The state of QR codes

Filipe Miguel Álvaro de Lima

A qualitative research on Swedish premium fashion brands
Title: The state of QR codes: a qualitative research on Swedish premium fashion brands

Publication year: 2012

Author: Filipe Miguel Álvaro de Lima

Supervisor: Anita Radón

Abstract

Brands are now more aware of the importance of implementing a mobile marketing strategy by employing a QR code campaign with the intent of enhancing brand awareness and strength the relationship with customers. Thus, an extensive research has been conducted on this subject with focus on the Swedish premium fashion market.

Research purpose: The purpose of this research study is to analyze a new mobile marketing tool called Quick-response (QR) codes, and understand this phenomenon on the premium fashion segment in Sweden, while relating at the same time with concepts such as customer relationship management and brand awareness.

Research method: In this study a qualitative research method was chosen, by applying qualitative semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis.

Conclusions: The research shows that there is a problem with customers’ awareness regarding QR codes and its usage. Companies should also be educated for the importance of integrating a mobile marketing program within their marketing and communication strategy. Nonetheless, the study has shown that brands may increase brand awareness and drive CRM if all the requirements above stated are fulfilled, since all of the participants in this research acknowledge the relationship between a brand and its customers extremely important.

Key words: QR codes, CRM, brand awareness, mobile marketing.
Acknowledgments
I would like to thank everyone who helped me throughout this study and thereby enabled this research, especially to all the respondents who kindly took time from their busy schedules and answered my questions: Marie Sjöberg (Panos Emporio), Sebastian Westin (Sandqvist), Oliver Saunders (Our Legacy), Zeynep Ahmet and Henriette Cramer (Mobile Life Centre), and Nicky L. (Ralph Lauren). Finally, I would like to thank my supervisor Anita Radón for her guidance, and my family for the moral support.

Borås, May 21st 2012
Filipe Lima
# Table of Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 7  
1.1. Background ......................................................................................................... 7  
1.2. Problem discussion ............................................................................................ 8  
1.3. Purpose ................................................................................................................ 10  
1.4. Research questions ............................................................................................ 11  
1.5. Delimitations ....................................................................................................... 11  
1.6. Contribution ......................................................................................................... 11  

2. Theoretical framework ............................................................................................. 12  
2.1. Mobile Marketing and Communications ............................................................ 12  
2.2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) ....................................................... 15  
2.3. Mobile Customer Relationship Management (mCRM) ......................................... 19  
2.4. Brand awareness ................................................................................................ 20  

3. Methodology ........................................................................................................... 23  
3.1. Scientific approach ............................................................................................. 23  
3.2. Research methodology ....................................................................................... 23  
3.3. Data collection .................................................................................................... 24  
3.3.1. Researched cases ............................................................................................ 26  
3.3.2. Interviews ...................................................................................................... 28  
3.3.3. Selection of respondents ................................................................................ 28  
3.4. Content analysis .................................................................................................. 29  
3.5. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability ............................... 30  

4. Empirical data .......................................................................................................... 31  
4.1. Social CRM ........................................................................................................ 31  
4.2. Customer Awareness .......................................................................................... 33  
4.3. New Trend or New Fad ....................................................................................... 36  

5. Analysis .................................................................................................................... 39  
5.1. Social CRM ........................................................................................................ 39  
5.2. Customer Awareness .......................................................................................... 41  
5.3. New Trend or New Fad ....................................................................................... 43  

6. Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 46  
6.1. Limitations of the study ...................................................................................... 48  
6.2. Suggestions for further research ......................................................................... 48  

7. Reference list and bibliography ............................................................................... 49  
7.1. Books .................................................................................................................. 49
7.2. Interviews .......................................................................................................................... 49
7.3. Electronic Sources ............................................................................................................. 49
  7.3.1. E-books and pdfs .......................................................................................................... 49
  7.3.2. Blogs ............................................................................................................................ 52
  7.3.3. Web pages ................................................................................................................... 52
7.4. Figures ............................................................................................................................... 55
8. Attachments ......................................................................................................................... 58
  8.1. Attachment 1: Swedish brands price comparison table .................................................. 58
  8.2. Attachment 2: Interview with Henriette Cramer – Mobile Life Centre ....................... 59
  8.3. Attachment 3: Interview with Zeynep Ahmet – Mobile Life Centre .......................... 60
  8.4. Attachment 4: Interview with Oliver Saunders – Our Legacy ..................................... 61
  8.5. Attachment 5: Interview with Marie Sjöberg – Panos Emporio .................................. 62
  8.6. Attachment 6: Interview with Sebastian Westin - Sandqvist ..................................... 63
  8.7. Attachment 7: Interview with Nicky L. – Ralph Lauren Corp. .................................... 64
Table of Figures

Figure 1 – QR code .............................................................................................................. 7
Figure 2 – Victoria’s Secret ”Sexier than skin” campaign ................................................... 9
Figure 3 – A framework of marketing communications ......................................................... 12
Figure 4 – CRM: a strategic approach .................................................................................. 16
Figure 5 – Theoretical framework of initiation of mCRM ..................................................... 20
Figure 6 – Theoretical framework summary ......................................................................... 22
Figure 7 – Demographic profile of QR code user by age, gender, and household income ...... 32
Figure 8 - QR awareness: East Asia and North America ....................................................... 34
Figure 9 - QR code scanning reasons ................................................................................... 35
Figure 10 - Polo Ralph Lauren US Open campaign ................................................................. 35
Figure 11 - Percentage of smartphones by operative system ............................................... 36
Figure 12 - QR code hype cycle .......................................................................................... 38
Figure 13 - Ralph Lauren Rugby QR and SVT1 Melodifestivalen campaigns ....................... 42
Figure 14 - Original and innovative QR codes .................................................................... 47
1. Introduction

In this introductory chapter it is fundamental to discuss the background of the chosen topic and the inherent problems when doing research about it – the use of Quick-Response (QR) codes and its relation with customer relationship management (CRM) and brand awareness within Swedish premium fashion brands. Thereafter, a presentation of the main research question will be stated and explained in order to guide this research in a more proficient way, and then, delimitations and contributions of this research for Swedish premium fashion brands and future scientific papers regarding this matter.

1.1. Background

Quick-response code or QR code is a two-dimensional symbol invented in 1994 by Denson, a major Toyota group company. Originally this two-dimensional symbol was intended for use in production control of automotive parts. However, it has become widespread in other fields, such as in the fashion industry, and more specifically, as a marketing tool for premium brands. One of the reasons that made QR codes so popular is the fact that Denso released the patent for public domain, meaning that everybody can use QR codes free of charge. Moreover, this code supports a much higher data density, which enables the access to the Internet simply by reading an URL (Uniform Resource Locator) encoded in the QR code (Soon, 2008).

The process itself is very intuitive. Consumers can use their smartphones to scan/take a picture of the barcode placed in various materials, for instance, promotional posters, or advertisements, and through a downloadable application for the phone, consumers are able to explore the content.

Besides its various characteristics that will be further explored later on in this research paper, what it is interesting to point out is that major luxury and premium brands are nowadays using this type of mobile bar code to complement a 360-degree mobile strategy. Thus, alongside with the use of QR codes, luxury marketers are looking to other opportunities to stay ahead in the market, developing location-based marketing and commerce options (Mobile Marketer, 2012 pp. 18). The aim of these companies is naturally to gain consumer recognition and develop a long-lasting relationship with consumers. Nevertheless, location is everything. Luxury brands and discount brands have realized that a mobile-optimized Web site is extremely important, and that mobile applications can increase consumer attention and traffic in-store. Overall, a marketing strategy based on QR codes is obviously not enough. Several marketers point out that “[marketers] should take advantage of integrating mobile with other channels” (Mobile Marketer, 2012 pp. 19), plus “mobile is a game-changer as it can be leveraged across all channels” (Lowden, n.d., cited in Mobile Marketer, 2012 pp. 19). Hence, it is clear that despite of the great functionalities that so far have been mentioned, the world of QR codes is a vast and complex world that is important to unveil.

Companies are always keen on finding new ways to express themselves and leverage their values in creative and powerful ways. Thus, fashion brands have comprehended that QR codes could be an interesting tool to use within their marketing strategy. Although there is no information regarding the first fashion brand to use QR codes, there are several
companies that were in the foray, for instance, Uniqlo, Topshop and H&M, “whose target audience is young and active online” so they constitute the best initial target (Kansara, 2009). Nevertheless, luxury and premium brands have also recognized the importance of this fairly new tool within their mobile strategy. In recent years, brands like Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, or Selfridges quickly adapted QR codes in their strategy. Ralph Lauren, for instance, took advantage of customized 2-dimensional codes to communicate their stores in the United States (US), although it was not their first attempt as in 2008 the brand printed codes on their tags, billboards and catalogs. Thus, Ralph Lauren took a wise step by trying to allure (well-off) men into visiting stores “and allow them to engage with the brand through a chance to win tickets to the US Open tennis tournament” (Lamb, 2011). In reality, other premium brands have been using this type of codes with the same purpose. Bang & Olufsen is now using QR codes in several communication instruments, such as in its prints, with the aim to deeper the consumers’ brand experience therefore engaging them with the brand. However, and being a company that is in the forefront of high-tech gadgets and electronics, according to McKenna cited in K. Hutzler a “[about Bang & Olufsen] mobile-optimized site could have better reflected the brand’s style” (Luxury Daily, 2011). Hence, QR codes are often misused and companies are trying to make an effort in developing new ways to further their brand awareness or in-store experience, as mentioned before.

As presented in the examples above, there are several concepts that serve as a background in this topic. Customer relationship management (CRM) is one of them. Customized codes, for instance, can help increase brand awareness and consumer engagement with a certain brand. These consumers that are most active are usually “technically savvy” (Lamb, 2011), and are willing to take part of an exclusive experience that ultimately can benefit both, the brand and consumer. Thus, mobile marketing is now extremely important to many brands. Bloomingdale’s, for example, created a mobile program that includes QR codes, mobile site offering and MMS (Lamb, 2011) as a way to drive CRM, or mobile CRM. Moreover, this can be seen as an intelligent move since mobile phones are a person’s most personal device and companies are able to reach out consumers with unique and tailored one-to-one messages that ultimately will lead to brand awareness (Luxury Daily, 2012).

1.2. Problem discussion
A study developed by the Swedish Institute of Computer Science (SICS), in Stockholm, reported some results regarding the awareness of QR codes of the general public in the same city (SICS, 2011). The sample was constituted by 108 passersby (67 male and 41 female) with age ranges between 16 and 64, including students (47), professionals of various areas, such as customer care experts (9), journalists (3), researchers (2) and hairdressers (5), and other occupations (SICS, 2011). The awareness of the total sample concerning QR codes and how to use them ended up being rather low. According to the survey, twenty-two percent of the total 67 male participants are fully aware of how to use QR codes against only two percent of the female participants.
The study was an informal survey, whereas the code was presented without a context, it can give us a hint regarding the perception or awareness of the Swedish (or better said, the Stockholm) population concerning QR codes. The research has revealed that still some current smartphones do not come with a QR code scanner application pre-installed, adding extra hurdles for users (SICS, 2011). However, there are several limitations with this study, such as the fact that it does not conclude if the users that are aware of QR codes do know how to “follow instructions to download a scanner app onto a phone, start the application, scan the code, and then get to the actual content” possibly indicating that perhaps the final result could even be lower (SICS, 2011).

Nonetheless QR codes are still a growing trend (Rachid, 2012). In theory, these codes are a great and innovative idea that aims to bring companies and consumers together, enhancing their experience with the brand. In fact, it is undeniable that some brands were very successful when using 2-dimensional codes in their marketing strategy. It is possible to point out the case of Victoria’s Secret “Sexier than skin” campaign, for instance, that plays with the old adage “sex sells” showing a model apparently nude, with the intent to intrigue and entice consumers to scan the code and reveal what is behind it. Nevertheless, and albeit the success of this campaign (Edwards, 2011 and Eaton, 2011), this topic is now broadly discussed among marketers and on different Web sites, such as on Luxurydaily.com and Businessoffashion.com, regarding whether QR codes are a fad or here to stay (Lamb, 2012).

Although this study can give a powerful insight on the topic, there are several concepts that are intrinsically related with this phenomenon. Overall, QR codes are connected with the mobile marketing program of a company that, on the other hand, is included within a marketing and communication strategy. Furthermore, technology allied with a proficient online marketing program can “change the way consumers process communications, and even whether they choose to process them at all”. The fact that the study aforementioned concluded that consumers, despite of having a smartphone do not scan barcodes, may prove this theory. The problem in fact lies on the challenges that some marketers encounter especially related with “commercial clutter”, and the invasive feeling that consumers may feel when being bombarded with different types of marketing communication campaigns (Kotler and Keller, 2012, pp. 499). Therefore, companies are still questioning themselves whether they should, or should not, incorporate a mobile marketing program due to the hurdles that this might present nowadays to their customers.

Another topic that needs to be discussed is the importance of brand awareness since brands when developing a mobile marketing strategy by implementing QR codes in various platforms, expect consumers to engage with this technology. However, if the campaign is not successful, or if consumers are not aware of these codes and their potential, it is unlikely that
brand awareness will increase. Kotler and Keller (2012, pp. 504) suggest that “recognition is easier to achieve than recall” and combined they form brand awareness that “provides a foundation for brand equity”. Thereby, it is fundamental to question the connection between the implementation of QR codes, in order to enhance brand awareness. Accordingly, companies acknowledge the fact that when incorporating a mobile marketing program, they aim to increase brand awareness and reinforce brand equity, but whether these codes help to improve both it is still questionable, especially within certain market segments.

