YOUR SECRET WEAPONS TOWARDS CUSTOMER LOYALTY ON THE WEB

- A study of how social media can enhance customer loyalty on the Internet.

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Abstract

Purpose With the explosion of social media platforms in the interactive digital media realm and companies increased comprehension of the importance of having loyal customers, the question of social media usage in developing customer loyalty has become more and more prominent. Since social media allows firms to engage directly with the end-consumer at a relatively low cost and with a higher level of efficiency, it is particularly important for small online branded retailers with limited marketing and PR budgets. The purpose of this study is to research how the use of social media can enhance customer loyalty on the Internet.

Methodology A both qualitative and quantitative approach to data collection and interpretation form the methodological basis of the study. An in-depth interview was conducted with small online branded retailer L'Homme Rouge to get an understanding of the brands current social media usage as well as future goals and aspirations. An online survey was conducted with L'Homme Rouge’s customers to examine their opinion concerning brands and social media as well as L'Homme Rouge’s social media usage. A total of 82 questionnaires were collected from customers in the age 20-30 years.

Findings The findings indicate that small online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge has a good understanding of what their customers want to see on their social media platforms. This provide them with the possibility to post and upload content that the consumers value. However, the retailer to a certain extent lack knowledge of which factors are important for customers to be loyal and consequently how social media can be used to enhance customer loyalty.

Conclusion The study has found that gaining trust as well as getting customers to recommend a brand, are two important factors in terms of establishing customer loyalty on the Internet. Due to its interactive nature, which is useful for establishing relationships as well as sharing content, the study further provides compelling evidence that social media is an effective tool when it comes to trust and recommendations. The study concludes by presenting various suggestions that small online branded retailers can use to develop and maintain customer loyalty on the Internet.

Research Limitations The fact that only one small online branded retailer was examined means that the exploratory findings need to be investigated more rigorously. A larger sample, including more online branded retailers, would permit a more detailed exploration of customer loyalty and social media and further strengthen and extend the results.

Keywords Online Shopping, Internet, Social Media, Customer loyalty
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1. Introduction
Now more than ever, getting closer to customers is every marketer's dream and consequently a top priority within most companies. With the dramatic evolvement of the Internet over the past thirty years, there has been a worldwide explosion of electronic commerce as well as interactive digital media (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Consumers are to a greater extent purchasing products online and the number of online retailers is increasing at a rapid speed. According to Euromonitor (2013) the European online retail market is expected to grow by an average of ten percent in the upcoming years (ABG Sundal Collier, 2013). Recent research conducted by Goldman Sachs (2013) indicates that 11 to 16 percent of the total global retail sales will be conducted through the online channel by 2020, compared to four percent today. Consumers are also, according to the report presented by Goldman Sachs (2013), adopting the online retail channel at an accelerating rate. The increased popularity of e-commerce on today's market generates a more intense and ferocious competition (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). As a result of that, companies are focusing on engaging with their customers and getting closer to them. The concept of customer loyalty has therefore gotten increased attention lately and companies are striving for developing and maintaining customer relationships that are based on loyalty (Sirohi, McLaughlin & Wittink, 1998; Reichheld & Schefter 2000).

Today, companies are vigorously trying to use social media to engage with their customers and, by doing so, facilitate increased revenues, efficiencies as well as cost reductions (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Customers are nowadays no longer passive recipients as they once were. They are highly integrated in the marketing exchange process and have taken on an active role in co-creating everything from promotional messages to product design. The massive rise in interactive digital media has catapulted the contact between companies and consumers from the traditional Web 1.0 model to the world of the highly interactive Web 2.0 (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden 2011). Teens today spend more than seven hours every day consuming media. That includes everything from surfing the web, social networking and playing video games to listening to music and watching TV. Nowadays, social media is becoming highly integrated into daily life and companies are starting to identify the unique opportunities it offers (Ahuja, 2013).

