of the secondary data has been gathered from scientific journals digitized on sites mainly on, and similar to, Scopus, Jstor, Emerald Insight and Web of Science. In some cases, specific websites been referred to where scientific articles could not provide sufficient data or information. In addition, printed literature by notable authors has been referred.

There has been plenty of articles and studies, both scientific and not, about tradition e-mails and for modern, interactive websites. Studies has determined how the they affect each other and the effect of interactiveness, push/pull-method, impulsive buying, remarketing and retargeting on live, functioning websites. Both the business perspective and the consumer perspective of subjects mentioned are well documented and covered by previous researchers. These immensely related areas provide the foundation for this thesis’ sources and frame of reference when it comes to analyzing the gathered data. This overcome the limitation of absent theories regarding interactive e-mails. The evaluation is that these areas’ theories are well suited substitutes and should not drastically affect the validity of this thesis.

Previous administrated interviews of business’ managing interactive e-mails, establish the secondary data for this perspective. These interviews will be compared to find the gap of knowledge that this thesis need to provide interesting aspects of the subject in addition to validate information. These interviews are not specially performed for this thesis and in such have insufficient validity and reliability, as Hox and Boeije (2005) specify as a characteristic problem with secondary data. Nevertheless, they provide aspects and statistics which are of high relevance to this thesis and are used with comparison with the primary source.

3.1.4 Reliability & Validity

Quantitative Research

Reliability defines if the results from the quantitative study can be reproduced (Golafshani, 2003); a high reliability assures that the result would be the same while a low reliability cannot assure this.
To minimize systematic errors, the quantitative survey has undergone testing with individual participants. The chosen participants read each question of the online survey and after each question the participant explained how it was interpreted. This is a well-known way to gain a higher reliability of the research (Jacobsen, 2002). In addition, validity is increased by the questions are interpreted as intended.

Further steps to assure validity in the quantitative method was to compare the separate qualitative interviews with each other. This is done not to assure consistent answers and disregard to differences but to find likeness and patterns to assure a validity in the chosen quantitative research method. Burke (1997) referred to this as pattern matching. This also allowed for finding interesting aspects for further research.

**Qualitative Research**

As chosen qualitative research method, individual interviews are open-answer and has no predetermined answer for each interview object – resulting in highly individual answers. The purpose of reliability, as defined by Golafshani (2003), is to assure the answer can be reproduced – when regarding quantitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defines "consistency" as a suitable substitute when regarding qualitative study. However, reliability is not a suitable term to use with previous definition since the aspect with qualitative research is to receive in-depth answers to provide irregularities; and not to ensure generalization and replicability.

Burke (1997) summarizes several strategies as for a thesis can conduct to ensure a high validity to qualitative research. Mentioned strategies, among others, are: triangulation, cross-checking information; method triangulation, multiple methods used to study a phenomenon; theory triangulation, multiple theories and perspectives used to interpret and explain the data; investigator triangulation, multiple researches have collected and reviewed data; peer review, "devil’s advocate" has reviewed the thesis; low inference descriptors, interview details has been described as closely as possible with e.g. direct citations; reflexivity, the researcher/s reflected over own biases; and participant feedback, interviewed individual has read the summarization of their interview and approved its validity. These strategies are applied to this thesis. Other mentioned strategies which are not used, due to limited time inhabited in this thesis, are: extended fieldwork, studied phenomenon is studied over an extended period; and data triangulation, use of several data sources. Triangulation is a powerful tool towards assuring validity of the researched subject (Denzin, 1978).

Mishler (2000) argued for the use of "trustworthiness" rather than "validity" when it concerns qualitative research; and as Whaley (2014) summarizes Burke (1997) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), "trustworthiness" is about providing enough data to ensure that the audience, the readers, can be certain that the data is correct. Burke (1997) defined this as descriptive validity and can be in addition to low inference descriptors, as mentioned above. By providing all applicable findings from these individual interviews, this thesis aims to gain trustworthiness in its discussion and conclusion. In order to gain this trustworthiness and validity all qualitative interviews with business and consumers are documented. However, in agreement with the participants this will not be publicly shared but to be confidential to the authors and the supervisor.

Furthermore, as summarized by Golafshani (2003), if a qualitative study can prove to be valid, the reliability is fulfilled as an underlying factor for qualitative research.
By using several research methods and assuring every step is thought through this thesis has taken several precautions to provide the validity and reliability a scientific thesis needs (Ejvegård, 2009).
4. Results

4.1 Interview with Spritz

The qualitative interview with Spritz took place on March 17th, 4.00pm at 660 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94111. The interview was made by Marcus Oldby and the respondent from Spritz SF was the Co-Founder, Beth Schnitzer.

Spritz SF is a whole-solution business partner which provide everything a company could use for interactive marketing. The business helps with branding, taglines, websites, developing logos, and both digital and traditional marketing; providing full-fledged services according to the need of the customer. Spritz SF’s major customer sector is within hospitality; food, beverages and tech sub-sectors.

Some of the Spritz work with interactive marketing have been when their clients needed to develop their existing e-mail database, more specifically their CRM system. Here the focus is to make sure that they were sending out e-mails that integrates into those systems and developing landing pages for the customers.

For some clients, Spritz SF also use interactive marketing as more of an engagement tool to stay top-of-mind and create customer awareness. Other clients were only focused on integrating the interactive marketing concept to their social media platforms and paid advertising – whether it would be retargeting or any digital ad-buying. The in-house creative team also work with creative tasks, such as landing pages, infographics – anything to illustrate and convey their clients messaging in an appealing way, this in order to get the customers to open, to click and eventually get them to buy.

Moreover, Spritz were asked about interactive marketing in e-mails and how they believe it differs to the traditional way of using e-mail marketing. According to Schnitzer, she believes the answer lies within the fact that today there such a big access to data on potential customer, or leads, but also so much analytics. She describes that the beauty with interactive, or any kind of digital marketing, is that you can follow it up and analyze it very quickly. Schnitzer means that companies can see what kind of strategies that are working and which are not – a positive aspect for companies to find the right strategy and not invest large funds on e.g. a print advertisement where the company does not get anything in return. Furthermore, Schnitzer also describes that there are great benefits with Interactive marketing and e-mails, as it enables segmenting your market and know what your customer really wants and needs – target by behaviour and interest.

When talking about the huge amount of data people are having access today and the information we are having access to, Schnitzer also agrees to the fact that interactive marketing and how it is used as a push marketing method, might also be a bit overdone in some aspects. She mentions how she every day sees the traces of retargeting when she visits a website and receive all kinds of offers about different products. Schnitzer also states that this is one of the backlashes with interactive marketing and especially e-mails, that it sometimes turns the customer’s behaviour into the right opposite, by dismissing the brand. This is a business-to-consumer phenomenon that is constantly analyzed in order to find the balance between marketing frequency and customer satisfaction, according to the Spritz SF co-founder.

According to Schnitzer and the records of Spritz SF, they receive significant numbers of open-rates and click-through rates through e-mail marketing. She states that the key to get
these results is to provide relevant content in a creative and personalized way. When asked about the key impact of interactive marketing Schnitzer means it is faster – allowing consumers to get faster access to information about products. The Interactive concept of marketing also let people to use their senses; to see, hear and feel products which Schnitzer means is vital for this strategy.

In the end of the interview Schnitzer emphasizes the relation between interactive marketing in e-mails with social media, and how important it is for companies to rely on. She means that through social media, the amount of leads that companies can build and then drive to their websites or landing pages is a big utilizing factor. It is in this stage where companies can file and storage customer data and information, such as e-mails, to use for interactive e-mail marketing which Schnitzer means is an important integrated platform for companies to create and maintain relations with their prospects and existing customers. According to her, it is also important to look at all the details from an emotional and user-experience perspective; make sure colors are right, the buttons are the right sizes and that the content is giving the customers a reason to click on the that button, i.e. convert leads and prospects into customers.