Knowing your customers is also extremely important for the success of a marketing communication program. Customer relationship management (CRM) enables a company to manage “detailed information about individual customers and all customer ‘touch points’ to maximize loyalty” (Kotler and Keller, 2012, pp. 157). The widespread of the Internet allowed marketers to approach new marketing practices and personalize marketing by “making the brand as relevant as possible to as many customers as possible”. QR codes are therefore inherently connected with CRM (in this case, e-CRM) due to the fact that many companies realized “once customers make actual contact with the company”, they can form strong bonds with customers by “individualizing and personalizing relationships”. Hence, and in virtue of this research study, it is essential to retain the idea that CRM and e-CRM (when linked to an online marketing communication program) requires “building a customer database (…), segments, and individual needs” (Smutkupt, Krairit, Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133:135). Nonetheless, e-CRM is one of the topics that require attention when doing research about the present topic due to its uniqueness. Fashion brands, as mentioned before, are nowadays incorporating these codes with the objective of “creating brand recognition and inspiring user engagement” (Lamb, 2011), however, there are still some doubts regarding how these black and white codes can drive e-CRM if most of the users cannot identify clearly the brand’s name.

Previous research on this area is scarce, although several authors already approach the potential of mobile marketing and other types of marketing and communication programs, although without discussing any particular market nor segment (Shankar and Balasubramanian, 2008; Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010; Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). Kotler and Keller (2012, pp. 565) provide some statistics that sustain the importance of this subject in our time. Worldwide, in 2009, there were “4.1 billion mobile subscribers”, and mobile phones represent the main opportunity for marketers to reach out consumers. The new generation of smartphones although being faster and presenting better software capabilities, still can show some deficiencies (e.g. download problems, small screen sizes, etc.). Hence, despite of a “growing population segment using mobile phones for everything, different people have different attitudes and experiences with mobile technology”, therefore in this study the focus lies on understanding if QR codes are the next big thing when it comes to mobile marketing, based on what was mentioned throughout this section which aimed to pinpoint the main ideas when discussing this subject.

1.3. Purpose
The purpose of this research project is to analyze a new mobile marketing tool: QR Codes. Thus, the intention lies on understanding this phenomenon on Swedish premium fashion
brands, and more specifically, if those can use QR Codes in their marketing strategy in order to drive an efficient customer relationship management, enhancing their brand awareness.

1.4. Research questions
Despite being an interesting and relevant topic in today’s marketing agenda, it is important to narrow down the research in order to eliminate unnecessary data. Furthermore, and based on the information presented above, the research question has to be clearly stated in order to guide this research project. For the effect, the statement includes two perspectives within the main issue that it is in discussion:

- **How can Swedish premium fashion brands use QR Codes in the overall marketing strategy, in order to drive customer relationship management and enhance brand awareness?**

1.5. Delimitations
In this project it was necessary to delimit the research to Swedish premium fashion brands, consequently excluding discount brands (e.g. Lindex and Kappahl), and mid-price brands (e.g. Velour and Cos), due to time constraints and validity factors that have a huge influence in the results. Moreover, the reason why it was decided to delimit this project to the Swedish market has to do with logistic reasons and differences between this market and other markets, in Scandinavia or overseas. Finally, albeit being interesting to understand the consumers’ perspective, this project is limited to organizations therefore it does not consider the Swedish consumer point of view regarding QR Codes and the segments aforementioned.

1.6. Contribution
The subject discussed in this research paper concerning QR codes as a marketing tool used by Swedish premium fashion brands is possibly the first study about this matter. Consequently, relating this topic with other concepts, such as customer relationship management (CRM) and brand awareness, makes this research extremely relevant when looking at today’s marketing agenda. Furthermore, the intention is to correlate this type of barcode within the Swedish premium fashion market, and to understand if there is a connection between QR codes as a tool to build brand awareness and manage CRM.

Nowadays, as seen in the background chapter, brands are increasingly using QR codes as a way to reach out to their consumers. For instance, a study developed by Insight Express at “Mobile Marketer’s Mobile First Look Strategy 2012 Conference”, published by Luxurydaily.com (2012, pp. 13) states that “[QR codes] will become increasingly necessary to beating out competitors”, therefore it is important to apply and analyze all the data surrounding this topic in order to understand if these codes could also be used in the Swedish market, and if yes, in which way could brands benefit from their use. In addition, it is pertinent to mention that some of the brands mentioned in this research already use or used in the past QR codes within their mobile marketing strategy. Hence, the contribution of this study lies on understanding if the chosen companies could possibly engage consumers with the brand by empowering them to explore and understand the former.
2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter different concepts are approached that are closely related to the main topic. The aim is to connect them to each other, in order to construct a solid foundation that serves as a guide for this research. The subjects have been organized in a coherent way for the purpose, starting off with an explanation of mobile marketing, presenting its implications, strategies and implementation process, followed by an elucidation on customer relationship management, and finally an overview on the concept of brand awareness.

2.1. Mobile Marketing and Communications

As pointed on the introduction above, the introductory topic is mobile marketing and communications. This subject is extremely relevant and fairly new among authors, especially when it comes to the effectiveness of mobile marketing despite of the effort and money spent on this kind of activities (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto 2008, pp. 50). One-to-one marketing communication is nowadays very important for companies that want to successfully target consumers, and one of the reasons is that mass communication has become fragmented and less effective (Webster, 1992; Peppers, Rogers and Dorf, 1999; Shawn, Subramaniam, Tan and Welge, 2011 cited in Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). The authors Leppäniemi et al. (2006) cited in Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008, pp. 51) have provide us with a review on mobile marketing research, conceptualizing in four different subjects: “(1) mobile marketing, (2) mobile advertising, (3) wireless marketing, and (4) wireless advertising”.

Nevertheless, before taking a closer look to some of the literature regarding mobile marketing, it is essential to mention that according to Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008, pp. 52) a “marketing strategy drives integrated marketing communications (IMC) planning process and ultimately leads to a plan that outlines decisions about marketing communication activities and resource allocation”, therefore, it is relevant to present a conceptual framework (fig. 3) by the same authors, in order to get an overview of the topic.

As presented in Figure 3, the objectives of marketing communications are intrinsically connected to the objectives of a certain company. It is relevant to argue that all those objectives and strategies that companies want to implement should be “integrated, and contribute to the achievement of the total marketing communication objectives for individual brands” (Bickton and Broderick, 2005 cited in Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008, pp. 52), and generally are related to “awareness, information and attitude generation and/or affecting behavior”
As for now, the focus is on the mobile marketing phenomenon that it is inherently present in the marketing communication program that will be discussed both in a strategic as well as in an operative level.

There is a growing consensus regarding a definition of mobile marketing that needs to be approached. Therefore, the Mobile Marketing Association (2006, pp. 22) cited in Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008, pp. 51) defines mobile marketing and “the use of wireless media as an integrated content delivery and direct-response vehicle within a cross-media marketing communications program”. Plus, the same Association states that this specific type of marketing is “a set of practices that enables organizations to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network” (MMA, 2008 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 127).

It is appropriate to understand the basic features of the several devices that drive mobile marketing and an insight over those features applied to the context of mobile strategy. This will provide significant understanding that later on will be essential to the analysis on the topic of QR codes.

First of all, and according to the authors Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul (2010, pp. 128), ubiquity constitutes the main advantage of the mobile as a medium, due to its potential to enable individuals to receive and conduct transactions regardless their location. Moreover, Lauterborn (1990) cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul (2010, pp. 129) presented a redefined marketing mix model that is correlated with the four Ps (i.e. price, product, promotion, and place), that the author called four Cs, which comprise customers’ “needs and wants, cost to customer, convenience, and communication”, as a way to respond to some criticism regarding the former mix model that it is much more product-oriented. Therefore, and in line with the ubiquity inherent to a mobile marketing strategy, a company is able to offer a product or service that aims to “meet customer needs and wants” (Bovee, Houston and Thill, 1995; Kotler and Armstrong, 2006 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 132). Through mobile marketing there is an intrinsic interactive potential for marketers to build a solid customer network by inciting and inviting customers to participate actively in a campaign, such as when scanning a QR code. Ralph Lauren, for instance, was pioneer when successfully used customized 2-dimensional codes “to lure consumers into its stores locations” (Lamb, 2011). Consequently, customization has led to a positive response towards something that it is being advertised, producing high response rates, and ultimately building stronger and closer relationships between brands and their customers (Xu, 2007; Barutcu, 2007; Vesanen, 2007 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133).

Here, it is possible to introduce another two unique characteristics of mobile marketing adding to the already mentioned ubiquity. Personalization and two-way communication are two fundamental features of mobile marketing, and are closely related to customization. First of all, mobile phones are very personal and seldom shared by more than one person. Individuals can personalize their phone with different applications and store multiple data in the SIM card (Subscriber Identification Module). Thus, this device enables individuals to engage in a two-way communication (and sometimes even more, such as conference calls),
making possible for an individual to stay connected 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Nevertheless, and returning to the four Cs, this characteristics presented above allow companies to track customers’ online orders, respond to queries, and provide an efficient post-purchase service, suggesting a proficient “way to satisfy customer needs by enhancing the convenience of shopping” (Shankar et al., 2010 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133). In addition, mobile devices are now on the radar of several authors that suggest that this type of devices play a huge influence on the customers, and they “could be related to CRM” (Kannan et al., 2001 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133). This subject of Customer Relationship Management, or CRM, will be discussed later on in this chapter, due to its relevance to the research.

As mentioned before, the marketing mix model of the four Ps is no longer the main concern of marketers, especially the cost and convenience inherent to a marketing campaign. Thus, customers when purchasing a product or service are also concerned with “the total costs of acquiring, using, and disposing” an item (Kotler and Armostrong, 2006 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133), and these costs are evidently related to many important factors, such as time and energy spent on purchase, and activities allied with the purchase decision-making process. Therefore, and linked to the customer four Cs, convenience is vital for the modern consumer, plus it constitutes a key advantage when using their mobile device to perform a broad range of activities in a more opportune way, thus reducing costs as mentioned before. As pointed in the introductory chapter, QR codes are used in several ways and with different objectives, but ultimately aim to provide “a better purchasing decision” by giving extra information about products and services no matter the location of the customer (Mort and Drennan, 2002 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 133).

Within the customer marketing mix model purposed by Lauterborn (1990), communication is the last but nonetheless important characteristic of a mobile marketing campaign. The mobile phone is undoubtedly an effective tool when companies want to target consumers anytime and anywhere. Thus, these conditions are very important for companies, “particularly when there is time or location-sensitive information to be delivered”. (Clarke, 2011; Anckar and D’Incau, 2002 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 134) Therefore, localization is an essential feature of mobile marketing, since it refers to the possibility to identify a certain geographical position (Clarke, 2001 cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 134), and enable companies to track and map the location of mobile phones when wireless networks are activated (Hu and Evans, 2004).

According to Barnes (2002, cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 134), there are two ways when considering mobile marketing communication strategies: push and pull. In the first one, for instance SMS advertising, consumers get information via SMS from companies without prior request. Barwise and Strong (2002) and Rettie, Grandcolas and Deakins (2005) cited in the authors above, empirically found that this type of advertising “is highly effective for generating brand awareness and consumer response”. On the other hand, in a pull strategy campaign, consumers request information by scanning a QR code or an image recognition-based code in order to get more data from the company.
Nevertheless, no matter the strategy in use by a company, mobile devices are a great way to stay connected with the world, since companies have realized that there is a huge potential in using mobile marketing to facilitate a meaningful communication with their customers, and that can be achieved “by providing customized, timely and location-specific information without restriction of time and place” (Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 134).

2.2. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

One of the elements that it is pertinent when discussing the topic of marketing communications, and more specifically the phenomenon of QR codes, is the area of Customer Relationship Management, or CRM, that was also identified by the authors Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008, pp. 54) as extremely relevant in this context. Therefore, this study will follow a framework (fig. 3) that was presented before and approach the subject of CRM from two sides: CRM history and characteristics, and e-CRM or mobile CRM establishing a connection to the aforementioned topic.

Before carrying out a discussion regarding mobile CRM that ultimately is more relevant to this research study due to the subject of QR codes, it is important to understand the origins of CRM and the literature over the years concerning this topic. CRM is a management tool especially “targeted to increase corporate profit” and the main goal of companies when using this tool is to get a better understanding of their customers in order to offer customized services so organizations can “increase both customer satisfaction and client loyalty in the long run” (Gebert et al., 2003; Kalakota and Robinson, 2001; Shani and Chalasani, 1992 cited in Valsecchi, Renga and Ragone, 2007, pp. 755). However, in this theoretical approach the definition of CRM according to Gartner (2004 cited in Tamošiūnienė and Jasilionienė, 2006, pp. 72) is the one to be used, he states that “[CRM] is a business strategy designed to optimize profitability, revenue and consumer satisfaction by organizing the enterprise around customer segments, fostering customer-centric behaviors and implementing customer-centric processes”, plus the author “emphasizes, that CRM is not a category of applications or technologies, although technologies are critical to enable CRM strategies”.

After the definition aforementioned, it is fundamental to take a closer look to CRM in a historical approach. Back in the 1980s, many companies started to reduce costs and restructured their operations to attain their financial goals. Consequently they decided to investigate in which way the companies could satisfy their shareholders by adopting a series of strategies that aimed to cut those costs. However, this inward way of thinking “resulted in a loss of focus on the most important reason why enterprises are in business: to satisfy customers’ profitability” (Gartner, 2004 cited in Tamošiūnienė and Jasilionienė, 2006, pp. 70).

Later on in the 1990s, relationship marketing emerged as a new strategic approach due to the value of establishing long-term relationships with customers from an organization point of view. Moreover, the concept of customer relationship management was developed in order to highlight the relevance of “profit-enhancing” interactions with customers. Thus, CRM is ultimately based on the idea that a company-customer relationship is a valuable investment, and this approach is conducted so organizations can achieve an optimal “customer value at the end of the life cycle”. Furthermore companies started to improve their customer service by giving incentives instead of merely gather data about them, with the goal of enhancing

After this conceptual and historical context of CRM as a management tool, the vision of customer relationship management will be explained, as well as its goals and implementation process, before connecting this subject to e-CRM and other important matters. For this effect, a theoretical framework (fig. 4) developed by Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 78) is presented in order to illustrate the strategic approach that will be discussed in this section.