At the same time as social media provides companies with great possibilities in terms of for example customer loyalty, it also puts them under a lot of pressure to engage where customers are paying attention (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). In October 2012, Facebook had 1 billion active users every month, which worldwide equals one in every seven people (Kiss, 2012). In the beginning of 2013, Twitter reported that its 200 million active users send 400 million messages, or Tweets, every day (Tsukayama, 2013). After considering the speed at which social media has been adapted by both businesses and consumers, it is clear that it is the place where consumers will be congregating and businesses want to be. As
consumers media consumption shifts online, retailers increasingly need greater online presence and remaining relevant requires a full rework of the retail model. As an example, pure-play online retailer ASOS has a long-established presence on both Twitter and Facebook. As of 2012, the retailer had 325 thousand followers on Twitter and more than 1.7 million "likes" on Facebook (Goldman Sachs, 2013). The implications for the retailer to provide a relevant and frequent reason to re-visit the site go beyond creative digital marketing. ASOS is informing the consumers of everything from the product range, inventory turns, stock-keeping unit size, and distribution times to design briefs and manufacturing lead times (Goldman Sachs, 2013).

Companies are starting to realize that having loyal customers can be used as a competitive advantage in today’s enormous landscape of online retailers. According to Reichheld and Schefter (2000), there are both economic and competitive factors that indicate that the value of loyalty is even greater on the web than in the physical world. The problem, however, is that developing and maintaining customer loyalty on e-markets is a complex and challenging process. Some of the main reasons are that it is difficult to develop trust since the companies do not have any direct contact with their customers and it is also easy for customers to turn to another company since competition is just one click away (Gommans, Krishnan & Scheffold 2001). Social Media holds enormous potential for companies in terms of getting closer to their customers and developing and maintaining customer loyalty is increasingly emphasized. However, using social media as a channel to engage with customers is more complex than it might initially sound. According to Baird and Parasnis (2011), there is large gap when it comes to what the consumers seek on social media platforms and what the companies offer.

The importance of customer loyalty for online businesses has been extensively discussed in traditional marketing literature for example by Reichheld and Schefter (2000); Smith (2000) and Gommans et al., (2001). Most contemporary research has focused on giving practitioner-oriented suggestions concerning how to build customer loyalty on commercial websites (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Smith, 2000). When it comes to social media, most research include descriptive narratives of social media in terms of definitions, characteristics and how businesses can take advantage of its opportunities as well as overcome its challenges (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). However, so far little research has been done within the field of social media and customer loyalty on the Internet, which by some has been called E-loyalty. It is therefore interesting and important to explore the effects that social media can have on customer loyalty on the Internet. Research focusing on small online branded retailers is also lacking since research mostly has been focused on commercial websites. Small online branded retailers are usually newly launched and their budget in terms of marketing, PR and customer acquisitions is fairly limited. As a result,
using different kinds of social media platforms is a common way for these retailers to create brand awareness and attract new customers. This since social media allows firms to engage directly with the end-consumer at a relatively low cost and with a higher level of efficiency than what more traditional media can achieve (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Using social media is consequently, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), not only relevant for large multinational companies but also for small and medium sized companies.

One example of a small online branded retailer is newly launched and Swedish based L’Homme Rouge (see Appendix 1). The company has since the start in 2010 transformed from just selling knitted hats to designing and letting produce seasonal collections twice a year. They have succeeded to find a niche for their brand and currently have a small but dedicated customer base. L’Homme Rouge is highly present on different social media platforms, which has turned out to be an important contributory factor to the brand’s growth. Something that L’Homme Rouge desires and strives for is developing and maintaining customer loyalty. However, in a growing industry with intense competition, a small online branded retailer on the rise faces difficulties in achieving customer loyalty due to the non-existent budget for PR and marketing. With the explosion of social media platforms in the interactive digital media realm and companies increased comprehension of the importance of having loyal customers, the question of social media usage in developing customer loyalty has become more and more prominent. Acquiring new customers on the web is both costly and challenging and with a limited budget, understanding how to use social media platforms to attain customer loyalty is particularly important for small online branded retailers as L’Homme Rouge.