4.2 Personal Interviews

4.2.1 Billy, age 40

Billy uses e-mail mainly as a communication tool for professional matters. As he travels and are often out of office for long periods of time the mail contributes much to the everyday work life. It becomes a tool for scheduling, “to-do”-list, and constant updates about customers and colleagues. The e-mail has become a crucial tool for everyday work. As for professional aspects the e-mail gets many different senders each day. The inbox quickly fills up and in a day it is common to reads upwards 20-30 e-mails throughout the day. And while out of the office the e-mails are read with the use of a smartphone. The preferred way of engaging an e-mail differs from the device used. For smartphones it is basically a read-only device and not used at all to respond in an way to e-mails. To respond e-mails it is necessary to use a personal computer and an installed e-mail client; only for the full-size keyboard and a faster typing speed.

To personal matters the e-mail is not of that importance as it is for the professional aspect. The e-mail serve more as self-reminders for things to do for the household and in some extent also a way to sign up for a diverse range of online accounts. However, for newsletters and promotions the e-mails are quickly unsubscribed from and deleted. This due to lack of importance as well as often generic content. The personal e-mail is as the professional read-only on a smartphone and responded to with a personal computer. The e-mails for personal business is not as common as the professional and is in such only checked once a notification is received or by sporadic check often during late evening.

The obvious benefits of e-mails are that it is text based, according to Billy. The ability to always be able to understand and focus to the written text without any concerns to whether or not he disturbs his surrounding or if it is a subject which is suitable to be kept secret. The ability to always look back to previous messages and agreements is also an important benefit for e-mail. Furthermore, a final benefit is the ability to answer an e-mail when it fits in his schedule. This, however, is also a con for e-mail.

Billy admits as it is an important aspect for him to be able to respond to the e-mails whenever he so chooses, but at the same time he always wants fast responses. As the interview goes on this aspect appears multiple times that he feels that e-mails are often exhausting, i.e. time
consuming, to answer. Even more so than other, text based, communication channels, i.e. instant messaging and ordinary text message. This is one of the reasons why a full-size keyboard is necessary to write responses to e-mails, Billy clarifies, and also adds that the screen size is an important aspect to the comfortability with e-mails.

E-mail marketing is not something Billy appreciates. He says “... it is probably the worst way of marketing to me.” The negative feelings are due to more often than not the sent-out content is irrelevant information for him, cluttering the mailbox, and unattractive offers. Newsletters are more interesting by the fact that it is not actively pushing products to Billy.

In regard to hyperlinking Billy does not consider it a problem while on a computer, but does when he considers the mobile version. On the move, as he often is, the idea of a being able of receiving a more comprehensive view and ability to complete transactions without leaving the inbox is a great possibility. Interactive e-mails are especially beneficial to e-mail marketing towards the smartphones, Billy rounds up the interview.

Shopping online is not something common. It has happened but only in occasions where it was not possible to purchase the product in-store. Research is commonly done online, however. When considering investing or purchasing a product Billy goes online and evaluate the choice of product. Spontaneous shopping is nothing that occurs. The purchased product has always been considered against alternatives and this is rewarding when he finally gets the product home, as it feels like the best choice of product.

4.2.2 Linnea, age 20

As professional aspects Linnea has little experiences of e-mails. Those who has been received is only for internal use and even those are sporadic. Once she gets the e-mails she only has the ability to read them on a desktop personal computer. As she is rarely out of office it is not of importance to be able to read them on a smartphone but it is explained that while on business errands it is a major inconvenience to not be able to read the e-mails. It would be preferable to be able to read the e-mails on the move, and thus preferring her smartphone.

For personal affairs the smartphone is the primary device for both reading and typing e-mails. There is no need for lengthy e-mails and since she feels comfortable typing on a small device the smartphone is enough. However, sometimes it is complicated attaching files and viewing newsletters on a smaller screen and thus she is more comfortable sending or reading such types of e-mails on a larger screen. The flow from a smartphone is more natural to open hyperlinks and investigate the hyperlinked website but the loading times are a major irritation for a fast flow reading through e-mails. The switch of active windows is not a moment of irritation since it is easy to go back, but the fact to read more about a product she must wait and often for long times before the website is properly navigable.

E-mails are easier to respond compared to other text-based messages. The concept is more professional than what other sources are. This makes e-mail more thought through and this demands more time, thus being more acceptable to be slower than the compared channels. It is also more of a professional tool than a way to communicate. Since it is a tool of professionalism Linnea does not perceive any more benefits of e-mails. The cons of e-mails are that it is a clumsy way of communication. The need for an e-mail address which must be obtained by direct communication is an inconvenient way to initiate or continue communication, and to obtain it without previous communication is not without risk of being labeled as spam as well as unaware of updates; such as if the e-mail has been read or not.
Newsletters and promotions is the best kind of e-mail marketing. It is a convenient way to read marketing if you want and have the time, without being too annoying. Sometimes when a company sends too many e-mails, more than one in a four-day period defined by Linnea, she gets annoyed and evaluates if she should unsubscribe. Depending on the company she later does or does not. Linnea feels that the e-mails are often relevant to her and she enjoys updates from companies of her interests.

Hyperlinking is not a problem for Linnea; nor is it something enjoyable. There is no hesitation to press links and no irritation getting redirected to a website; neither on a personal computer or a smartphone. To be able to complete a transaction within the e-mail is, however, something Linnea got thrilled about. The idea of quickly and smoothly order interesting products from a newsletter is something Linnea likes and would use a lot; and wonder why this is not a thing already.

Thanks to the convenience of always be able to order anything, anywhere, online shopping is a normal part of Linnea’s life. Traditional shopping has diminished since the age of 18, because this was the time she was able to order products online herself. Before this she was ordering online with the help of an adult which were legitimate to purchase online, so even before the legal age of online shopping there was an interest and a will to do so. To receive the products is the best part. “It feels great. You wait for something and you finally get it so it feels like a relief as well as a happy feeling to fetch them at the post office.” Spontaneous shopping is as well something that is a part of the online shopping behaviour for Linnea, as it occurs almost every time something thought through is bought. It is easy to find something extra which she did not know she needed. In regard to if the possibility of completing a purchase directly within the e-mail client is something that would be interesting as long as the provided products are well chosen and based on the interests of Linnea. If it should work for spontaneous shopping it is most essential the products are attractive enough.

4.2.3 Johannes, age 28

E-mails are the most important way of communication between Johannes and his customers. As a freelancer the e-mail is an irreplaceable tool both for communication and acquisition of new customers. Constant flow of e-mails is however a time consuming everyday task where several tens of e-mails are received each hour and more often than not urgent and need a response immediately. Therefore, the need to sit down and use a full-size keyboard on a laptop has become the most crucial tool for Johannes; in combination with notifications on a smartphone this is Johannes “on-the-move” office. As the office is always on the road both devices work continuously together and one would not be efficient without the other, Johannes explains.

There is no such thing as personal e-mail when the whole life is business. The need for a personal e-mail is only for account sign up and memberships at different websites and stores. This e-mail address is rarely checked; last time was 2 months ago. Little thought is put into this e-mail as it does not matter if someone tries to reach out on that address. Newsletters and promotions are in such not unsubscribed from; they are never opened or regarded. The personal e-mail address is not active on any of the devices, but only used with web based clients. Promotions, newsletters, updates of any kind are not something that is noticed on a personal level, since personal e-mails are not a way for communication with him.

Text-based messages are the most important tool for communication. For personal matters it is more common with alternatives, such as instant messaging and text messages, but when considering professional matters they are rarely used. Not even phone calls are common,
Johannes explains, since most rely on the ability to look back at what was already said as a sort of agreement or proof of agreement.