First of all, a CRM program begins with a vision. In terms of CRM, Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 67) suggest that this vision aims “to ensure that a competitive position can be created in the marketplace”. Likewise a business plan, a CRM vision should be incorporated before starting a project, and in this matter, according to Mark et al. (2005) cited in Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 67), a vision must be integrated with the overall program strategy and the business strategy, as well as other CRM guidelines, valuations and customer segmentation that are fundamental. Moreover, after implementing the CRM, the vision should be modified and updated throughout the program, especially due to the need of developing new customer bonding capabilities, a stronger relationship and a competitive advantage (Gordon, 2002 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 67).

As mentioned before, companies in the 1980s were willing to reduce costs and employ less time in managing their relationships with customers, however, nowadays it is clear that organizations understand the importance of communicating with consumers, respond proactively to their requirements and sell appropriate products or services attending to a two-way relationship, no longer based on, for instance, a push strategy, where companies entice consumers to purchase products by only creating needs. Thus, the objective is to enable professionals to understand the market (e.g. by segmenting consumers), and enable proficient interactions by offering multiple online and offline channels. In addition, in order to understand the performance of a CRM project, a metric system to analyze the success of a program constitutes a fundamental tool that companies should take in consideration (Botwinik, 2001; Rogers, 2003 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 68).

In a CRM program, the company needs to focus on its customers. As Burnett (2001 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 68) suggests, the key customers are “those whose needs can be fulfilled by the competencies possessed by the firm”. Plus, in the existing market place where companies fight to distinguish themselves from their competitors, this goal of attending people’s
needs has now a totally new meaning, since companies can operate in multiple segments depending on their strategy. Hence, the main issue is ultimately to work with consumers and stakeholders so the companies can fit their specific needs, emphasizing the power of a two-way relationship in a company’s success (Knudsen, 2006).

Following the framework presented before (fig. 4), the CRM goals are divided into three different areas: customer profitability, behavior prediction/segmentation, and personalization.

The customers can be segmented in several ways, for instance, based on “characteristics, behaviors, needs or wants that affect their demand for, or usage of, the product being marketed”, hence demographic (e.g. gender) and psychographic (e.g. lifestyle) characteristics (Wood, 2007, p. 7). Nonetheless, it is essential to highlight that, as mentioned by Helgesen (2006 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 69) and Brondmo (2000, pp. 103), companies have to understand that a positive relationship “between satisfaction and profitability cannot be taken for granted”. For this reason, some of the most common strategies to guaranty successful customer profitability are personalization, customer loyalty, and cross- and up-selling.

One other relevant area is behavior prediction and segmentation. New technologies, for instance, are now a proficient platform for companies to interact with consumers because they have realized that it is fundamental to get in-depth customer knowledge in order to attain a more collaborative relationship, as well as to recognize profitable customers. Thus, some researchers have pointed out that it is important to leverage customers’ purchase behavior in a certain category so companies can make assumptions regarding their potential acquisitions in other categories. Consequently, after the analysis of customers’ purchases is made, it is possible to create customer segments according to a determined purchase behavior (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2011; Newell, 2000; Iyengar et al., 2003 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 69:70)

Finally, personalization constitutes the last area within the CRM goals. As seen on the last section, companies aim to create different strategic customer segments that enable them to, within a segment, personalize products and/ or services to suit the different requirements of consumers. Nevertheless, companies need a large amount of information to build an efficient connection with customers, for that effect, organizations that already operate online are able to personalize the customer service (such as Asos.com), enabling a convenient platform and, therefore, access to them (Culnan and Armstrong, 1999; Awad and Krishnan, 2006 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 70).

The next step on the CRM program according to the framework in use (fig. 4) is the CRM implementation that includes: orientation, technology selection, and deployment and fulfillment of the CRM objectives.

First of all, when considering a CRM program, companies need to develop a specific orientation in order to facilitate its implementation. It is important to integrate unbiased strategies, processes and technology. As suggested by Anton and Petouhoff (2002 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 71) “CRM technologies are enablers of the people and
processes needed to effectively and efficiently manage customers”. Therefore, and as mentioned before, new forms of technology have facilitated companies to use Information Technology (IT) to sustain the CRM program. The use of technology, such as social media, has enabled companies to support a profitable customer rapport by assisting data integration and sharing information in a more efficient way. Moreover, the selection of a specific technology cannot be taken lightly by the company, instead, should be a careful and comprehensive process that, according to Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 73), “should be undertaken by a committee comprising representatives from all departments that are stakeholders for the CRM implementation”. Thus, if customization and personalization are the goals of the CRM program that a company wants to achieve, the choice of technology must be performed to allow “the fulfillment of these objectives”.

Finally, the deployment of the CRM program needs to be examined and it is important that professionals take a close look at specific topics that were considered by Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 74). Overall, those issues aim to fulfill the CRM objectives, and the study published by the same authors in *The Icfalan Journal of Management Research* (2009) divides them in four different sections: focus on key customers, use of multi-channels, sales force, and cross-selling.

Firstly, companies must focus on gaining deeper knowledge on their clients by sharing and receiving information, then, it is fundamental to manage relationships, no matter the geographical boundaries and disciplines. Employees must work in team in order to spot, coordinate, and create new opportunities to the company’s customers, by having a proactive and well-informed approach (Ghazaros, 2009). Secondly, the use of multi-channels is essential to create a coherent platform, plus it is important to deliver a consistent value to customers. However, by combining multiple channels, companies must have in mind that they must regard a constant amount of time to each channel, otherwise customers may be negatively affected and perceive the companies’ efforts as confusing and insufficient, due to a divergence of messages throughout the different communication channels. Thirdly, as mentioned before, the use of technology is extremely relevant to ensure personalization for customers, as well as to provide access to vital information regardless time and space constraints. Finally, if all of the above sections are satisfied (especially after gathering customers’ information and preferences), companies can consolidate the CRM program by adding cross-selling to trade products and/ or services to existing customers after having a deep knowledge about each segment. Hence, and in order to implement a successful cross-selling activity, companies should address four fundamental factors: compensation, competence, control, and communication (Hasset, 2007; Stone et al., 2002; Akcura and Srinivasan, 2005 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 75:76).

As a final note, according to the framework in consideration (fig. 4), performance is the final step in the CRM and it should be measured against the metrics established in the beginning (i.e. vision and objectives). Regardless of the success, there are several mistakes that put the whole program in risk, they are clarified by the author Kale (2004 cited in Mukerjee and Singh, 2009, pp. 77): “viewing CRM as a technology initiative; lack of customer-centric vision; insufficient appreciation of customer lifetime value; inadequate support from top management, underestimating the importance of change management; failing to re-engineer
business processes; and underestimating the difficulties involved in data mining and data integration”.

2.3. Mobile Customer Relationship Management (mCRM)

In the line with what was mentioned regarding CRM, our research study is focused on QR codes. Therefore, it is important to specify a relatively new concept that better suits this marketing tool, albeit the relevance of having a theoretical approach on CRM as the genesis of Mobile Customer Relationship Management (mCRM). For this effect, the focus will be on conceptualizing CRM once again but, instead, take a closer look to the unique characteristics of mCRM.

According to the authors Duncan and Moriarty (1998 cited in Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 773), when researchers purpose a definition for mCRM, often use the concept of technology to conceptualize it. This is inadequate for two reasons: “firstly, it does not emphasize sufficiently the critical role of communication in establishing and maintaining profitable customer relationships. (…) Second, there is confusion around the terms mobile and wireless”. Despite of being problematic to attribute a single definition of mCRM, the authors Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 774) suggest that mCRM is “communication, either one-way or interactive, which is related to sales, marketing, and customer service activities conducted through the mobile medium for the purpose of building and maintain customer relationships between company and its customers”. Moreover, it possesses some of the characteristics of CRM mentioned above, especially the importance given to building a proficient relationship between customers and companies. Therefore it only diverges from the aforementioned definition of CRM due to the use of the mobile as a medium.

Nonetheless, there are three unique characteristics of mCRM pointed out by the authors Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 774) that are due to the specific characteristics of the mobile, they are: personalization, interactivity, and flexibility.

Personalization is the first unique characteristic of mCRM, especially due to the fact that a mobile phone generally only belongs to one person, and a message can be sent or received directly to the target without many problems. Moreover, advanced personalization, as in CRM, is extremely vital when communicating through a mobile. In mCRM there is once again the issue regarding a company understanding the customers’ needs, preferences and wants, and without this understanding, customers become invisible and unmanageable (Park and Kim, 2003 cited in Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 775). Secondly, a mobile device enables the interactivity between entities. In this point, it is especially interesting the relevance of mediated interactivity, where two individuals (or a company and customer) interact with each other through a device. Thus, various studies (Barwise and Strong, 2002; Barnes and Scornavacca, 2004; Bauer et al., 2005 cited in Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 775) have proven that the mobile medium is exceptionally unique due to its interactive feature. Finally, the third characteristic pointed by the authors above is the flexibility in communication. Through a mobile phone there are no physical and time barriers between two or more elements, thus companies can reach or be reached by customers beyond the possibilities of many other devices.
As in the CRM program, there are several challenges that should be considered when developing and promoting mCRM. Few of the most common limitations are closely related with the mobile medium, such as the small screen size, lack of mobile optimized Web sites, limited bandwidth, or audio and visual deficiencies, among other restraints (Jelassi and Enders cited in Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 775). Moreover, a mobile marketing strategy must be combined with other traditional channels in order to attain the goals set by a company when, for instance, wants to enhance brand awareness by using QR codes. Hence, the authors Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 776) purpose a series of three different issues that should be taken in consideration, they are: endogenous, exogenous, and mCRM-specific issues. In figure 5, a “theoretical framework of initiation of mCRM” (2007, pp. 776) developed by the authors is presented.

According to the authors of this theoretical framework, endogenous issues begin from inside the company. The mCRM should be integrated into the overall CRM system of a company, as an additional channel. Consequently, the former has to support the mobile program so this one can function appropriately. Thus, it is fundamental that the technology is carefully chosen despite of nowadays being easy to incorporate a mCRM system in the existing CRM. The prerequisite is a customer database usually profiled using demographics or psychographics, albeit the increasing uses of social behavior data in a way to categorize customers.

In the exogenous side, mobile marketing has to follow regulatory restrictions concerning the utilization of customers’ data and others restraints due to, for example, laws in the European Union (EU) area involving “protection from unwanted communications” and the “misuse of mobile marketing techniques and violation of core privacy rights” (Thomas and Rohlmeier, 2008). Secondly, the mobile infrastructure is fundamental to sustain and contribute the technology associated with the mobile medium. There are several changes in this area in the recent years that enable the development of activities associated with wireless networks, which are extremely important as a foundation of mCRM, such as the introduction of 3G and 4G technologies. Finally, and concerning mCRM-related issues, it is relevant to emphasize the importance of stimulating customers “to opt in for the mCRM program and subsequently provide the information required to initiate communication with them”. Thus, it is essential that companies find the ways to entice customers’ attention and convince them to interact through a mobile medium (Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 777:778).

2.4. Brand awareness
Rossiter and Percy (1987 cited in Macdonald and Sharp, 2003, p. 1) describe brand awareness as fundamental for the communication process to be successful, and without it consumers...
cannot recognize the brand in the first place. In addition, Farquhar (1989 cited in Moisescu, n.d.) considers that in order to build a strong brand, it is essential to create a positive “brand evaluation, an accessible brand attitude, and a consistent brand image”, and the term “brand attitude actually refers to what the others term as awareness”. Consequently, brand awareness is vital for consumers to include a brand “in the consideration set”, whereas also it influences perceptions that consumers have over a brand, and “a driver for brand loyalty” (Aaker, 1991 cited in Moisescu, n.d.).

In line with the main topic of this research, it is important to mention the role of the consideration set that it is related with brand awareness, since when discussing companies’ interest in a mobile marketing program, this concept reveals its significance for the current study. Consequently, Woodside and Wilson (1985 cited in Macdonald and Sharp, 2003, p. 2) and Keller (1998 cited in Moisescu, n.d.) suggest that a high level of brand awareness results in a higher purchase intention, but also it is essential in the buying decision-making process since it is connected with the aforementioned consideration set. Finally, no matter the type of marketing and communication strategy used by a company, brand awareness is considered by Macdonald and Sharp (2003, p. 3:4) as being a fundamental goal. The authors refer that “without brand awareness occurring, brand attitude and brand image cannot be formed”, plus Aaker (1991) mentioned by the same authors, argues that brand awareness is “one of the four major assets which add value to the product or service and/or its customers”. Overall, and as a summary, it is possible to add four essential points to mention when considering brand awareness: (1) it places the brand in the consumer’s mindset; (2) it acts as a barrier when compared to unestablished brands; (3) supporting consumer’s commitment to a brand and; (4) grants leverage in the distribution channels (Stokes, 1985; Aaker, 1992 cited in Macdonald and Sharp, p. 3).
There were several key concepts that have been discussed throughout this chapter that need to be summarized in a model (fig. 6), since it is clear that these concepts are all connected with each other. As Samuelson and Nordhaus (1998) cited in Kaewsuwan (2002, p. 2) defined, a model is a formal framework that aims to represent “the basic features of a complex system by a few central relationships”. In addition, Begg, Fischer and Dornbusch (2000) cited by the same authors add that “[a model] is a deliberate simplification of reality”. Due to the complexity of the concepts that have been mentioned in this chapter, it is pertinent to combine all the key points that make the theoretical framework of this research about QR Codes and Swedish premium fashion brands. Overall, it is possible to comprehend that within a marketing communication program, a CRM plan can be incorporated. Thus, in a mobile marketing plan, also an online CRM program can be established by, at the same time, recurring to a customer database. Ultimately, a company by integrating one of the aforementioned programs has as an objective to increase the brand awareness through different possible options presented above in the model.
3. Methodology

In order to understand the relationship between QR codes with CRM and brand awareness, and this 2-dimensional tool within the Swedish premium fashion market, it is fundamental to examine several components in this research study. Due to time constraints this essay cannot touch upon all the factors that may be related with QR codes and the use of this tool in the segment of discussion. Therefore it was decided to present only the ones that in the literature emerge as most prominent and relevant. Whereas there is a lack of research regarding this matter in the Swedish fashion reality, the study has been limited considerably per se. Therefore, it was only possible to find one study regarding the perception of QR codes and its use among Swedish consumers although with no relation with any particular industry or market segment. Hence, this subject has required an extensive amount of empirical research combined with a choice of different kind of methodological approaches that will be now described.

3.1. Scientific approach

There are three possible ways to approach a research question, the deductive, inductive, and abductive method. In the first one, the researcher uses “the literature to help identify theories and ideas” that will further on be tested using data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, pp. 61). Plus, in this approach the researcher starts “with an abstract” (Neuman, 1997 cited in Ali and Birley, 1998, p. 3), whereas there is a “well-established role for existing theory since it informs the development of hypothesis, the choice of variables, and the resultant measures which researchers intend to use”, moreover the researcher formulates a particular theoretical framework and tests it, in order to validate the hypothesis that were previously stated (Ali and Birley, 1998, p. 3). On the other hand, the inductive approach starts by “exploring data and to develop theories” that consequently will be related to the literature. Moreover, the study does not commence with any “predetermined theories and conceptual frameworks” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, pp. 61). Finally, the abductive method refers to a conclusion by “inferring a case from a rule and a result”, and “like induction, this inference is more or less probable” (Svennevig, n.d., p. 2).

After considering the three possible approaches it was clear that the deductive approach was the most suitable method for this study. The reason lies on the fact that data was collected through relevant and appropriate literature according to the topic that was initially purposed for investigation. Thus, the research was not intended to be open-ended and exploratory, based on observations to end up in a broader generalization, nor was the intention to choose a specific case and formulate a hypothesis that would sustain a specific rule.

3.2. Research methodology

In the methodology chapter it is relevant to differentiate two types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Despite of several authors pointing out that the frontiers between these two are no longer useful, it is important to make a clear distinction. In its essence, a quantitative research “emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 11). In addition, according to Valero (1997, pp. 10, 11), “quantitative analysis concentrates on the facts, data, or quantitative aspects associated with problems”, plus it helps to “enhance the decision-making process”. This method is extremely interesting when “an exploratory study with open interviews precedes the collection of data with questionnaires, but the first step and its results are only seen as preliminary” (Flick,
For this study, and due to the research question that was initially stated, it would have been, for instance, extremely difficult to identify and access a reasonable number of Swedish premium brand consumers.

On the other hand, the qualitative method usually uses words in the process of gathering and analyzing data, stressing an inductive approach (Bryman and Bell 2011, pp. 26). This type of research strategy is especially interesting in the present study. Thus, it is fundamental to present some of the characteristics that validate the use of the qualitative research strategy in this case.

Despite several differences regarding theoretical positions about this method, it is far more interesting to rather focus on the common points that most of the experts in this field identify, such as the Verstehen as an epistemological principle which highlights the quality of the qualitative research in terms of “understanding the phenomenon or event under study from the interior”, thus it is the view of one subject, social situations (for instance, processes of work), or cultural and social rules that the researcher aims to understand (Flick, 2009, pp. 65). This research strategy implies the “construction of reality as basis”, with this Flick (2009, pp. 66) means that the result of this method “is not a given reality” but instead it is produced by several actors. Hence, it is clear that after reviewing the literature regarding both quantitative and qualitative research strategies, the former seems to suit our purpose better.

Nonetheless, in terms of research design, and attending to the research question, a cross-sectional study seemed more appropriate due to the reason that it “entails the collection of data on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables” (Bryman and Bell 2011, pp. 53). For the purpose, this type of research design is extremely helpful due to its distinctiveness. A cross-sectional design is suitable when the researcher is interested in variation, and in the present case, this is particularly relevant, since the research aims to draw the distinctions between companies regarding the topic of investigation.

Furthermore, this type of study is specifically conceived to collect data more or less simultaneously using the same standardize methods for determine variation, therefore this enables the researcher to benchmark different cases not manipulating any of the variables in question. In addition, the researcher is able to replicate the technique to other cases since he or she defines various procedures that wants to adopt throughout the research. However, there are also some risks that it is important to have in consideration when using a cross-sectional design, for instance the potential causal inferences that can occur from the findings and the consequences of the disruption of ecological validity, which may invalidate the conclusions (Bryman and Bell 2011, pp. 54).

### 3.3. Data collection

This research study makes use of secondary data. This includes raw data that was initially collected when doing research on QR codes and other matters stated on the purpose section. Thus, it was extremely important to gather information from online computer databases, such as at Stockholm University, University of Borås, and University of Gothenburg. As

---

1 "Ecological validity often refers to the relation between real-world phenomena and the investigation of these phenomena in experimental contexts” (Schmuckler, 2011 pp. 420).
Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, pp. 258) suggest “[secondary data] will probably provide the main source to answer the research question and to address objectives”, although in this study primary data was also relevant since it is important to gather valid and reliable information specifically collected to answer the research question and address the objectives. This last type of data requires a more comprehensive explanation, since it was the main source to respond to the question initially acknowledged in this paper.

Therefore, for the current investigation a qualitative research method was applied, more specifically, qualified interviews. It is fundamental to have a guideline, or template, containing several questions and rather specific topics to be covered during the interviews (Bryman and Bell 2011, pp. 467). According to Flick (2009, pp. 156) the contents of the overall knowledge possessed by the interviewee, also called “subjective theory”\(^2\), are reconstructed, in other words, the interview is conducted based on series of topical areas “introduced by an open question and ended by a confrontational question” (Flick, pp. 156). Consequently, it was clear that semi-structured interviews were the most suitable option for this research, since this method allows the interviewee to express an opinion more freely and enables him or her to state views and understandings regarding the topics in discussion. Thus this method “allows a more goal free evaluation” and it is possible that “the study may benefit from not being constrained by a narrow focus in its stated goals” (Flick 2009, pp. 160; Roos 1998, pp.12).

In this study the online interviewing method was also applied. The reason for choosing this method was primarily due to availability and time constraints of four interviewees: Sebastian Westin (Sandqvist), Henriette Cramer and Zeynep Ahmet (Mobile Life Centre and Swedish Institute of Computer Science), and Nicky L. (Ralph Lauren). Thus, and since this method still fits the criteria of the qualitative approach, it is important to refer some of the aspects of this method.

Online interviewing can be organized in two ways: in a synchronous or in an asynchronous form. The first one is very similar to a face-to-face interview since both participants (researcher and interviewee) are online at the same time exchanging questions and answers. The second form means that participants swap questions back and forth but they are not necessarily online simultaneously, this one, is mostly performed by e-mail. The latest form was the one performed in this research. Authors, as mentioned by Flick (2009, pp. 267), suggest that the researcher should “design the collection of data more interactively by sending one or two questions” that are meant to be answered by the respondent. On the other hand, if the researcher wants to carry out semi-structured interviews this constitutes the best option to get more accurate and developed answers, and therefore, information. Mann and Stewart (2000, pp. 129) cited in Flick (2009, pp. 268) developed a series of five factors that researchers should consider on Internet-mediated interaction during interviews: the purpose, the temporal structure, possibilities and limitations of the software, characteristics of participants, and the external context (i.e. inter/ national culture).

As in any other method, this type of methodology has its cons and pros. The main problem when conducting online interviews is related to anonymity of the participant, which may

\(^2\) “Subjective theory refers to the fact that the interviewees have a complex stock of knowledge about the topic under study” (Flick, 2009 pp. 156).
create barriers for the researcher to infer any kind of “real-life contextualization of the statements” (Flick, 2009, pp. 268). Plus, and very relevant for this study, is the impossibility of analyzing all “non-verbal and paralinguistic elements of communication” which are extremely difficult to convey and incorporate in the final results (Flick, 2009 pp. 269 and Burke, 2010). Nevertheless, this method is purposive to this research since it is easy to code and categorize the answers given by the respondent, if the interview template is adapted and applied to Internet research (Flick, 2009 pp. 269).

Finally, it is important to mention that a qualitative content analysis was also implemented. This method reveals its importance for this study due to its approach to the analysis of documents and texts, enabling the researcher to quantify the different contents encountered in terms of categories and themes (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 289). These categories are brought afterwards to the empirical material, and are often “assessed against it and modified if necessary”, thus and opposing to other forms of analysis, the goal of qualitative content analysis is, in the end, “to reduce the material encountered throughout the research” (Flick, 2009 pp. 323). Furthermore, it is important to state that the content analysis was guided by having in mind a model by Mayring (2000, 2004) cited in Flick (2009, pp. 323-325), starting from defining appropriate material for a consistent analysis, select the interviewees and research question that was already mentioned in the previous chapter. Hence, through different flexible steps that Mayring has defined in a model (1983, adapted in Flick, 2009, pp. 324), the qualitative content analysis aims to interpret the results based upon the research question, and later on validated with questions and answers.

3.3.1. Researched cases

Semi-structured interviews were implemented to get a deeper knowledge on this subject and to answer the research question. Firstly, and since the focus lies on studying Swedish premium fashion brands, it is essential to understand this concept and the methodology used for the research. Therefore, when doing a research on premium brands, it is common and inevitable to find some discussions around mid-price and luxury, more specifically, about their definitions, differences and similarities. Since the study was limited to the Swedish fashion market, the range of potential brands suitable for this study decreased significantly. However, there is no clear distinction whether Swedish consumers would consider one brand as belonging to the luxury or premium segment, making it harder to define the segment in question.

Nevertheless, and despite the inherent subjectivity of this topic, sixteen (16) brands were chosen as a sample and then analyzed according to the average price of three categories: men’s shirts and shoes, dresses, and leather goods (Attachment 1). The brands selected were chosen amongst a wide range based on top-of-mind mid- and high-price Swedish brands, on several Web sites such as Kläder.nu (2012), Moderådet.se (2012) and Bloggmode.se (2012), main high-end streets of Stockholm (e.g. Biblioteksgatan), and department stores (e.g. Nordiska Kompaniet and Åhléns). Therefore, the prices of the following Swedish brands were compared: Our Legacy, Filippa K., Acne, J. Lindeberg, Ann-Sofie Back, Carin Wester, Sandqvist, Tiger of Sweden, Minimarket, Rodebjer, Velour, Cos, Whyred, Brothers & Sisters, and Panos Emporio.
This step was fundamental to decide which brands could be part of this research, as well as to define what it can be considered a rough definition of Swedish premium brands according to their price points. As stated in a market research study by Mark Whiting (2011), premium brands are usually perceived by seven different assets: “less ostentation, more accessible, more modern, rational, best in class, sleeker in design, and precision in fabrication”, plus, these brands cannot be seen as inferior when compared with luxury brands, mainly because we are looking at premium brands from a Western point of view. In his research, Whiting (2011) also reports that this classification of segments “is above all a personal assessment”, therefore, it is only possible to advocate the idea that this classification of the aforementioned Swedish premium brands is, at a certain point, a result of my personal relationship with premium and experience with these brands.

Nevertheless, after every Web site was analyzed and correspondent e-shops, it was possible to conclude that twelve (12) brands have similar price points for the aforementioned items (Attachment 1), and, overall, only Velour, Cos, and Brothers & Sisters have considerably lower prices for the products that were selected for analysis, and present more discrepancies in that level when compared with Our Legacy, Filippa K., Acne, J. Lindeberg, Ann-Sofie Back, Carin Wester, Sandqvist, Tiger of Sweden, Minimarket, Rodebjer, Whyred, and Panos Emporio.

Thereafter several employees were contacted and some more willing to participate than others. One of the delimitations encountered is related with logistic and temporal issues, especially from companies that often do not find the time to meet the researcher and respond to questions. Accordingly it was decided to segregate semi-structured interviews in two: personal (or face-to-face) and e-mail interviews. The intention lied on gathering a reasonable number of companies to interview, and for the reasons that were mentioned in the previous section. Hence, in the end three (3) interviews were conducted to Swedish premium brands: Our Legacy, Sandqvist, and Panos Emporio.

It was also important to interview two experts in this field with a broad experience on QR codes and the Swedish market. Henriette Cramer and Zeynep Ahmet from the Swedish Institute of Computer Science were obvious options, since both researchers conducted a study concerning the awareness of QR codes in Stockholm (Chapter 1). Hence, interviews were conducted to Cramer and Ahmet via e-mail (Attachment 2 and 3), both adapted from the original interview template previously constructed for the companies aforementioned.

Finally, one online interview via e-mail was performed to Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren Corporation. The reason for approaching this expert lies on the importance of having a contrasting company that serves as a reference point in another market that, despite being overseas, it is very similar to the one in analysis in this research. Ralph Lauren Corp. is considered to have in its portfolio several premium brands (e.g. Polo Ralph Lauren or Rugby) due to its strategy to attract a mass market (Roumeliotis, 2011; Barker, 2000), and its mobile marketing actions have been considered very successful by professionals in this area (Johnson, 2012; Lamb, 2011; Tsirulnik, 2010; Zmuda, 2009). In addition, and since this study aims to provide first indications about this topic, it was important to get information from a well-established brand like Ralph Lauren, despite of the company being more active on this level in the US.
3.3.2. Interviews
As mentioned before, a qualitative method was chosen, and semi-structured interviews applied to respondents were an essential part of this study. Moreover, face-to-face interviews were performed to Oliver Saunders (Our Legacy) and to Marie Sjöberg (Panos Emporio), and four interviews via e-mail to Sebastian Westin (Sandqvist), Henriette Cramer (Mobile Life Centre), Zeynep Ahmet (Mobile Life Centre), and Nicky L. (Ralph Lauren). It is extremely important to mention as well that the interviews performed via e-mail include one first interview and another follow-up contact which was helpful to clarify some concepts that were not explained clearly on the first approach.