Promotion and updates with e-mails is valuable tools to present the business and this is on a relatively small scale to a few customers, so these are heavily personalized. This is the most important aspect of newsletters, promotions and updates, Johannes says; for them to be personalized. This is something that was noticed before the professional aspect existed, as well as in the beginning of the career. Without personalization the e-mails are quickly disregarded, something he noticed himself from both perspectives. Furthermore, the need to keep the customers active and engaged is the lacking part of the newsletters, updates and promotions Johannes receives. Most of the receiving e-mails are from previous partnerships or purchases for his business. These are not irritating as they are sent by friends and colleagues, but neither are they good or interesting to Johannes. Furthermore, many of these e-mails are desperate calls for reviews on different websites, Johannes adds. As these e-mails are literally junk to him, he cannot imagine anyone leaving a review thanks to an e-mail like that.

“E-mails with hyperlinks are as effective as letters with references.” Johannes never uses hyperlinks unless they are to the start page of a website. Both because it is a security risk and has become a principle not to do it but also the sender give a biased view of the assortment of products offered. To be offered same chosen products but with the ability to quickly look up the information within the e-mail without the usage of hyperlinks would be a better solution, even if it still is a biased view. This functionality is interesting and is something Johannes look forward to. Furthermore, the question rises why interaction is such a great part in the WWW but not in e-mails.

“Everything I need is online. It is so time consuming to enter a store, see if they have the specific product, more often than not they do not and so I need to go to the next store.” The need for specific models and products has made Johannes transition over to online shopping. Also the convenience to search, find, buy, and send the product to anyone which could help collect the product has made a big impact in the way he shops. Every purchase is not necessarily spontaneous but not all of them are well thought through, Johannes says. This indicates that the idea of direct interactive e-mail shopping would be difficult due to the amount of information needed for Johannes to decide; even a spontaneous decision needs the right specifications.

4.2.4 Line, age 32

As a manager the need for all day communication is mainly done by e-mail. Keeping updates to employees is convenient by sending same e-mail to many recipients and getting responses the same way in individual conversations has made it easy to manage follow up questions. However, as the manager responsible for corporate purchases as well the e-mail receives many promotional e-mails and offers from both previously known and unknown sales agents. It quickly adds up to many e-mails each day and is an important tool to be able to keep the work flow during the day. They are accessed by the usage of a corporal computer and therefore not much of an alternative but to stay in office when replying to e-mails. It would, however, be beneficial to at least be able to read the e-mails while on the move.

E-mails has become an important tool for the personal aspect. Previously it was mainly to always have a way for contact regardless of device used or where she where located, and whenever during the day. On later days it has become a tool for sending and receiving documents and receiving promotional updates such as new collections from fashion designers
and newsletters from preferred e-commerce websites. These are however read on a smartphone and there is not often a need to reply on these e-mails. Occasionally it is received an update or newsletter from businesses which might not be of interest, these e-mails are often deleted or disregarded but rarely are they unsubscribed from.

Other text-based mediums are more regularly used for communications as individual conversations and for personal businesses, as e-mails are a professional tool according Line. E-mails are easier to keep lengthy conversations and agreements due to people are more conclusive. People tend to be more straight on, not expecting an immediate answer but a well thought through message which either brings new information or opinions; “It feels like people see other text based mediums as digital small talk, and they see e-mail as writing a letter.”

Line enjoys getting promotions and updates by e-mail. She feels it is an effortless way of being kept up to date and see new products which are based on her interest and previously bought products. And e-mails from serious businesses and designers are pure joy to read, thanks to the professionalism they present. Spam is not something that bothers, not non-personalized e-mails as they are often fun to see what one might be missing when only looking at the same old clothes and products as you always have. By the look of an e-mail Line often decides if it is something worth proceeding to look at on the official website or if it is not of interest. The often well guessed suggestions in the e-mails are more than enough to keep her interested, Line adds.

According to the people which are close to Line, it is not common to press hyperlinks within e-mails due to security risk inhabited in spam e-mails. However, Line disagree with the exaggerated risk and if you are even slightly knowledgeable about the WWW you know how a proper hyperlink looks like, and how it should be presented. More often than not the hyperlinks in e-mails are used to get more information or to get a better overview of the presented product/s. Especially on smartphone it is a pleasant experience to follow hyperlinks as the windows are in the background and by a single tap the e-mail shows again. On a computer the experience is still pleasant, Line clarifies, but sometimes it can get too much information at the same time when a full-screen website expands and presents navigation bars, images, logos, menus, contact information etcetera.

“Spontaneously shopped something online? Is there any other way to shop online?” Line admits that the gratification of receiving an online bought product is greater than that of a direct purchase in a store. Online shopping behaviour differ from that behaviour when visiting a physical store. To shop something online is less regretful and the risk of disappointments are overrun by the ease of shipping back the or part of the purchase. If the product is of interest it is ordered as well.

4.2.5 Alexandra, age 34

Alexandra uses e-mail on a regular daily basis, both for professional and private purposes. “During my whole professional career, e-mail has always been the primary communication tool – and still is. To be honest, the transition we are witnessing in terms of marketing and communication in general, nowadays is used in many different channels but most significantly in social media. It is a trend that I found difficult to adapt to.” However, in Alexandra’s profession, e-mail is the primary tool of communicating internally between different departments, but also in terms of external communication towards clients and customer groups. As a part of the internal procedures, Alexandra describes how all communication must be documented for internal purposes. For example, after a meeting
discussions and potential conclusions for campaigns, promotions, etcetera must be followed up in their e-mail system. This in order to provide a text based documentation of what the people involved in the meeting came through with. Alexandra also explains how the e-mail tool is key for the organization in terms of keeping a structured and up-to-date communication, both with colleagues and clients.

In terms of devices, all employees are provided with corporate computer laptops where they use an internal e-mail system. Moreover, Alexandra also describes the convenience of e-mail in terms of use independently of where you are and which device you use. “A day at the office involves a lot of time where I am on-the-go, because of this I also use e-mail through my smartphone. This is mainly for responding to e-mails from colleagues and clients. It is a very convenient as you are always accessible and it also allows you to be involved and updated in a certain loop. However, it is not the ideal device to use when setting up a promotional draft, campaigns etcetera.”

According to Alexandra, she is a high engaged online shopper in several different product segments, although clothes and travels represents a large majority. However, she is a bit critical towards e-mail marketing and how it is used today, about send outs of different promotions about certain products. “Although I am familiar with most of the promotional e-mails about campaigns and offers, there is still a lot of e-mails I receive that I find irrelevant. When working with digital marketing, for example through e-mail, in the end everything comes down to content and whether it is relevant or not.” Alexandra also explains her view on e-mail marketing and how she thinks it is overused in terms of frequency and the actual content. “I subscribe to many different companies and receive newsletters, promotions, etcetera and some of them I receive 4-5 e-mails from every day. E-mail is great in when you want to reach out to a large group of people, but if you don’t control and structure neither the frequency nor the content – it is all in vain.”

About hyperlinks Alexandra believes we are living in a very demanding world when it comes to information, where she describes herself as a living example of a demanding consumer. “For personal use, I would consider myself as very lazy when it comes to pressing hyperlinks. In many cases I feel like it is too much effort to leave what I am actually doing on my personal e-mail.”

When asked about interactive marketing in e-mails and how she perceives interactive features such as pictures, Alexandra think this is crucial for e-mail marketing. “Pictures and illustrations in e-mails are definitely features that catch my interest and more than regular text-based send outs. When I see pictures or videos in for example clothes campaigns or travel promotions, it is much more appealing as you can relate to the content and its message”.

4.2.6 Thord, age 44

E-mail is mainly a tool for contacting as a technical support. These e-mails are about technical difficulties which rarely need to be responded to and those who do are to confirm that the e-mail has been read and a meeting will be arranged or problem fixed. Some communication is between colleagues within the region to share knowledge and to co-operate when the major system goes offline. These occasions are rare, but they do occasionally occur. The e-mail is limited to a desktop computer, which are also the preferred way of both reading and responding to e-mails.
While on the professional side the e-mail are an important part of the everyday work life it does not take part of the ordinary day for Thord. The e-mail has been almost unused for the last couple of years but rarely used for job applications and for account sign ups. E-mail has never played a major part for communication with him, but always been there without any proper usage.