3.3.3. Selection of respondents
Oliver Saunders works as head of retail at Our Legacy, in Stockholm. Our Legacy was founded by Jockum Hallin and Christopher Nying together with Richardos Klarén in 2005. The brand focuses on fabrics and cuts, through an unconventional approach and using premium fabrics in all the garments. The three designers and the art director Tony Cederteg point out that the inspiration comes from the “1980’s vintage Armani, Helmut Land threads from the 1990’s, Wu-Tang Clan, hardcore punk, photography books and art installations” (Très Bien Shop, 2012). The assortment of Our Legacy includes accessories, footwear, shirts, knitwear, outerwear, shorts and trousers, and tailoring (Our Legacy, 2012). During the interview several relevant topics were discussed, such as some questions regarding the marketing and communication plan of Our Legacy, customer relationship management strategies, new forms of technology, but also a personal opinion concerning the future of QR codes and Swedish premium fashion brands.

Sebastian Westin works as head of marketing and public relations, and he is the Sales Representative in Scandinavia of Sandqvist, in Stockholm. The brand was founded by Anton Sandqvist and soon his brother and Sebastian, a friend, joined the team. The three founders all grew up in the Swedish countryside and that had a great influence on the aesthetic of Sandqvist’s design. The inspiration comes from “the Nordic landscapes with its vast unpopulated areas, soaring mountains and remote cabins”, but also from the “urban city lifestyle” (Sandqvist, 2012). The assortment of Sandqvist includes the mythic leather and cordura bags and high quality accessories, as well as knitted apparel (e.g.: gloves, hats and scarves). During the interview with Sebastian Westin some topics were approached. For instance, his knowledge regarding QR codes, Sandqvist’s marketing and communication program, technology, and other relevant topics surrounding customer relationship management and Swedish premium brands.

Marie Sjöberg works as head of sales at Panos Emporio, in Gothenburg. The brand was founded in 1986 and is Scandinavia’s leading fashion house specialized in beachwear and accessories. Panos Emporio “combines simplicity and sophisticated clean lines with outstanding quality and fit” as Mr. Panos Papadopoulos (CEO) mentions on the company’s website (Panos Emporio, 2012). The assortment of Panos Emporio focuses mainly on beachwear and, more recently, the company has expanded its assortment to men’s and women’s wear and accessories. During the interview with Maria Sjöberg different topics were discussed as planned in the interview template and follow up questions were important to get relevant data on the present topic.
Henriette Cramer works as a senior researcher and project leader at the Mobile Life Centre in Stockholm. Her research revolves around “mobile location-based services and people’s perceptions of ‘place’”, but also “people’s interaction with applications” (Cramer, 2012). In 2011, Cramer and two other fellow researchers published a study entitled “Awareness of QR codes in Stockholm”. The results of this project were discussed on the interview, but also other topics related with marketing and CRM.

Zeynep Ahmet works as a junior researcher at Mobile Life Centre in Stockholm, and as a consultant at TeliaSonera SWE. She describes herself as someone “intrigued by tech and future society visions” in her official Twitter page (Ahmet, 2012). Ahmet graduated from Blekinge Tekniska Högskola and Linköping University. In the short interview that was possible with this participant, it was possible to ask some questions regarding the implementation of QR codes in Sweden and the results of the project developed by her and fellow colleagues about awareness of QR codes in Stockholm.

Nicky L. works as customer service coordinator at Ralph Lauren Corporation, in New York City (NY). When responding to the questions she preferred to not publicly disclose details about herself and job responsibilities. However, some questions were asked, especially concerning the implementation of QR codes in the company’s marketing and communication program, and the relationship between the company and its customers in the US.

### 3.4. Content analysis

As mentioned above, the use of qualitative content analysis as a research method is relevant for this study. This process enables the data collection toward sources that are valuable for addressing the research question that is stated in the purpose section. Thus, this method reveals its extreme importance in this research project due to its capacity to support reliable and valid inferences, connecting a range of methodical and transparent procedures for processing data (Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Zhang, Y. and Wildemuth, B., n.d.).

Likewise the research methodology, the content analysis can be divided into qualitative and quantitative approach. The first begins during the genesis of data collection, which enables the researcher to go back and forth “between concept development and data collection”, and may help the “subsequent data collection towards sources that are more useful for addressing the research questions”. However, some steps are very similar to the traditional quantitative content analysis, and it only depends on the objectives of a research study, whereas the analysis can assume a more or less flexible and standard approach (Tesch, 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994 cited in Zhang and Wildemuth, n.d.). Hence, whenever the focus of this kind of analysis is qualitative “the emphasis remains on the meaning of text” (Tewksbury, 2009, pp. 46).

After this theoretical review, it is important to mention that content analysis was used as a method for answering the purposed research question. A comprehensive study of all the Web sites of the chosen Swedish premium fashion brands (and mid-price brands) was essential to gather information about them, and to understand the key concepts that guide these brands throughout their business plan (i.e. vision, goals, range of activities performed, etc.). Finally, it was relevant to do an analysis of the different marketing and communication
campaigns that Swedish brands use in order to create a positive relationship with their customers, as well as other Web sites that discuss and analyze this topic comprehensively.

3.5. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

In order to verify the influence of biases and values in a study, the researcher can seek to replicate the investigation to reproduce findings (Bryman, 2004 cited in Lise, 2007, p. 8). Thus, when conducting a research project, it is necessary to make decisions based on personal judgments since there are no standards like in quantitative researches making it more difficult to replicate (Lise, 2007, p. 8). Therefore, Lincoln (1994) cited in Bogdanova, Enfors, and Naumavoska (2008, pp. 20) stresses the relevance of developing criteria pertinent for this kind of research method, suggesting the term of trustworthiness that lies on “credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, pp. 411).

Credibility lies on developing adequate representations of the reality study. It is important to consider what it was done during data collection, and how the researcher forms an interpretation and presents it to his or her readers. Moreover, there are several techniques that should be used for enhancing this, such as “prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation across sources and methods” (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Therefore, it is possible to state that throughout this study, the use of references and rich descriptions were used in order to allow the reader to make decisions concerning this matter.

Transferability concerns to the level to which extend this research study can be employed in other contexts. It is fundamental to have a “diverse array of data collection and sampling approaches” in order to attempt to build a theory, robust in its transferability (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). Despite of choosing a qualitative method which normally only refers to a small sample, it is possible to assert that this study provides first indications on this subject, which is imperative to sustain. However, and due to changes in the social, economical, and cultural system, it is impossible to predict if the current situation will change or mature in a few years, which does not invalidate this study.

Dependability is intrinsically related to the issue of reliability. It concerns “to time and to change processes” that a researcher should take in consideration (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 cited in Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). It refers “to the degree to which a study can be replicated”, thus the importance of keeping full information on how the study was conducted throughout all phases (Lise, 2007, p. 9; Bogdanova, Enfors, and Naumavoska, 2008, pp. 21). Therefore it is important to mention that the subject investigated is in its infancy level, being very difficult to predict, as mentioned above, if the interviewees would have the same opinion regarding the questions that were asked during the semi-structured interviews, when replicating this investigation.

Finally, confirmability refers to “how can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 cited in Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). In this research all interviews and discussions were taken in an objective approach, and during the analysis of the data, personal opinions and preconceived thoughts were avoided in order to develop unbiased conclusions.
4. Empirical data

This chapter gathers the empirical findings of this research paper, consisting of all the relevant information collected on the six interviews with Sebastian Westin (Sandqvist), Oliver Saunders (Our Legacy), Marie Sjöberg (Panos Emporio), the experts Henriette Cramer and Zeynep Ahmet (Mobile Life Centre), and Nicky L. (Ralph Lauren Corp.), but also data from journal articles, books, and various electronic sources. Finally, it is relevant to mention that after the interviews and a comprehensive content analysis, some topics seemed to be brought up when discussing QR codes, they are: social CRM, customer awareness, and whether QR codes are a new trend and here to stay, or just a fad that have its days counted.

4.1. Social CRM

During the interviews, series of questions were asked concerning the marketing and communication program of the companies. It was important to understand the target group of Our Legacy, Sandqvist, and Panos Emporio, the marketing strategy of these companies (e.g. use of an integrated mobile program, advertising, out-of-home campaigns, etc.), the awareness and relationship of the three interviewees with QR codes, and finally, their opinion regarding the integration of these barcodes within the marketing and communication strategy of each company. Moreover, the same questions were raised to the expert Henriette Cramer and Zeynep Ahmet, and the professional Nicky L., especially in relation to the employment and benefits of integrating QR codes in a company’s marketing program.

All companies described their target group as 35+ years old consumer (male and/or female), well-educated, upper-middle class, and living in a big city (Saunders, Sjöberg, and Westin, 2012). According to a study developed by Scanlife Q4 2011 Report, sixty-three percent of the individuals that scan these codes are male with an age between 35-44 years old (25%). Plus, on average, most active users have an income between $50,000-$100,000 (32%) and $100,000-$150,000 (24%).

Maria Sjöberg (2012) states that:

We want to work with everyone. But ideally men with 35+ years old, that enjoy doing sports, very leisure-oriented, and upper-class. Plus, women around the same age and social class, that want to wear high-quality dresses (e.g. for a party), or nice working clothes.

In addition, Oliver Saunders (Our Legacy) and Sebastian Westin (Sandqvist) describe their brands’ target group in a similar way, pointing that the ideal profile of their customers is:

A smart guy smartly dressed.

Henriette Cramer (2012) from Mobile Life Centre, and one of the researchers on QR code awareness in Stockholm, concluded in her study that male participants were more aware of this type of code in relation to female individuals that appeared to be less aware when confronted with one, although no information was presented that may justify why men appeared to be more technology-savvy than women that took part in this informal survey.
The fact that the companies present a similar target group in their business plan, it is in reality important when questioning the participants regarding their marketing and communication program. Oliver Saunders, for instance, emphasizes the power of word of mouth in a strategic level in order to improve the relationship with retailers around the world, especially through a proficient relationship with magazines that has become very relevant to Our Legacy for gaining momentum. Saunders explains:

We rely on word-of-mouth. I think that we have been very successful because of that, (...) we are completely unaware of how we grew to the level that we are at the moment. (...) I think that we work very close with local magazines, because they really like us (...), so every season we get more and more momentum, such as, more retailers that want to sell our collections, more stores, etc.

Marie Sjöberg and Sebastian Westin also consider the relationship between the brand and local magazines extremely important to raise awareness to the brand, believing that this type of traditional media allied with personal contact (business-to-consumer) is fundamental to build brand equity. In fact, personal contact was mentioned throughout the interviews as something fundamental for the brands, by sustaining that one-on-one interaction can benefit the company in many ways, as pointed out by Marie Sjöberg:

[about customers] I’m calling them regularly, but also visiting them to know how they are doing (...), our loyal customers for many years. Sometimes they call me and ask me where can they buy something, and I tell them about a new store that sells, for instance, our bikinis.

Oliver Saunders states that customer service through social media is extremely important for the brand, especially when mentioning the e-shop, by saying that the relationship with the customers should be transversal across off- to online platforms. Consequently, Saunders highlights the importance of a good service as a value that need to be perpetuated every day, by telling all employees that, for instance, wrapping is important, inviting loyal customers is vital, or that online customers always bring new customers to the brand through word-of-mouth. In addition, Sebastian Westin mentions the importance of inviting Sandqvist’s best customers to events, store openings, special days, and posting news on the brand’s Facebook page, or by simply reply to questions that they may have using social media. In fact, Maria Sjöberg, at Panos Emporio, mentioned that the company interacts with its customers everyday through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms, by sharing new garments or by interacting with customers responding to their questions and giving instructions on where to buy a specific item. Marie Sjöberg states:
I love technology, because it’s quick. Social media is very important, because when I buy something I can take a picture and share on Facebook or Twitter (...). When we get something new, we take pictures, share on those platforms, and then our “friends” share that picture as well, and so on.

During the interview with the expert Henriette Cramer, the researcher argued that social media is extremely important for companies, stating that it is easy to get in contact with potential customers, but also to manage existing ones. Therefore, it is possible to see a cohesive opinion between all interviewees in regard to the importance of social media as a way to manage customer relations.

4.2. Customer Awareness

Throughout all interviews with the respondents from Our Legacy, Sandqvist, and Panos Emporio, as well as the mobile marketing experts Henriette Cramer and Zeynep Ahmet from the Mobile Life Centre, and Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren, customer awareness was in fact the most discussed topic.

Sebastian Westin from Sandqvist had some problems identifying some characteristics of QR codes, justified by the fact that he is not aware of the potential and basic functionalities of these 2-dimensional codes. In addition, Henriette Cramer referred in the interview the rather low results of QR code awareness in Stockholm, stating that:

In Sweden, consumers are not aware of QR codes because they do not know how to scan them, therefore the problem lies much more on functionality.

It is undeniable that, despite of the skepticism regarding the implementation of QR codes in the overall marketing and communication program of Our Legacy, Oliver Saunders considers this new type of technology relevant when used to provide a better customer service. In reality, during the interview Saunders underlined the concept of “customer service” many times, mentioning that its customers appreciate the brand due its natural and organic feeling, adding that:

I never thought about QR codes, because I do not think it is related with our vision and the values that we stand for. (...) [Our Legacy] is organic, with a natural feeling that goes beyond technology to enhance the brand’s value. Plus, I don’t like the idea of using this kind of technology to promote sales (...), if I would implement QR codes would be to give something to the consumers, such as, telling more about our brand, but yet again, I maintain the idea that it is more interesting to have a customer saying that he or she heard about our brand through another friend.