The reason why e-mail is so unused is because it has been outshined both by other text-based alternatives but as well for digital voice calls. It is more pleasant, and much faster, to keep a conversation over other digital means. For example, Thord says when establishing contact with instant messaging one can agree on to keep the conversation on digital voice call to be more time efficient. Both parties win on the sped-up process and anything important agreement could easily and quickly be sent as a message or even summarized and written as an e-mail, if that is for the occasion preferred. The text based perks are the ability to look back on what previously were agreed. However, Thord adds, more often than not if you need to look far back in a conversation the current situation has often changed, making the previous agreement absolute. This is why a mutual verbal agreement is a faster way to get updates and to keep efficiency.

As for promotional e-mails Thord give them little respect. Newsletters are more interesting as they are not a direct push from the company to sell products but more to enlighten its customers about exciting news and updates, more than just promotions and new products. As these types of e-mails are rarely sent to his work e-mail, they are now a fading memory of how companies once tried to gain his interest. It is more noticed about retargeting which shows ads based on his browsing history and cookies. This type of marketing is interesting, both in the way it works but as well of how well it gains interest. Not unusual Thord stops and take a moment to watch an ad or read a banner which is promoting a product previously looked at. As the retargeting is based on generic data, i.e. the specific product tag, and not any other private data, i.e. card number or actual physical address, Thord relies on the businesses to use the data for a better user experience. Sometimes the ads get too personal or not relevant at all, but these occasions are rare and once they occur there are ways to delete that specific promotion.

Hyperlinking within e-mails are not anything worth mentioning to Thord. If something catches his attention he browses to the product himself by the usage of price comparison websites. “Companies are trying to get the most money out of me, so why would I trust their suggestions?”, he resonates. Compared to store shopping where an employee often is affected by emotional aspects Thord feels that by the use of e-mails the management has removed this aspect and thus dares to push bad offers to customers as they personally are hidden behind the company name; anonymous in other words. This makes the offers more generic and not adjusted to the interests of Thord, and thus losing his respect.

Online shopping is a specialty of Thord. “Especially spontaneous shopping of the most unnecessary stuff imaginable”, he adds. To browse the web late evenings and weekends results in unusual buying behaviour and the purchase of both useful but also useless nonsense which are sometimes returned but also saved “just in case I need them later.” The feeling of receiving the most unusual things by mail is somewhat tragic but also quite amusing. The gratification of receiving a purchase by mail is more rewarding and fun than to purchase it in a store.
4.3 Survey results

4.3.1 Are you a Swedish citizen?
In total the sent-out survey received 115 responses. These were however not only answered by Swedish citizens which were targeted by this study, so this would later result in a smaller amount eligible survey responses; 111. After this the total amount answered which were located outside the targeted age range – 18 to 50 – were excluded from the responses resulting in the targeted and needed number of respondents to reach a confidence interval of 10; 105.

4.3.2 What is your gender?
Of these 105 answered, eligible surveys a majority of the respondents were masculine. Based on the three alternatives – male, female and prefer not to say – the male was dominant with 65.71 percent of respondents choosing this alternative. Female represents the remaining 34.29 percent of the respondents as no chose the third alternative.

4.3.3 What is your age?
Age of the respondents is unfortunately skewed and heavily tilted towards the ages between 18 to 30. A whooping 78.10 percent of the respondents claimed they were somewhere in the mentioned age span, while the follow up amounts to 12.38 percent choosing 41 to 50 year and third largest group of respondents were in the ages of 31 to 40; 9.52 percent.

4.3.4 In the last six months, I have spontaneously shopped something online
Excluding the surveys answered by respondents outside the target audience the total number of respondents which knew they had spontaneously purchased something online in the last six months represent a majority, followed those who knew they had not and the third and last answer those who did not know if they did spontaneously shop something online in the past six months: 64.76 percent, 21.90 percent and 13.31 percent respectively. This shows that the clear majority of the respondents has spontaneously shop something online in the past half year.

4.3.5 E-mails are a good way to get in contact with me
To understand the penetration of e-mail usage amongst the target audience the statement needed to be answered. To ask if every respondent perceived e-mail as a good way of contacting them they were a way to also get an overview to if the respondents kept themselves up to date with their e-mail’s inboxes. The optional answers ranged from “Nope, I never check my e-mail” to “Yes, I check my e-mail all the time/upon notification” upon a Likert-scale of one to five.

The result was that a minority of the respondents chose that it was not a good way to contact them, i.e. choosing a one or a two; 18.10 percent. Those who chose it was a good way of contact, four or five, represent the majority of the surveys and resulting in 69.52 percent. Remaining 12.38 percent represent respondents uncertain what to classify e-mail as; if it is a good or bad way to contact them.

4.3.6 I open my e-mails mainly on a smartphone/tablet
Based on the qualitative interviews perceived ease of use and perceived behaviour varied between different devices and in such it could provide insights of how the respondents opens
their e-mails. This could also provide validity to the quantitative survey when compared to external sources.

The survey shows a slight majority opening the e-mails on a mobile device such as smartphone/tablet. Those choosing a 4 or a 5 of the scale between “No, mainly on computer” and “Yes, only on these devices” represent a 58.10 percentage. While respondents still open the e-mails interchangeably choosing a 3 – 17.14 percent – the minority choosing a 1 – 10.48 percent – and a 2 – 14.29 percent – which amount to 24.76 percent in total for those who mainly uses a computer to read their e-mails.

4.3.7 It is too effort-demanding to reply to an e-mail on my smartphone/tablet

On the Likert-scale 1-5 where 1 states “I never respond using a smartphone” and 5 “I respond using a smartphone all the time”, the results show that 27.62 percent grades a 4 and 22.86 percent grade a 5. In other words, people that have responded with a 4 or 5 on the scale represents the majority of all respondents – believing that it is not too effort-demanding to reply to an e-mail on their smartphone or tablet. Worth mentioning here, is that 25.71 percent of the respondents represents the neutral, grade 3, on this part of the questionnaire.

4.3.8 I don’t want to press hyperlinks in e-mails

Regarding hyperlinks the survey shows a quite evenly scattered response in terms of not wanting to press hyperlinks in e-mails. As a matter of fact, 34.29 percent graded 1-2, prefer not to click through any hyperlinks. However, a total of 33.33 percent of the respondents graded from 4-5 on this scale. This shows that there is a quite equal scale in terms of preferences of pressing hyperlinks. A total of 34 respondents, covering 32.38 percent, took a neutral stand in this question.

4.3.9 The need to follow a hyperlink for basic information is annoying

To observe perception of the need to pursue basic information by the usage of hyperlinking could be a potential area of improvements for future interactive e-mails.

Between the absolutes “Oh no, it's nice” as 1 and “Yes, it really is!” as 5, 20.00 percent were not bothered by the concept of following hyperlinks to external websites in the pursue of basic information; i.e. choosing 1-2. While this is a rather low percentage, almost exceeding a fourth of the respondents with 24.76 percent are neutral to hyperlinking for basic information. While not negligible the surveys which chose 1, 2 and 3 are still a minority to the ones which chose a 4 or a 5, 55.24 percent, indicating it is annoying to follow hyperlinks for basic information.

4.3.10 When I get the possibility to write a review of an online bought product, I do

Another area on possible improvements for interactive e-mails which also is suggested illustration by a GIF. According to one of the interviews, Johannes, these types of e-mails, where a company asks a customer by e-mail to leave a review on a website, are useless and ridiculous.

The survey showed somewhat the same as the interview foretold; 13.33 percent of the surveys chose a 4 or a 5 when asked, leaning towards “Always” on the Likert-scale. This mean these respondents do most often and always leave a review of an online purchased product when asked to. Another 12.38 percent answered a 3; being uncertain or sometimes leave a review. The clear majority chose a 1 or a 2; “Never” on the scale, 74.29 percent, indicating the same as Johannes’s opinion; being ineffective.
4.3.11 If I got presented the opportunity to do it directly in the e-mail, as above, I would do it

Here there could be a clear pointer to if an interactive element could change the previous question (4.3.10). Before answering the respondents watched an animated GIF which presented an option of replying directly as a review within the e-mail client’s inbox – posting it directly on the website once sent.

Figure 4.1 The e-mail which presented the option of posting a review directly from the e-mail client’s inbox. (Rebelmail, 2016)

When presented this option the respondents got drastically more interested in the idea of responding to review. From a 74 percent choosing a 1 or a 2 on the previous question (4.3.10) this time the 1 and 2 amounts to 16.19 percent, while 28.57 percent chose a 3 and a whopping 56.19 percent chose a 4 or 5 on the Likert-scale towards “Always”.

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4.3.12 If more information could be presented in an e-mail like above, I would be more interested in the product/s

In the survey it was a need to get a perception of how interactive e-mails could increase interest in products and still add more information, hoping to gain greater initial interest in the presented products.

15.24 percent answered “No, still boring” by choosing a 1 and a 2 while 45.71 percent answered “Yes, I would be interested” by the choice of a 4 or a 5. This shows a perceived value in interactive elements, even if 39.05 percent were neutral.

4.3.13 If I got the opportunity of completing the purchase in the e-mail, I would

To provide an actual impulsive buying tendency perceived by the respondents about the opportunity to get introduced to a product, being able to add the product to a shopping cart, and be able to check-out and pay – all within the e-mail client.
Figure 4.4 The presented an animated GIF illustrates an interactive shopping, one-page store which enables the respondent to add, browse, and complete a purchase directly from the e-mail client. (Bailey, 2016)

The respondents were quite evenly divided. The sum choosing 1 and 2 amounts to 32.38 percent indicating “No I would still prefer the website”; while the ones choosing 4 and 5 result in 45.71 percentage, i.e. “Yes, more convenient and faster”. This leaving 21.90 percent to the neutral zone, 3. The extremes were as lowest value, i.e. one, and as the maximum, i.e. five.
4.3.14 I would prefer interactive e-mails over traditional e-mails with hyperlinks

As ending the survey there was a need to get a straight on answer what the respondent perceived the interactive e-mails which were illustrated by the GIFs in the survey.

67.62 percent of the respondents would prefer interactive e-mails which would provide more information as well as beautify the e-mails over the traditional e-mails containing static images and hyperlinking which one are used to; i.e. choosing a four or higher. This is opposed with 25.71 percent not feeling either positive or negative about interactive e-mails, i.e. choosing a neutral three. Only 6.67 percent choosing a 2 or less; a single 1 were chosen by the respondents, making it less than one percent which would prefer the traditional e-mails over an interactive one.
5. Analysis

5.1 E-mail as a marketing tool

The interview has provided a perspective of how traditional e-mails are viewed upon and from them it can be concluded that they might serve as a brand recognition as well as share of mind enhancing way of marketing. For some of the interviewed individuals the newsletters and updates which are not actively trying to sell products, as in line with previous discussed push-method for marketing and linear communication model, are interesting and well received. For one, Line, the promotional e-mails are still interesting as they are limited to her interests and specific to mainly fashion designers. The aspect of emphasizing the professionalism as these sources provide seems to be the key to their success with Line. Disregarding her, promotional e-mails seems to have little effect on the recipients and are often completely disregarded and deleted in many cases. The interviews show that the idea of pushing information to the customers can be a feasible way of gaining interest if the customer is a loyal and genuinely interested customer. Since the newsletters etcetera are willingly accepted – therefore not spam; they were at some point wanted or needed to get in touch with the online medium. However, on later occasions, it is clear from the interviews that these e-mails are not appreciated or sometimes read at all. As previously stated by Bourne and Sitecore (2016), Magnetic and Retail TouchPoints (2015) and Marketingsherpa (2015) the content is of most essential weight and cannot be look past. This is also emphasized as a great focus area by Spritz. Yet in the interviews several individuals – Billy, Johannes, Line, and Alexandra – claims received e-mails are generic. So even thought that personalization is one of the main focuses for e-mail, it is still perceived generic and non-personalized in today’s high-tech, big data focused society. However, in one of the interviews – Line – a generic e-mail could create a new interest for products as it might provide a new area of interest and something which are not usually looked at. This information is not repeated and not asked anywhere else, but could be a lead to build up a greater relationship with the customer and the business; to provide a product which is not based on interest but something that might create a new demand and therefore add a greater value to the customer.

As the e-mails are for the most part promotional, the attitude to being pushed information is negative. The interviews are clear to point out the newsletters benefits as for being less of a push-method and promotional advertisement, but more to inform about greater interest rather than to sell more products.

As Charlton (2014) and Kivilis (2015) postulate the e-mail is a traditional tool with both internal and external uses. This is clearly stated by the in-depth interviews to be the case. In several interviews the e-mail has greater influence and importance internally within a company than externally. So does the survey results also conclude the e-mail is a tool to communicate with customers as the average score is 3.8 towards “E-mails are a good way to get in contact with me”. This confirms its versatility and a validation for that data in this thesis.

Interesting aspect of this is also an average difference between the genders; exceeding a half point difference between female’s 4.14 average and male’s 3.62 when regarding “E-mails are a good way to get in a contact with me”. This suggests there is a gender difference when regarding e-mails. This pattern continues with a 0.36 higher average for females for question 4.3.6; 0.48 higher average for females for question 4.3.7; 0.39 higher average for females for...
question 4.3.8. These differences evince that it is easier to contact females by e-mail compared to males; they are more mobile with their usage of devices for opening e-mails; having it easier to reply on e-mail using a mobile device as well. In addition, it is demonstrated that males are more restrictive following hyperlinks in e-mails; which is also confirmed by the following question (4.3.9) where males have a 0.24 higher average than females. To conclude the gender biases, the males are more positive in their attitude towards interactive e-mails compared to females, with a 0.53 higher average.

5.2 Interactive content’s effect

When considering interactive elements in marketing one might hope to gain a great interest, engagement, and a better response rate; either in the form of click-through or ROIs. This have been discussed previously in this thesis, how interactive content and elements can gain a greater positive emotional state and how it could gain better responses from customers. Traditional e-mail has played its part and has become a slow medium in a fast environment.

As mentioned by in-depth interviews, interactive elements are a big part of the WWW already today and previous studies (Swayne, 2016; Williams & Page, 2011) emphasis the need for interaction amongst the younger population, i.e. generation Y. In addition, Hartemo (2016), CMO Council (2015) and Obal and Kunz (2013) shows the need and the benefits of having well-developed digital media with intractable elements to both keep the interest as well as gain trust with the newer generation. However, this thesis cannot conclude a difference between age groups as of lacking respondents of age 30 and upwards and thus not enough representatives to accurately evince a dissimilarity.

The survey shows a point of view based on the respondents’ answers compared before an interactive illustration and the traditional alternative; the website review. When asked how often the respondents give a review online for an online bought product the answer was on average 2.00, indicating that hyperlinking and asking for a review rarely happens. This show that the traditional way of presenting the opportunity to go online to the external website to leave a review is ineffective. When presented the illustration of doing the review directly in the inbox as figure 4.1 would display the response were shifted. On average the responses now suggests that the respondents were much more likely to leave a review; increasing from 2.00 average score to 3.50. It could be suggested that the step away from hyperlinking and pulling traffic to one’s website, which is measured as click-through rate, and introducing the possibility of leaving a review directly could give an effective boost to the number of reviews received from customers. This goes in the same direction as Swayne (2016) argued for; interactive elements are more likely to gain better responses from customers. The barrier of extra effort asked from the customer, i.e. pressing the hyperlink to the external website, the browser start-up, screen environmental shift, the loading time etcetera, could be connected to the increase of average value from the respondents. By only asking for that which is the essential – the review – the interactive element provide a possibility to increase number of reviews from both satisfied as well as unsatisfied customers.