On the same question, Zeynep Ahmet from Mobile Life Centre states that the problem is not centered in the execution of QR code campaigns in Sweden, but instead, it is connected with cultural matters. Thus, the issues lies on the level of penetration of smartphones and general awareness of individuals in the country when compared to Asia, for instance, where this level is much higher according to Ahmet. In addition, there is also another matter brought up by the interviewee regarding the deficiencies of employment of these 2-dimensional codes in Sweden, he adds:
In South Korea, for example, they have deployed the screens and QR codes in a more efficient way, making the physicality of the interaction very much apparent for bystanders that might not be aware of what is going on around them.

Zeynep Ahmet emphasized on the interview some examples of companies that employed QR codes successfully in order to improve the online sales. Tesco, for instance, was one of the examples mentioned by Ahmet. The company knows the percentage of QR code awareness in South Korea making it easier to implement an action with this technology in this market. In reality, when looking at some data regarding customer awareness, it is possible to verify the usage of these 2-dimensional codes in four major East Asia countries (i.e. Japan, China, South Korea, and Taiwan). A study conducted by GMO Japan Market Intelligence (2012) surveyed 4000 smart phone owners in the countries aforementioned over the age of 19 (fig. 8). The percentage of awareness was high with an average of ninety-four percent knowing about QR codes, as the graph shows. In fact, the discrepancy was rather high between East Asian countries and North Americans (i.e. US, Canada, and Mexico) according to a study performed by BrandSpark (2012) to 3000 users that revealed the QR awareness of the North American population, showing that seventy-seven percent are aware of these 2-dimensional codes.

![Figure 8 - QR awareness: East Asia and North America (GMO Japan Market Intelligence, 2012)](image)

These percentages do not surprise Zeynep Ahmet that is skeptic about the implementation of QR code campaigns in Sweden. Ahmet mentions that the market in Sweden is very similar to the US when analyzing some data regarding customer awareness, moreover proving that, for now, these codes are still in their infancy level despite of the growing trend in the last couple of months. As a matter of fact, a study developed by Scanlife (2011) shows that “2011 saw a 300 percent growth in barcode scanning over 2010, and 1000 percent over 2009”. Consequently, both studies provided an overview regarding the connection between customer awareness and the motive for scanning a QR code. Whereas the awareness is clearly different between East Asian consumers and North Americans, the main reasons for scanning a code are in reality the same: to get product information, to get a coupon/promotion, and to purchase an item (fig. 9). Although it is interesting to note, according to the GMO study (2012) that when it comes to purchasing, China leads the way with a percentage of approximately thirty-seven percent of the all sample scanning a QR code to purchase a product. Moreover, consumer awareness is an issue that functions as a constraint as it was possible to observe when collecting data concerning this subject. This is
an important topic as well when Nicky L., from Ralph Lauren, explained the meaning of having customers that are now more aware of QR codes, especially after the company introduced a mobile application that enables its customers to purchase directly when scanning a code, for instance, in a magazine. The company ranked 1st in 2009 of Mobile Marketer of the Year (Tsirulnik, 2010) after receiving the highest points for its “outstanding use of mobile advertising and marketing”, thus Nicky L. responded to this by stating:

*It wouldn’t have been possible to succeed in a campaign like this if we wouldn’t believe that our customers are aware of these codes. (...) after creating this application (...), it became very popular, especially the ‘lifestyle app’. Afterwards we just basically decided to incorporate a QR code in an advertisement to see if people would respond positively to that (...), I think we were very successful in doing that (...), but of course it was a risk.*

As it was possible to understand when talking with Nicky L., Ralph Lauren served as a role model in this field. However, some interviewees were not that confident when considering the implementation of these codes in their marketing or sales strategy, such as Marie Sjöberg, that claimed that the problem lies on the number of retail stores that sell Panos Emporio, adding the following:

*We are too big in Sweden, but we are also very small. We sell our swimwear, for example, in hundreds of stores, but on the other hand we only have one flagship store in Gothenburg. Therefore, personally I believe that the problem is not even the awareness in our case, but a question of logistics, since I don’t think it would work in our case.*
Furthermore, Marie Sjöberg acknowledged that the consumer might be aware of these codes. In fact, this professional was the one to introduce QR codes in one of the first companies that started integrating them in a mobile marketing campaign:

*I am very aware of QR codes. Actually, when I was working for Eniro 118118, I approached the company with this technology. (...) I believe it was one of the first to introduce them in Sweden.*

When doing data analysis on the dissemination of smartphones in Sweden, it was possible to find some interesting statistics. According to the company Telia, over seventy percent of all mobiles sold in the country are smartphones, and sixty-one percent have a phone that supports e-mail and Internet (Telenor Nordic Mobility Report, 2010 cited in Design Mobile, n.d.). In addition, the graph below presents the percentage of smart phones by operative system (fig. 11). It is actually relevant to get an overview on this type of distribution, due to the fact that brand new iPhones nowadays do not have a QR code scanner pre-installed (Marriott, n.d.), which is a concerned shared by Zeynep Ahmet:

*For example, if the iPhone would come with a pre-installed scanner maybe that would increase the consumer awareness for this technology, at least they might experiment the application.*

When confronted with some statistics, Nicky L. responded that despite believing that Ralph Lauren customers may be aware of QR codes and how to scan them, there are still some deficiencies in the scanning part. She states that it is normal that some companies are still afraid to invest in mobile marketing and, more specifically, in a QR code campaign, due to the lack of experience scanning these codes.

Moreover, the participant Marie Sjöberg promptly responded to this matter by stating that with no doubt the issue lies on this lack of awareness that it is still evident nowadays (in Sweden), although personally she assumes that scanning codes is something that she does for a long time, due to the possibility of getting more information about her favorite brands, not discarding completely the idea that in the future this technology may be useful for Panos Emporio, and other companies within this segment.

**4.3. New Trend or New Fad**

After identifying the last two topics as being fundamental for a further analysis and conclusions in the next chapters, it was possible to recognize another issue that it is intrinsically connected with the previous two, and that was mentioned several times throughout the interviews with the brands and experts, but also brought up on several online sources and studies that have been analyzed comprehensively. The phenomenon of
QR codes is related with different subjects, but regardless of the awareness and objectives from the companies and professionals when adopting these codes within their mobile marketing strategies, the imperative question regarding whether QR codes are here to stay or not, it is important to discuss. Therefore, in the interviews with the professionals, a question was raised concerning this topic, more specifically, if they believe that the adoption of QR codes from Swedish premium brands will increase or decrease in the future. Sebastian Westin from Sandqvist, when questioned about the future of QR codes in the Swedish premium market stated:

*I don’t think it will get that big within the premium or high-end segment, (...) for me, it’s just a fad (...)*, but maybe within cheaper segments.

On the other hand, Maria Sjöberg from Panos Emporio, is a strong believer that these codes have a future in the Swedish premium segment, and even goes further mentioning the potential of QR codes for companies if they want to promote themselves in a creative and innovative way, by presenting a customized code which the consumer can scan and get more information about the brand, or product:

*The thing is... especially if you have something commercial, it is so easy to take a picture and then get to know where you have to go. If the consumer is presented with a new garment in a spread of a magazine, and then scan the code and be redirect to the web shop and be able to purchase or get information about the garment right way, it is extremely interesting, both for the company that may increase the sales and for the consumers that can buy a product in a convenient way. (...) it is going to be very big in Sweden.*

Oliver Saunders was the most critical one when questioned about this subject, admitting that the technology itself is interesting but perhaps limited for Our Legacy, and other Swedish premium brands:

*I think it would be more interesting if people could get more information (...), the idea that people interact [with the brand] in a different way is scary to me. Overall I consider QR codes quite limited (...), what else can you do when scanning one besides getting information?! (...) I think that brands don’t want their customers to scan codes inside the store, because the all experience is ruined. Plus, I believe that there is a blurry line between getting too much information about a brand, and not information at all.*

The interviewee also mentioned the differences between corporate infrastructures, especially when justifying the resistance towards the implementation of these codes in Our Legacy. However, he recognized that QR codes might be important for some companies when they want to be creative and innovative, and decide to incorporate a mobile strategy within their marketing and communication program. Moreover, Saunders compares the differences between the Swedish premium market and other markets, such as, in the US, where he believes that QR codes will have a future due to the high percentage of customers purchasing goods via mobile. In addition, the participant mentioned a study that he read online about mobile purchasing rates in Sweden, saying that:
I read somewhere that buying through the computer is over in Sweden, but I haven’t seen that yet. If that changes, perhaps I will reconsider implementing a mobile marketing campaign, but honestly I’m not sure. (...) since in Sweden I don’t know anyone using it [QR codes] in an appealing way.

Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren mentions the effort that the company put when first developed the mobile marketing program using QR codes, affirming that it was important to capitalize some investment made on advertisement. Consequently, Nicky L. believes that the brand will continue to use these codes, although not revealing if in the near future will launch another campaign, she stated that in the US, brands will increasingly adopt these barcodes:

I have no doubts that in this market, and particularly in this segment, QR codes are going to be big. Brands have realized the power of mobile marketing, and if you look at some brands [...], they started using the codes and have been extremely successful. Plus, from my point of view, consumers want to interact with the brand, and nowadays are more aware of this kind of technologies (...), we definitely want to interact with them as well.

The experts from the Mobile Life Centre, Zeynep Ahmet and Henriette Cramer share a common opinion regarding the future of QR codes. Both believe that whether QR codes are a fad or here to stay in this market, only depends on the consumer awareness:

In the study, we concluded that the QR code awareness was very low (...), this [technology] will only last if consumers learn how to scan barcodes, otherwise they will rapidly disappear.

Some data was also collected from articles in order to understand if studies suggest companies and consumers will increasingly adopt and/or scan these 2-dimensional codes in the future or not. Accordingly, experts in the field advocate the idea that Europe and the US will have a similar attitude towards QR codes to the one that is already possible to verify in East Asia. Figure 12 shows the QR Code Hype Cycle (2011) showing a representation of the maturity and adoption state of this technology, more specifically, in the West and Japan, where in the last, QR codes started to become very popular some years ago, and nowadays “have lost their novelty value and they have simply blended into the background” (Roger, 2012).

Figure 12 - QR code hype cycle (Roger, 2012)
5. Analysis

The following analysis is based on the theoretical framework and the empirical findings presented on chapters 2 and 4, but also will consider the different interviews to the companies and experts, as well as the results of the content analysis. Finally, it is important to mention that the chapter will follow the same order as in the previous chapter according to the different categories earlier identified.

5.1. Social CRM

First of all, it is important to consider the target group of each company as being essential when discussing this subject. Moreover, all interviewees characterized their segment in a similar way, possibly indicating that Swedish premium fashion brands, regardless of their vision, present similarities in accordance to demographic and psychographic characteristics. In effect, the customer profile can be compared to the statistics that were collected upon reviewing the literature on QR codes’ scanning and usage rates, demonstrating a more or less defined customer that is now able and willing to scan these codes in order to get more information about a brand and get discounts and/or coupons (GMO, 2012).

According to Lieberman (2010, p. 3), “social CRM is an extension of CRM, not a replacement, and among the important benefits is that it adds value back to the users and customers”. The author adds that it is intrinsically related with the social business strategy, which incorporates the need of companies to adapt themselves to the “social customer” and its expectations. When questioned about the marketing and communication strategies, all the participants referred to social media as a platform to reach out customers, and to provide a better customer service attending to the companies’ service requirements.

Oliver Saunders from Our Legacy, identified the importance of “customer service through social media”, since it can benefit both brand and customer. However, this participant was very reluctant when questioned regarding whether or not the company could integrate 2-dimensional codes in its marketing and communication strategy. Saunders himself stated that the brand, despite of having a natural and organic approach to business “is quite old school when it comes to technology”, mentioning that he does not see the point of integrating them in the company, unless a new twist comes to it. It is fairly surprising that the participant adopted a skeptical attitude towards this subject, perhaps due to his belief in word-of-mouth (WOM) as a mean to penetrate new segments and attract other retailers.

Ahmet, Väänänen, and Mattila (n.d., p. 1) conducted a study regarding practices of mobile services’ users, concluding that after careful examination of the market in study “the adoption rate of users of certain mobile applications (e.g. QR code scanners) and services, depend on factors such as novelty, enjoyable interaction, efficiency of use and utility of the app”, moreover the researchers argue that this “adoption is affected by the built-in mechanisms of the service to promote further distribution […], and the practice of word-of-mouth (WOM)”, that is fundamental when companies want users to recommend a certain service to others, such as friends and family. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that WOM is fundamental when implementing QR codes in a mobile marketing campaign.

According to Lauterborn (1990) cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul (2010, pp. 129), brands need to consider the four Cs as a new marketing mix model that comprises: consumers’ needs and wants, cost to consumer, convenience, and communication. In
addition, Baird and Parasnis (2011, pp. 10) conducted a study concerning the relationship between customers and companies via social media. The authors mention that “consumers are willing to interact with businesses if they believe it is to their benefit, feel they can trust the company and decide social media is the right channel to use to get the value they seek”, moreover they add that this type of engagement may strengthened the emotional and feeling of connectedness of consumers with brands. Therefore, it is relevant to acknowledge that the power in this relationship no longer comes from the company, but instead, the consumer is now in control, hence also the importance of WOM in marketing.

Nevertheless, from the interviews it is possible to understand that Marie Sjöberg has a very positive attitude regarding QR codes as an enabler to interact with Panos Emporio’s customers. In fact, the inherent characteristics of these codes are extremely related with the uniqueness of the mobile marketing program (i.e. ubiquity, personalization, two-way communication, and localization) mentioned by several authors in the theoretical framework chapter (Clark, 2001; Bauer et al., 2005; Junglas and Watson, 2003; Schierholz, Kolbe, and Brenner, 2007; cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 128). Marie Sjöberg revealed that it is important for the brand to share with its customers the latest garments, news, and respond to their questions via different social networks (i.e. two-way communication), especially due to the fact that nowadays professionals can interact with customers anytime and anywhere (i.e. ubiquity and localization), attending to their characteristics that are intrinsically connected with the company’s target group (i.e. personalization). The problem of implementing QR codes at Panos Emporio, according to Sjöberg, lies on the large number of retailers that sell the brand’s collections. However, it is hard to believe that these codes present a hurdle for the company, especially when analyzing the interview with Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren that stated the success of the company when incorporated QR codes in its advertisements. Panos Emporio is overall a very active brand in different online platforms, using several Web sites for communicating with its customers, so a mobile marketing campaign would probably benefit the brand by getting closer to them, regardless how scattered its customers are.

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 774) argue that the mobile device presents three particular characteristics when connected to mobile CRM, they are: personalization, interactivity, and flexibility. The fact that Sebastian Westin considers the online platform a great mean to deal with customers, sustains the point made by the authors. These three distinctive characteristics are present in the relationship between brands and customers, with both being able to communicate with each other real-time regardless time and space constraints. Thus, this synergy is comprehensively discussed during all interviews, despite the doubts on the implementation of QR codes within the brands’ strategy, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. Nonetheless, Henriette Cramer also defended the idea that social media is fundamental for companies nowadays, arguing that it is more convenient to reach out to potential consumers and manage the existing ones. This statement is fundamentally in line with all the arguments that have been sustained throughout this research, perchance due to a change that has been verified in the recent years, with the companies realizing the power that customers have in an organization. Therefore this matter touches an interesting point when considering that QR codes can only reach a larger population (BrandSpark, 2012), if there is a more proficient communication.
between brands and customers, or if the attitudes towards these codes change to a more aggressive approach from the companies. The reason that leads to this conclusion may lie on the fact that Ralph Lauren, for instance, has started using QR codes way before the Swedish premium brands in analysis, plus when performing content analysis on the Web sites of these brands, it is clear that Ralph Lauren is ahead when it comes to integrating mCRM as an additional channel in its overall mobile marketing program. Before QR codes, this North American company had already several applications for smartphones that aimed to create a bond with its customers. However, and according to the present analysis, the exogenous issues inherent to the mobile medium as a channel in CRM are practically the same in Sweden and in the US, more specifically the regulatory systems from operative networks and the overall mobile infrastructure (Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 776). But in contrast, the analyzed Swedish premium brands still present some endogenous deficiencies, especially related to the challenges (and doubts) on implementing QR codes as an additional feature in their mobile strategy, despite of having a well-defined customer segment as mentioned before.

5.2. Customer Awareness

Sebastian Westin from Sandqvist had problems identifying some basic features of a QR code, showing that the level of awareness is rather low to what was expected when conducting the interview. Nonetheless, this is not surprising according to Henriette Cramer that sustained the idea that consumers (professionals included), sometimes are not aware of the potential of these codes, translating in a low involvement with this type of technology allied with a mobile marketing campaign. Moreover, Cramer also points out that the issues with the functionality are a reality, which may be one of the reasons of the still low number of Swedish premium brands that use QR codes. Oliver Saunders, for instance, believes that Our Legacy’s consumers are not prepared and that they may not want to see the brand using barcodes associated with the brand. Plus, it is important to mention that it is extremely difficult for this company to introduce a mobile marketing strategy when, from the beginning, the brand has decided not to use any kind of promotional activities. But regardless of the strategy, it was notorious that during the interview, despite recognizing the low customer awareness of Swedish individuals on this matter, Saunders also acknowledged the inexperience and the low level of commitment with mobile marketing.

Zeynep Ahmet suggested in her interview very interesting figures regarding the mobile customer relationship management program and QR code awareness, and usage in East Asia. In addition, the expert mentioned the lower penetration of smartphones in Sweden compared to the one verified in the Japan, for example, although statistics show that the percentage of smartphone users in the country is rather high, with over 70 percent (Telenor Nordic Mobility Report, 2010 cited in Design Mobile, n.d.). Moreover, Ahmet mentioned something extremely interesting regarding the poor employment of QR codes in Sweden and the existing culture in the country towards the experience of using this type of technology. The issue according to a personal reasoning lies precisely on the lack of experience and poorer employment of a mobile marketing campaign in Sweden most of all. This argument is sustained by the fact that in Japan, for instance, QR codes have been widely used for some years now but only recently started to appear in the West countries, therefore the question of
awareness is not that much related with the penetration of this new phone generation, but instead linked with understanding and knowledge.

Even though the US and Europe are in the same hype level when discussing this type of barcode (Roger, 2012). Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren provided some information regarding the implementation of QR codes in this company, that when compared to other Swedish brands by doing content analysis, it is clear that the situation is slightly difference between the countries. Both the US and Europe present very positive numbers concerning the usage and scanning of QR codes, but still they are behind East Asia. Therefore, it was important to compare two campaigns that sustain this difference which in the end, from my point of view, influences the consumer awareness for this technology. Below the contrast of a Ralph Lauren campaign in the US and another from SVT1 in Sweden:

![](image)

*Figure 13 - Ralph Lauren Rugby QR and SVT1 Melodifestivalen campaigns (Gates, 2008; Staffan, 2012)*

In the examples above it is possible to recognize the QR code. However, despite of the level of engagement that has been verified in both countries (i.e. the US and Sweden), there is a major difference regarding the information that has been given to the consumer in both situations. Nicky L. from Ralph Lauren said in the interview that believes that the company’s customers are well-aware of these codes, and that might be true. But nonetheless, the brand Ralph Lauren Rugby has decided to explain in the ad the benefit for the consumer when scanning the code – in this case scan to purchase -, whereas in the ad from SVT1 (a Swedish public broadcaster) the barcode is presented without a context and explanation.

Despite of showing some differences regarding the efforts from these companies, it was clear that in the interviews the issue regarding consumer awareness on QR codes is beyond the differences of those two countries, but more as a disregard to the needs of consumers. In reality, this is related with the concept of customer profitability that has been discussed in the theoretical part of this study. Burnett (2011) cited in Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 68) states that a CRM program, should focus “on its key customers” and these can be defined “as those whose needs can be fulfilled by the competencies possessed by the firm”. In effect, this suggests that still some companies despite implementing a mobile CRM project, do not pay attention to the needs that should be primarily fulfilled. It is important to understand that consumers need to be educated and then willing to determine if a program is in reality...
relevant for them, but first, they should be aware of the messages that are trying to be communicated through these new channels, such as the mobile phone. In addition, Mukerjee and Singh (2009, pp. 68:69) discuss the importance of differentiating customers according to their differences. Once again the implementation of QR codes seems to face some hurdles derived by the discrepancies on consumers’ frequency of usage and knowledge of these codes. Therefore, it is natural the skepticism manifested by Zeynep Ahmet that acknowledges the level of infancy that QR codes present in the Swedish premium market. In this regard, it is actually possible to understand the differences between responses from Nicky L. (Ralph Lauren) and the other participants in Sweden, since the first stated that QR codes were introduced in the company’s mobile marketing strategy after creating other platforms that enabled the customers to explore this new technology, such as the successful Ralph Lauren Rugby mobile application.

According to the study mentioned in the empirical chapter on the dissemination of smartphones in Sweden (Telenor Nordic Mobility Report, 2010), and what was brought up by Zeynep Ahmet, a scanner application is most of the times not pre-installed on these mobile phones which perhaps makes it harder for the consumer to gain awareness on how they should scan the codes. This is clearly an example of how the mobile infrastructure plays as a disadvantage for the consumer. Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto, and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 776), once again, suggest that companies might have to deal with technical problems when integrating mCRM systems, because even though a scanner is pre-installed on a smartphone, how is the company going to stimulate the consumer to use the application? This is a question that needs to be reviewed and processed by the companies. Although, it is obvious that no matter the strategy implemented and the relationship of these brands with QR codes, one of the reasons that sustain the use of this technology is clearly the desire to build brand awareness (Rossiter and Percy, 1987 cited in Macdonald and Sharp, p. 1). For this regard, Ralph Lauren has tried to take the risk and be in the vanguard of the companies integrating mobile marketing. Thus, the company with its many brands verified the impact that a QR code has, when implemented, on a brand such as Ralph Lauren Rugby, that was recognized by the press as role model in this field.

5.3. New Trend or New Fad
Overall during the interviews the feedback was fairly mixed. Sebastian Westin from Sandqvist, for instance, revealed a skepticism regarding the future of QR codes in Sweden and, more specifically, in the Swedish premium fashion segment. In addition, the participant suggested that perhaps these codes are “going to be big in lower segments”, such as, for companies like H&M or Kapppahl (Westin, 2012). However, it is difficult to draw conclusions on this idea since the focus of this study was not to analyze other market segments. Although, the author Kansara (2009) had already mentioned in his study that companies like H&M was one of the first to incorporate QR codes in its mobile marketing strategy.

On the other hand, Marie Sjöberg was very positive throughout the interviews, the head of sales mentioned the importance of customization if companies want to be successful in a QR code campaign. In fact, Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul (2010, pp. 135) mentioned on their study concerning the implication of mobile marketing, that for consumers the mobile phone can be an effective channel to satisfy their needs. Moreover, the authors state that “to fully
exploit mobile marketing features, firms should focus on the power of mobile devices that distinguish mobile marketing from other forms of marketing”, therefore it is realistic to affirm that the customization process might be the way to attract consumers to QR codes, through a distinctive strategy that aims to incite them to relate with these codes. Likewise personalization (Bauer et al., 2005; Junglas and Watson, 2003; cited in Smutkupt, Krairit and Esichaikul, 2010, pp. 128), customization can relate a code to a brand helping the consumers to get the message quickly, deciding whether or not the message is relevant for them.

Oliver Saunders from Our Legacy was very critical regarding the future of QR codes in the Swedish premium segment. The interviewee mentioned the blurry line between getting too much information and receiving limited information from a company. In fact, Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009, pp. 128) refer to this phenomenon in their work, stating that companies should “avoid overwhelming the customer with offers and messages”, but instead, marketers “must focus on targeting carefully customized messages to selected customers rather than indiscriminately broadcasting messages to the entire mobile customer base”. It is actually interesting to mention that this advice should take in consideration the existing customer base (fig. 7), that companies have, hence the importance of collecting data about customers and/ or customer groups. Even though Saunders’ point of view regarding QR codes was pessimist, in reality the problem might lie on the lack of awareness in terms of functionalities, since the mobile medium is actually able to perform “essentially the same functions as any other channel within CRM” as mentioned by Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto, and Leppäniemi (2007, pp. 774).

From Ralph Lauren, Nicky L. gave to this study an important contribution by explaining the importance of mobile marketing when it comes to the vital interaction between the company, and its brands, with the customers. Once again, interactivity is one of the unique characteristics that enable a company to project a certain image on the consumers by, for instance, raising awareness to a certain product or service. This is extremely relevant for this research since it brought to discussion an important topic (i.e. brand awareness). In any case, Stewart and Pavlou (2002 cited in Sinisalo, Salo, Karjaluoto and Leppäniemi, 2007, pp. 775) referred that “the locus of the interactivity exists in the decisions of the authors who choose to interact when it serves their purpose(s)”, therefore it is clear that this phenomenon is imperative when considering the influence of QR codes in a mobile marketing campaign and consumers.

Finally, Ahmet and Cramer from the Mobile Life Centre in Stockholm, advocate the idea that the future of QR codes is uncertain due to changes on customers’ awareness to this technology. In the theoretical framework, Smutkupt, Krairit, and Esichaikul (2010, pp. 129) referred to some authors (Chaffer, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer and Johnston, 2006; Lauterborn, 1990) regarding the four Cs supporting the idea that this new approach is “a useful framework for assessing the impact of the Internet on marketing strategies”, plus statistics (Telenor Nordic Mobility Report, 2012 cited in Design Mobile, n.d.) show a high penetration of Internet and smartphones in Swedish households, probably indicating that the problem is not related with the “cost to customer” or “convenience” in accessing information, instead, it reaffirms the issue of awareness that, despite being on the rise, it is still low comparing to other countries (BrandSpark, 2012). Hence, it is interesting to indicate the QR Code Hype
Cycle (Roger, 2012) that might indicate a positive evolution of the QR code visibility in time. However, it is difficult to sustain the idea that Sweden will follow the same path as the US, especially if the Swedish premium fashion market will increasingly adopt this technology or not.
6. Conclusions

Through this research it was possible to gain a comprehensive insight about the state of QR codes within the Swedish premium fashion market. The purpose of this study was to analyze this new technology closely related to mobile marketing, and understand this phenomenon on the aforementioned market. It was possible to study and discuss in detail other matters that are intrinsically connected with mobile marketing, such as CRM, mCRM and brand awareness. Thus, the aim was to understand if there is a correlation between these subjects and QR codes in the Swedish context, relating and contrasting with other examples that have been found throughout the research (i.e. content analysis and qualitative interviews). QR codes are with no doubt implemented within a mobile marketing campaign as a way to establish and manage a relationship with customers, and ultimately enhance brand awareness leading to strong brand equity. However, it is clear that Swedish premium brands are still questioning the importance of incorporating a mobile marketing strategy and QR codes, which is surprising due to the successful cases that are daily reported in the media demonstrating the positive results that a mobile campaign can generate.