The content also increase the interest of the chosen products which are sent out and displayed by the e-mail. In the survey it shows a slight advantage towards illustrated interactive elements. These elements were displayed as ways to give more information in a simpler way, often in the same spirit and conduct of those one might be used to on the WWW; hovering change view or pressing “+” to expand areas. When analyzing the survey the advantage for interactive elements is small yet noticeable. On average the respondents answered a 3.48 on the Likert-scale; showing a greater interest for products presented in an interactive way than a traditional static image which hyperlinks to more information. This indicates an increased in
the e-mail and products by including interactive elements to view and display information, which might otherwise not be included in a traditional e-mail due to lack of space or risk of cluttering. These interactive models are only for displaying more information in ways the customer is commonly used to on the websites, making the interactions natural and understood without explanation. To analyze the results of the survey and interviews together with what Rook (1987) concluded by his data showing the power of otherworldly products; this data was not asked for and thus should not be overlooked. The power that introduced the IBT was a living product, one which moved and lived on its own. If this is applicable on digital products, is also tentative. However, this could be considered with the results of Rook’s study (1987) and the unmotivated mentioning of “product animation” for insentient objects and its effects of impulsive behaviour. Additionally, as the interactive elements increase the sense of telepresence (Steuer, 1992) it could be suggested that with the visual contact combined with a greater telepresence makes it harder to wait or withstand the urge to purchase the item – as in the studies by Mischel and Grusec (1967), Mischel et al. (2010), Hoch and Loewenstein (1991). This could also be suggested by the increased interest in the illustrations in the survey.

The final interpretation of interactive e-mail illustrated by a GIF was the full-fledged website substitute, i.e. where the recipients could view, change, add, and complete a purchase in the e-mail client’s inbox. To finalize the theories on IBT and spontaneous shopping the majority of the respondents of the survey had during the past six months purchased something spontaneously online; so did also several of the in-depth interviews: Linnea, Johannes, Line, Thord. The survey concludes the opportunity of completing a purchase within the e-mail as something the majority of the respondents would do it. On average, however, was it only a slight marginal above the neutral; with a 3.11 on average score it could provide enough to be an opportunity for IBT to make a stand and turn the ROI to the positive

5.3 Impulsive behaviour and spontaneous shopping

In the survey it is more difficult to see if the IBT is a lifestyle trait, as Rook (1987) suggested, but in the interviews it is easier to see a reoccurring event which could imply it is more of a lifestyle trait rather than an isolated event. Spontaneous shopping however stands out on both data sources as the clear majority have shopped spontaneously online in the past six months. The IBT of this study is however not enough to suggest it depends either on age or gender, showing slightly greater percentage females which knew they spontaneously shopped in the past six months; 72 percent compared to 61 for males. The overview of both these data collection points show a greater picture over IBT. Only 21.91 percent of the respondents were certain that they had not spontaneously shopped something online in the past six months; interpreted as these do not have the lifestyle trait Rook (1987) postulate.

Immediate gratification as follows the online purchase which were mentioned in the interviews – Linnea, Line, and Thord – is the fuel which drives the urge of online shopping. As these three as well did rather much spontaneous online shopping – suggestively high IBT as a lifestyle trait – the gratification could be enough to encourage continued behaviour; as the behaviour exists, it is safe to assume the gratification is a vital part of the shopping behaviour, as Hoch and Loewenstein (1991) postulates, and even more vital for the younger generation, as Perine (n.d.) evince.

Another relevant aspect when analyzing the effect on impulsive behaviour and spontaneous shopping is how interactive e-mails can focus on social contexts and include features affecting emotions in the actual e-mail. As stated by Hoch & Loewenstein (199) positivity and immediate gratification are emotions marketers target to create an impulse behaviour.
However, one might say that interactive e-mails may not just have to look at positive-related emotions, but also negatively related content. For example, today we see TV-commercials that strategically aim to affect viewers’ emotions and feelings, e.g. Red Cross, in order to have people spontaneously donating money or become a member, but also allowing customers to feel gratification, approval and positive emotions that they have contributed to a certain cause. This, on the other hand, could be applicable for interactive emotion-focused e-mails.

5.4 The ABC Attitude Model
The ABC attitude model is defined as three separated components: affect, behaviour, and cognition. When analyzing the results from the qualitative and quantitative research, from a ABC model perspective, it is possible to determine which of the interactive elements that had the most effect on the respondents – creating the hierarchy.

5.4.1 Affective Component
The most relevant attitude objects to analyze when looking at affective components would be the respondents’ feelings towards traditional e-mails and interactive e-mails. The quantitative survey shows that the respondents have different feelings towards traditional e-mails with hyperlinks compared to interactive e-mails. A majority feel that they don’t want to open hyperlinks in e-mails. Moreover, a majority of 55.24 percent feel that it is annoying to follow this feature in e-mails. On the other hand, the results show a significant difference of the respondents’ feelings towards interactive e-mails that allows you to write reviews directly in the mail, but also in terms of interest towards products when they are presented in an interactive way embedded in e-mails. As a matter of fact, the interactive content and features also showed that a majority of respondents were more likely to complete a purchase if the e-mails included an embedded purchase feature.

The final question in the survey put the two objects head to head when examining the preferences between interactive e-mails and traditional e-mails with hyperlinks. This is where the affective component clearly indicates that the respondents prefer interactive e-mails in front of e-mails with hyperlinks. A large majority of 67.62 percent answered 4 and 5, showing that there is a bigger demand and wish for interactive e-mails.

5.4.2 Behavioural Component
The analysis of this thesis and its results does not necessarily mean that the respondents will start to e.g. write more reviews or making more online purchases. However, the affective components and the cognitive components are indications that both in some way form the behaviour attitude towards an object; knowledge (cognitive) and feelings (affective) regarding an object will affect the actions (behavioural) behaviour towards this object.

5.4.3 Cognitive Component
The Cognitive Component refers to person’s thoughts and beliefs about an attitude object (Salomon et al., 2014). This component has an interesting correlation with the behavioural component. This we can also see throughout the research survey. On the question about people’s behaviour regarding writing reviews (4.3.10) there was a large majority stating they do not write reviews when they have the opportunity. However, a majority responded to that they would do write reviews after online purchases if they had the opportunity to do it, as an interactive element, in the e-mail. This could hint the actual behaviour as well; just as the IBT hint about the IBB.
Moreover, as also mentioned earlier the respondents’ thoughts and beliefs towards interactive e-mails, as a concept for online purchases, resulted in a positive outcome according to the results that are presented above.

5.4.4 The Hierarchy of Effects

When looking at the results from the collected data, one analysis could say that the most common attitude outcome would be that the respondents shape of attitude is based on cognitive information processing. At first, the respondents were allowed to give their beliefs on interactive e-mails and traditional e-mails, which also were explained how they differ to each other in terms of features and interactive possibilities with the consumer. Moreover, this later on affected a majority in the sense that they were more positive towards interactive content, rather than traditional e-mails where the consumer normally follow a hyperlink to gain further information about a specific object, subject or topic online. However, although a majority preferred interactive e-mails, it is not possible to state that the respondents will form a behaviour, e.g. make more online purchases or providing feedback to the senders. This last step is only a factor that we can speculate within and tell by likelihood of behaviour as we will not be able to measure actual purchases, reviews, etc.

What we can tell, interactive e-mails can affect a future behaviour by visualizing an object for the customer, in order to allow customers to recognize themselves with this certain object. A higher level of recognition might generate a higher involvement or engagement for the customer. As well could interactive elements be beneficial by the aspect of product animation exhibited in Rook (1987), by the creation of visual fun effects to gain a greater positive attitude, eventually affecting the positive emotions and thus affecting IBT which itself affect IBB (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011; Khalifa & Shen, 2012; Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991; Rook, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Thus, the empirical findings from this thesis will have affection as the focus variable to gain a behaviour.

5.5. Communication Process Model

5.5.1 Linear Communication

One might say that historically the linear communication model has been of big use for e-mail communication and when marketing online. However, the concept of linear communication is, when analyzing the results from this research, a concept that would not have as much impact as the interactive communication model, where customers get to directly interact with the coded message in the channel. As presented in the results respondents are more likely to make online purchases if they are able to interact with the content directly in the e-mail.

As interviews with stated hyperlinking is not appreciated nor efficient in all recipients. As these hyperlinks are getting rejected by a substantial amount – onwards from 34 percent – these e-mails as are in capability and intention of being interactive communication becomes linear.

5.5.2 Interactive Communication

Interactive e-mails are the e-mail communication tool that allows the sender and the receiver to interact in an even deeper interactive level than usual text e-mails. An interesting aspect when looking at the communication process model and more specifically in e-mail communication, one might say the receiver is the one who determines whether the communication will be of a linear or interactive characteristic. The results from our research
show that interactive content in e-mails would generate more engagement in all of the related questions. However, if one research question, such as the writing reviews to companies would state that a majority of respondents would not give feedback, then this communication would be characterized as linear. This engagement between the sender and the receiver shows how the receiver could indirectly controls the outcome and character of one communication.

Looking back at the survey results and how the interactive communication elements would generate a more likelihood to write feedback, interest in the actual product and online purchases – it clearly shows that by having interactive content, it is more likely that the sender’s message will create an interactive communication with the receiver.

In relation to the results from the survey, where the final question investigated the preference between interactive e-mails (interactive communication) and traditional e-mails, that can be referred to a linear communication type, an average score of 3.93 prefers interactive e-mails.

### 5.6 The Impact of Mobile Devices and Future Expectations

In compliance with previous study ("E-mail Client Market Share,", 2017) the mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, play a vital role for many of the interviewed individuals and so also for the respondents on the survey. With a 3.48 average score, the respondents were more actively using their mobile devices than computers to open e-mails. However, with a 3.46 average towards “I respond using a smartphone all the time”, the survey suggests it is not a problem responding with the help of a mobile device. This goes against the in-depth interviews where Billy and Johannes does not reply using a mobile device – or does it rarely – but in line with what Linnea perceive it not as a problem responding using an on-screen keyboard. The focus therefore should take notice of the paradigm shift in devices used for different matters; it is hard to control which device an e-mail is opened on but the e-mail could be constructed after the device in mind.

According to Bourne and Sitecore (2016) the respondents of the study expects faster payments, on the move ordering, faster deliveries, and more personalized content – which is also mentioned by Magnetic and Retail TouchPoints (2015). These aspects are applicable to the interactive e-mails where the recipients are able to order directly through the e-mail client; with some aspects not feasible to solve with the help of a digital means of communication.

To concur with Magnetic and Retail TouchPoints (2015) and Marketingsherpa (2015) this thesis’s interviews points out the frustration of generic, mass-targeted e-mails without personalized content. This is both from the survey as well from the interviews clear being a problem which needs to be focused against to gain a greater interest as well as getting better interest, engagement and ROI.
6. Conclusions

With the purpose of this study being to gain a better understanding of how customers behave with e-mail and spontaneous online shopping and in which degree prospects or customer would be affected by the functions in interactive e-mails this thesis has interviewed business, to see an objective with interactive elements; individuals, to see an underlying behaviour as the concept of interactive e-mails are yet to break-through and get a defined, conscious behaviour; and a survey, to see a greater generality of the data. With the previously researched subjects regarding subjects as e-mail’s perception and e-mail itself, online shopping, emotional states affection, and impulsive buying this thesis has brought information together to be built on to further research.

The perception which were received from the respondents show a positive attitude to update an otherwise old but functioning mean of communication. E-mail has the advantage of a great audience which are used to both receiving and sending e-mails. However, as the medium has stagnated in development the interest in e-mails are diminishing in favor of other, text-based means of communication. There are benefits such as the perceived professionalism inhabited in e-mail which are applicable to future development of the interactive e-mails as it still is the dominant marketing channel seen to the ROI.

The in-depth interviews have shown the behaviour both with e-mails as well as their online shopping behaviour. Their views on interactive e-mails were positive but very limited as they had not heard of the concept prior this thesis. Even though promotional e-mails do inhabit a negative attitude inherently from spam and misuse from irresponsible businesses the interactive e-mails were enjoyable as the interviewed individuals could see the benefits of implementing interactive elements in the otherwise dull and annoying promotional e-mails. This is the same result from the sent-out survey, showing a majority of the respondents interested in an interactive e-mail as the continued evolvement for e-mails.

The key to successful interactive e-mails are the same as the traditional ones. It is no secret that the key to success is personalization to get a genuine interest from the recipients but it is heavily fluctuating between e-mails if the underlying business succeeds with the personalization or not. This research show a greater interest in the interactive e-mails as compared to the traditional static counterpart. While the final effects can be of implementing these interactive elements are still to be researched and discussed, it is clear from this study that the tendencies and perception is an improvement compared to the current alternative with images using hyperlinks. Interaction plays a great part in the trust given by the younger generation. The interactivity gives a greater interest and engagement as well from the consumers.

Impulsive buying behaviour is a plausible driving force for interactive e-mails. As more and more online shopping procedures gets shortened and simplified – as the one-click ordering from Amazon – it is in the interest of the industries to simplify online shopping. This is as well backed up by studies evincing the demand and expectation of making these steps easier; showing potential to give a new way of ordering based on the interest and acceptance from the customers themselves. The effect of the expectations for mobile online functionality will boost the impact a convenient payment channel will make on the market.

To gain this effect of impulsive buying behaviour the sender must speak to the impulsive buying tendency with a clear motivation to improve spontaneous shopping. To do this the
sender should create personalized content, suggestively in assistance of a customer relationship management system and based on previously purchased products with a “wild-card”-product to broaden the relationship; create positive attitude, visual fun effects and – in moderation – longer browsing time within the interactive e-mail; enhance the feeling of immediate gratification, enforce fast deliveries, describe the product with attributes upon consumption. These aspects are especially important to the younger generations as they are used to the convenience and the immediate gratification the internet and online shopping provides.

This thesis has researched the interactive elements which already are feasible to introduce to e-mail marketing and enhance the customer's experience when engaging with a company’s external communication. The aging measured metric click-through rate might be overthrown when interactive elements brings enough information for the customer to make a well-grounded decision without a need to visit the website. This has shown the importance towards the younger generation as both previous studies as well as the primary data sources of this thesis show the interest of development of the digital execution. The younger generation – generation Y – has grown up with the technology and its expectations of digital communication will not be reduced but increase with age.

6.1 Further Research

As the technology improves the possible ways of communication will expand. The interactive e-mails show potential both in previous studies as well as in this thesis. What could be further researched is the impulsive buying tendency and see how the interactive elements affect the final IBB. The possibilities with Stern (1962) four definitions of IBB could be applicable to see if one of the classifications, e.g. reminder impulsive buying, is well-matched up with interactive single-page e-mail store to enjoy faster check-outs and enhance the impulsive buying tendency and/or behaviour.

The interactive e-mail is meant to shorten the time the customer need to browse a product, add to cart, and finish the purchase. However, as the interactive e-mail relies on the IBT, IBB and speedier check-outs – as Dholakia (2000) validates as an important aspect – these are heavily relied on a positive attitude, as concluded by Khalifa and Shen (2012) and Verhagen and van Dolen (2011). This is in turn positively affected by browsing time in the study of Verhagen and van Dolen (2011). What could be researched is the combined studies to see how much the IBT and IBB are benefited by the increased browsing time, or if the speedier check-out time is more influential towards the IBB, as it is requested and expected to be a more essential aspect in the future and for younger generations (Bourne & Sitecore, 2016; Hartemo, 2016; Swayne, 2016; Williams & Page, 2011).

In the work of Mishcel et al. (2010) it is clarified that if one were to describe an object with features which were at consumption, e.g. taste or consistency, the immediate temptation was harder to withstand. What could be an aspect to look further upon is if this also could be applicable to inedible objects, e.g. tools or clothes, but described and viewed in social contexts/usage within the promotional e-mail instead of tangible fact about the product.