In the beginning of this study, a research question was defined as a foundation of the present research:

- **How can Swedish premium fashion brands use QR Codes in the overall marketing strategy, in order to drive customer relationship management and enhance brand awareness?**

The interviewees who have participated in this research study share ambiguous opinions regarding the implementation of QR codes, although the majority expressed disbelief when questioned about it. In reality, the main issue is not related with the potential that these barcodes might have in those brands, but instead, the evident lack of awareness that was expressed by almost every participant in this study (except Marie Sjöberg, from Panos Emporio, and Nicky L., from Ralph Lauren Corporation). Furthermore, once a mobile marketing program has been establish, QR codes might be a suitable option for these brands, since all of them shared the same opinion about other types of technology (e.g. social media) as a mean to drive customer relationship management, and social CRM, and as a tool that enable the customers to recognize the brand, regardless of a positive or negative impression that they might get.

When doing research on this matter and analyzing the interview with Ralph Lauren Corporation, it was evident that the lack of awareness needs to be considered, and likewise the North American brand, these Swedish premium fashion brands should reconsider the usage of QR codes by customizing barcodes in order to raise awareness, both to the company and their customers, that when intrigued will probably react to the campaign. Below some examples are shown to exemplify various companies that decided to implement QR codes in their mobile marketing program, and all of them were successful when doing so:
These examples pretend to illustrate some original and innovative campaigns that were implemented and successfully acknowledge by some influent authors (e.g., Elliot, 2011). In fact, it is important that Swedish premium fashion brands must implement a mobile marketing program and, thereafter, invest in a QR code campaign. Consequently, brands need to find a new and interesting twist to this technology, by focusing on different designs, presenting them within a more elaborate context, and providing instructions to the user.

Moreover, despite the skepticism of some interviewees, the experts were rather confident about the potential of implementing QR codes within a mobile marketing program even though mentioning the issue of consumer awareness. Thus, Marie Sjöberg from Panos Emporio was once again positive in this matter, stating that this type of barcode is extremely interesting to provide a better customer service and enhance the quality of the relationship between brands and their customers. In effect, it was possible to conclude after the interview with the contrasting North American company (i.e., Ralph Lauren) and the content analysis that was executed, the influence of QR codes on providing a more customized, personalized, and perhaps, more segmented experience, that would definitely help brands within the segment in analysis to improve their relationship with customers. Hence, this conclusion is actually extremely helpful to respond to the research question, since it is connected with the goals of CRM.

By having everything that has been stated in mind, it is now possible to reconnect all the findings of this study and answer to the main research question that was raised in the beginning of this project. Therefore, it is important to affirm the main conclusions in a clear and structured way as presented below:

- Companies need to be educated for this subject and start implementing a mobile marketing program;
- QR code awareness should be increased among consumers through a series of innovative campaigns;
- All companies recognize the importance of having a clear defined strategy that aim to enhance customer service and customer relationship management (CRM) through social media (i.e., social CRM), and other types of technology;
- Brand awareness has been proven to be increased when incorporating a mobile marketing strategy (e.g., Ralph Lauren Corp.), therefore Swedish premium fashion brands are most likely to enhance brand awareness if incorporating QR codes within a mobile program;
- Although the research does not provide any elucidation concerning the awareness of Swedish premium consumers, according to the findings in other sources, Sweden will
probably follow the rest of Europe when it comes to adopt QR codes, especially after
contrasting these brands to successful cases in East Asia, that lead the QR code hype
cycle.

These statements serve as conclusion for the present research, and respond to the purpose
that was initially defined. Thereafter, despite of the skepticism that was encountered
throughout the research when questioning Swedish premium fashion brands and experts
about this subject, it is possible to believe that QR codes are most likely to follow the current
hype that has been verified in other countries, and soon will prove that mobile marketing is a
trend here to stay.

6.1. Limitations of the study
During the process of this research study, some problems were encountered and a few ideas
could not be presented during the analysis. Therefore, it was not possible to gather a larger
sample for analysis, making it difficult to draw generalizations to other Swedish premium
fashion brands. Moreover, the study would have benefited from a combined qualitative and
quantitative research regarding consumers’ awareness and perception since it would have
enriched this study, despite of the hurdles that were mentioned in the research method
section.

Another limitation that can be identified is the fact that this study was in a great deal
influenced by the overall lack of awareness that companies have regarding this topic. In fact,
many brands that were contacted were negative about responding to the questions. In
addition, the language barrier that was initially not considered is actually important to
consider. This is related to the fact that this study was conducted by a researcher whose
mother tongue is not Swedish, therefore creating an estrangement between interviewer and
professionals that were contacted.

6.2. Suggestions for further research
The primary focus of this investigation was to analyze the state of QR codes within the
Swedish premium fashion market, relating this mobile tool with concepts such as CRM and
brand awareness. Thereafter it was necessary to prioritize some factors, although it would be
interesting to relate these mobile barcodes with in- and out-of-store experience for instance,
as mentioned by other authors (e.g. Davidson, 2012).

Furthermore, it would be interesting to do a complementary analysis on the consumers’
perceptions and attitudes towards QR codes and premium brands that already use these
codes proactively. Finally, a study regarding other types of codes could also be interesting
(e.g. Microsoft Tag), or other mobile marketing strategies such as Near Field Communication
(NFC), augmented reality, or image recognition in relation with QR codes.
7. Reference list and bibliography

7.1. Books


7.2. Interviews
Cramer, H., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, marketing and communication, CRM and brand awareness. (E-mail interview, 1 May and 8 May 2012).

L, N., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, Ralph Lauren’s marketing and communication strategies, and brand awareness. (E-mail interview, 2 May and 9 May 2012).

Saunders, O., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, marketing and communications, CRM and brand awareness. [mobile recorded] (Personal communication, 18 April 2012).

Sjöberg, M., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, marketing and communications, CRM and brand awareness. [mobile recorded] (Personal communication, 8 May 2012).

Westin, S., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, marketing and communication, CRM and brand awareness. (E-mail interview, 27 April and 4 May 2012).

Zeynep, A., 2012. Discussion on QR Codes, marketing and communication, CRM and brand awareness. (E-mail interview, 1 May and 8 May 2012).

7.3. Electronic Sources
7.3.1. E-books and pdfs


### 7.3.2. Blogs


### 7.3.3. Web pages


Brothers, 2012. [online] Available at: <www.brothers.se> [Accessed 4 April 2012]


### 7.4. Figures

**Figure 1 – QR Code**


**Figure 2 – Victoria’s Secret “Sexier than skin” campaign**


Figure 3 – A Framework of Marketing Communication


Figure 4 – CRM: A Strategic Approach


Figure 5 – Theoretical Framework of Initiation of mCRM


Figure 6 – Theoretical framework summary

Own figure.

Figure 7 – Demographic profile of the QR code user


Figure 8 – QR awareness: East Asia and North America


Figure 9 – QR code scanning reasons


Figure 10 – Polo Ralph Lauren US Open campaign

Figure 11 – Percentage of smartphones by operative system


Figure 12 – QR code hype cycle


Figure 13 – Ralph Lauren Rugby and SVT1 Melodifestivalen 2012 campaigns


Figure 14 – Original and innovative QR code campaigns

8. Attachments

8.1. Attachment 1: Swedish brands price comparison table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shirts (men’s)</th>
<th>Dresses</th>
<th>Shoes (men’s)</th>
<th>Leather Goods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acne</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>2770</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Legacy</td>
<td>1360</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2800</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Lindeberg</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger of Sweden</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>1380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filippa K.</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whyred</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2350</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velour</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers/Sisters</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodebjer</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimarket</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1395</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carin Wester</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann-Sofie Back</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandqvist</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cos</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1475</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panos Emporio</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. The Leather Goods only include accessories (e.g.: bags).
2. The prices are approximate and include VAT.
3. All the prices presented are in Swedish Kronor (SEK).
8.2. Attachment 2: Interview with Henriette Cramer – Mobile Life Centre

Interview on May 1st and May 8th, 2012. Henriette Cramer, Senior Researcher and Project Leader at Mobile Life Centre in Stockholm

1. General information
   - Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working in this area of expertise?

2. Marketing/communication and QR codes
   - A recent study developed by the Swedish Institute of Computer Science, in Stockholm, reported some results regarding the awareness of QR codes of the general public in the same city. The results were rather low.
   - As an expert, could you tell me what would be the best options in terms of marketing/communication for a brand to employ when using QR codes (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
   - Do you think that a company can integrate these 2-dimensional codes in the overall marketing strategy in a successful way? And what would you think could be the benefits?

3. Customer relationship management
   - Do you think that QR codes can help a brand to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers?
   - Would you relate mobile marketing and QR codes with the following terms:
     - Customization?
     - Segmentation?
     - Personalization?
   
     If yes, any comments?

4. Brand awareness
   - Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way consumers relate with a brand?

5. Swedish premium brands and QR codes
   - What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes within the Swedish premium market? And why?

Will they increasingly/ decreasingly adopt?
8.3. Attachment 3: Interview with Zeynep Ahmet – Mobile Life Centre

Interview on May 1st and May 8th, 2012. Zeynep Ahmet, Junior Researcher at Mobile Life Centre in Stockholm

6. **General information**
- Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working in this area of expertise?

7. **Marketing/communication and QR codes**
   - A recent study developed by the Swedish Institute of Computer Science, in Stockholm, reported some results regarding the awareness of QR codes of the general public in the same city. The results were rather low.
   - As an expert, could you tell me what would be the best options in terms of marketing/communication for a brand to employ when using QR codes (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
   - Do you think that a company can integrate these 2-dimensional codes in the overall marketing strategy in a successful way? And what would you think could be the benefits?

8. **Customer relationship management**
   - Do you think that QR codes can help a brand to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers?
   - Would you relate mobile marketing and QR codes with the following terms:
     - Customization?
     - Segmentation?
     - Personalization?

   If yes, any comments?

9. **Brand awareness**
   - Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way consumers relate with a brand?

10. **Swedish premium brands and QR codes**
    - What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes within the Swedish premium market? And why?

Will they increasingly/decreasingly adopt?
8.4. Attachment 4: Interview with Oliver Saunders – Our Legacy
Interview on April 18, 2012. Oliver Saunders, Head of Retail at Our Legacy in Stockholm

11. General information
- Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working at Our Legacy?

12. Marketing/communication and QR codes
- How would you describe Our Legacy’s target customer?
- Could you tell me what does Our Legacy do in terms of marketing/communication (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
- Are you familiar with quick-response (QR) codes?
- Could the company integrate these 2-dimensional codes in the overall marketing strategy? And what would you think could be the benefits for Our Legacy to use QR codes?

13. Customer relationship management
- What does Our Legacy do to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers?
- What are the main strategies in use to provide a service of excellence?
  ▪ Customization?
  ▪ Segmentation?
  ▪ Personalization?

14. Brand awareness
- Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way the consumers relate with the brand?

15. Swedish premium brands and QR codes
- What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes within the Swedish premium fashion market? And why?
  ▪ Will they increasingly/decreasingly adopt?
8.5. Attachment 5: Interview with Marie Sjöberg – Panos Emporio

Interview on May 8th, 2012. Marie Sjöberg, Head of Sales at Panos Emporio in Gothenburg

16. General information
- Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working at Panos Emporio?

17. Marketing/communication and QR codes
- How would you describe Panos Emporio’s target customer?
- Could you tell me what does Panos Emporio do in terms of marketing/communication (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
- Are you familiar with quick-response (QR) codes?
- Could the company integrate these 2-dimensional codes in the overall marketing strategy? And what would you think could be the benefits for Panos Emporio to use QR codes?

18. Customer relationship management
- What does Panos Emporio do to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers?
- What are the main strategies in use to provide a service of excellence?
  - Customization?
  - Segmentation?
  - Personalization?

19. Brand awareness
- Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way the consumers relate with the brand?

20. Swedish premium brands and QR codes
- What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes within the Swedish premium fashion market? And why?
  - Will they increasingly/ decreasingly adopt?
8.6. Attachment 6: Interview with Sebastian Westin - Sandqvist

Interview on April 27th and May 4th, 2012. Sebastian Westin, Head of Marketing and Public Relations at Sandqvist in Stockholm

21. General information
- Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working at Sandqvist?

22. Marketing/communication and QR codes
- How would you describe Sandqvist’s target customer?
- Could you tell me what does Sandqvist do in terms of marketing/communication (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
- Are you familiar with quick-response (QR) codes?
- Could the company integrate these 2-dimensional codes in the overall marketing strategy? And what would you think could be the benefits for Sandqvist to use QR codes?

23. Customer relationship management
- What does Sandqvist do to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers?
- What are the main strategies in use to provide a service of excellence?
  - Customization?
  - Segmentation?
  - Personalization?

24. Brand awareness
- Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way the consumers relate with the brand?

25. Swedish premium brands and QR codes
- What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes within the Swedish premium fashion market? And why?
  - Will they increasingly/decreasingly adopt?
8.7. Attachment 7: Interview with Nicky L. – Ralph Lauren Corp.

26. General information
- Briefly, could you please tell me about your job title, responsibilities and for how long have you been working at Ralph Lauren Corp.?

27. Marketing/communication and QR codes
- Could you tell me what does Sandqvist do in terms of marketing/communication (i.e. commerce, in-store, internet, mobile, out-of-home, print, etc.)?
- Are you familiar with quick-response (QR) codes?
- What is the relationship of Ralph Lauren Corp. with this new technology?

28. Customer relationship management
- What does Ralph Lauren Corp. do to maintain its customer base and reach out to potential customers? (note: you can pick one brand from the portfolio)
- What are the main strategies in use to provide a service of excellence?
  - Customization?
  - Segmentation?
  - Personalization?

29. Brand awareness
- Do you believe that new forms of technology (e.g. mobile applications, banner ads, optimized sites, social media, etc.) will continue to have a great influence in the way the consumers relate with the brand?

30. Premium brands and QR codes
- What is your opinion regarding the future of QR codes in the premium market? And why?

Will they increasingly/ decreasingly adopt?