As this research focuses on Swedish citizens, it might be of further research relevance to investigate how another culture perceive the concept of interactive marketing, and more specifically interactive e-mails. Moreover, the cultural aspect can be one to include for further research; how it may differ between different countries and cultures.
6.2 Limitations

This thesis aimed to view a major part of the Swedish workforce; ranging from age 18 to the age of 50. However, it has failed to do so with its skewed respondents towards the lower ages; 18-30. The in-depth interviews are better dispersed over the age span but cannot guarantee generalizability as the appropriate interviews have not reached data saturation. Same aspect can be argued about gender differences as they were noticed in this thesis’ survey.

The authors of this thesis have conducted several individual interviews each; and with the initial interview with Spritz these interviews were prepared with information from a business within the industry. However, as these authors are inexperienced interviewers it should be considered a limitation; as probably more detailed information could be extracted from the interviews with proper experience.

This thesis has not mentioned technical difficulties which are rather widespread for interactive e-mails. These limitations are probably the main reason why interactive e-mail has yet to been developed properly. However, as it is of great importance to see how the consumer reacts and behave around these subjects it is important to see where to focus technological advancement to keep the development in the best interest of the consumer.

6.3 Usage

This thesis’ argues to focus on the IBT and IBB within digital channels and enforces to keep the established marketing channels alive and evolving. Prior this study there were no scientific thesis about interactive e-mails and its effect on consumers. This could be foundation for further studies according to the interesting and challenging subjects mentioned above.

Most of all this thesis will hopefully introduce interactive e-mails to a broader range of consumers and businesses. It has tangible suggestions what to focus on and to keep in mind when working towards gaining a greater interest, engagement, and attention from the consumers which could be applied by a wide variety of industries. Optimistically, this thesis will give businesses enough reason to transit over to interactive e-mails as it is beneficial to the mobile, fast paced generations.
References


CMO Council. (2015). *Brand Attraction from Enriched Interaction* (pp. 6-9). CMO Council sponsored by IBM.


Appendix

Questions to business

- What is Spritz/company? How do you work with interactive/integrated marketing?
- Why a business model of interactive marketing? (What problem to be solved?)
- What are the objective of interactive elements?
- What type of interactive elements are most useful?
- How much should be interactive?
- What could be useful interactive elements - and not useful?
- Metrics concerning improvements; Click-through rate, Engagement, involvement,
- Done an interactive e-mail marketing campaign? Results; CTR, Open rate, response?
- How would you say the present tool of interactive e-mail look like and also what does the future hold for this channel?

Questions to individual interviews

- Do you use e-mail?
  Example of follow-up questions:
  Which device, phone app-laptop client-desktop client-web based client
  How many, why so many/few
- For what?
  Example of follow-up questions:
  personal matters, professional use, updates (newsletters), marketing/promotions, file transfer, receipts
- How often, frequency of use?
  Example of follow-up questions:
  twice, thrice, upon notification, when someone tell you to, always running
- Benefits of e-mail
  Example of follow-up questions:
  Professional benefits, personal benefits, benefits compared to other mediums (IM, Phone call, Regular Mail, Personal Meeting)
- Cons of e-mail
  Example of follow-up questions:
  Professional cons, Personal cons, Cons compared to other mediums (IM, Phone call, Regular Mail, Personal Meeting)
- E-mail marketing - Good/Bad
  Example of follow-up questions:
  Ever purchased anything from it: Felt the demand for one of the suggested items
  Remarketing, left a shopping cart, experienced it - Liked it/Did not care/Felt intruding
- How do you perceive hyperlinking,
  Example of follow-up questions:
  When guided to a new website, it affects you how
  Constant need to go back and forth
  Does it limit interaction
● Legit e-mail looks like what  
   *Example of follow-up questions:*
● Best part with Website compared to E-mail  
   *Example of follow-up questions:*
● Describe how one open a: Newsletter, Promotion, Personal E-mail, Professional E-mail
● Expectations for promotions/newsletters
● Examples of interactive e-mails: Thoughts, expectations, experience, usability, trustworthiness
● Spontaneous shopping  
   *Example of follow-up questions:*
   *Felt demand for suggested item: Clicked to view more info, purchase-abilities,*
   *Last time you did spontaneous shopping: Why, what, when, what info made you buy*
● Interactive Marketing  
   *Example of follow-up question:*
   *Would you prefer product marketing based on your personal interests?*
Survey questions

Interactive E-mails
This survey aims to get a perspective of how you perceive and feel about interactive e-mails. This concept is relatively new and has yet to be conducted by the broad masses of companies.

What are interactive e-mails? Basically it is an e-mail you can interact with. It could be better described as a single-page website where you can click, hover, expand, or change the content. Sounds like an ordinary website? True, but this time it is in your e-mail inbox. You'll get the idea from examples within the survey, so let's get going!

A three (3) represent "I don't know" / "Do not want to answer"

*Obligatorisk

1. Are you a Swedish citizen? *
   Markerad endast en gång.
   - Yes
   - No

2. What is your gender? *
   Markerad endast en gång.
   - Female
   - Male
   - Prefer not to say

3. What is your age? *
   Markerad endast en gång.
   - Below 18
   - 18-30
   - 31-40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - 61-70
   - 70+

4. In the last 6 months, I have spontaneously shopped something online *
   Markerad endast en gång.
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know
5. E-mails are a good way to get in contact with me *
   Markera endast en oval.

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   No, I never check my e-mail | | | | |
   Yes, I check my e-mail all the time/upon notification | | | | |

6. I open my e-mails mainly on a smartphone/tablet *
  Markera endast en oval.

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   No, mainly on computer | | | | |
   Yes, only on these devices | | | | |

7. It is effort demanding to respond to an e-mail on my smartphone/tablet *
  Markera endast en oval.

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   I never respond using a smartphone | | | | |
   I respond using a smartphone all the time | | | | |

8. I don't want to press hyperlinks in e-mails *
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   No, I do not | | | | |
   Yes, I do | | | | |

9. The need to follow a hyperlink for basic information is annoying *
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   Oh no, it's nice | | | | |
   Yes, it really is! | | | | |

10. When I get the possibility to write a review of an online bought product, I do *
    Markera endast en oval.

    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|
    Never | | | | |
    Always | | | | |

E-mail no. 1

Observe, then see description and question below.
Description

This e-mail is received after an online purchase, a mattress. This e-mail asks about a review of your purchase. Normally, it would include a hyperlink with "Go to the website and write your review". This time, you can answer direct in the inbox and post the review directly, without being transferred to an external website.
11. If I got presented the opportunity to do it directly in the e-mail, as above, I would do it.*

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Never 〇 〇 〇 〇 〇 Always

E-mail no. 2 - 4

Observe, then see description and question below
Description

These three e-mails present more information about each product than a traditional e-mail would. And in a more attractive way. Still, they hyperlink back to an external website for completion of a transaction (Shop/Buy now is the hyperlink).

12. If more information could be presented in an e-mail like above, I would be more interested in the product/s *

Markera endast en oval.

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No, still boring | Yes, I would be more interested

E-mail no. 5

Observe, then see description and question below.
Description

The final e-mail present both more information as well as offer the consumer to complete the purchase and transaction within the e-mail, without leaving the inbox. The consumer could add, change size and color, or remove a selected number of items to/from the shopping cart. And finish by the use of its credit card to place an order directly. For clarification, this would be equally safe as an ordinary online purchase.

13. If I got the opportunity of completing the purchase in the e-mail, I would *
   - Markera endast en oval.

   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
Yes, more convenient and faster |   |   |   |   |   |
No I would still prefer the website |   |   |   |   |   |

14. I would prefer interactive e-mails over traditional e-mails with hyperlinks *
   - Markera endast en oval.

   |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
---|---|---|---|---|---|
I strongly disagree |   |   |   |   |   |
I strongly agree |   |   |   |   |   |
Theodor Öberg

Marcus Oldby