1.1 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to research how loyalty among customers on the Internet can be established through the use of interactive digital media such as social media platforms. By analyzing the concepts of customer loyalty and social media as well as examining the small online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge and their customers, the aim is to describe and suggest how the use of social media can enhance customer loyalty on the Internet.

1.2 Research Question
How can small online branded retailers use social media platforms to develop and maintain customer loyalty on the Internet?

1.3 Delimitations
The small online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge, which will be examined, sell products in Scandinavia as well as in Germany which is why the study is limited to the online retail market in Northern Europe. Apart from their webshop, L’Homme Rouge also sell some products through retailers in physical stores but that will not be taken into account when
examining customer loyalty. The study is consequently limited to only researching how customer loyalty on the Internet can be enhanced. The study further includes some statistical data concerning the future growth of the total global retail sales but since the numbers also indicate the growth of the online retail market, they are still applicable and relevant for the study.

1.4 Definitions
The following model shows the social media landscape and the different components within the landscape. The study will put emphasize on social media tools, photo and video sites as well as social networks. The social networks that will be mentioned are Facebook and Twitter. Mass media is a part of the landscape but will not be discussed further in the study. The different social media platforms as well as some of the social media tools will be defined further down.

**SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE**

- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Photo & Video Sites
- Pinterest
- Youtube
- Vine
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Social Networks
- Facebook
- MySpace
- Radio/podcast
- TV
- Press
- Blogs
- Mass Media
- Live Chat
- Events online
- Q & A
- Competition
- Check-in
- Tag
- Share
- Social Media Tools
- Like
- Comment
- Pin

Inspired by Schultz (2007)
Online branded retailer - an online fashion brand that only sell their own labeled products.

Facebook - Facebook is a social networking site on which members can create their own personal profile, connect with their friends as well as share, comment and ‘like’ each others statuses, pictures, links and videos (Wikipedia, 2013, A).

Blogs - Blog is short for weblog, which is an online journal (Wikipedia, 2013, B).

Instagram - Instagram is a social network centered around photo-sharing. Allows its users to take pictures, add filters and share them on Instagram and other social networks (Wikipedia, 2013, C).

Twitter - Twitter is social networking platform for microblogging. Allows users to ‘tweet’, or post a message of up to 140 characters, as well as ‘re-tweet’ others messages (Wikipedia, 2013, D).

Tumblr - Tumblr is a social networking platform for microblogging. Allows users to post different multimedia to a short form blog, as well as repost other users’ posts (Wikipedia, 2013, E).

Pinterest - Pinterest is a photo sharing website that allows users to create image collections, or ‘pinboards’. Users can browse other pinboards for images, ‘re-pin’ images to their own pinboards, or ‘like’ photos (Wikipedia, 2013, F).

Youtube - Youtube - YouTube is a video-sharing website where users can share and view videos (Wikipedia, 2013, G).

Foursquare - Foursquare is a social networking site that allows users to, through their smartphones, “check in” at venues, showing where it is located (Wikipedia, 2013, H).

Vine - Vine is a mobile app that allows it’s users to create and post video clips of a maximum length of 6 seconds. Videos can be shared on other social networks (Wikipedia, 2013, I).

Spotify - Spotify is a commercial music streaming service (Wikipedia, 2013, J).

Like - Like is a button on every Facebook post that users press if they want to show that they like something (Wikipedia, 2013, K).

Hashtag - Hashtag is a feature on several social networking platforms that groups pictures, discussions etc. that uses the same tag (Wikipedia, 2013, L).

Share - To ‘share’ is a feature on several social networks, which is a way of forwarding content to followers. Different social networks have different tools for this purpose called, ‘share’ on Facebook, ‘repot’ on tumblr; ‘re-pin’ on Pinterest and ‘retweet’ on Twitter (Wikipedia, 2013, A, D, E, F).

Spamming - To “spam” is to send unsolicited messages, often advertisement, in bulks. In this study, the word is used when describing that a company is posting too often on the different social media platforms (Wikipedia, 2013, M).

Word of Mouse - A play on "word of mouth". Refers to a computer mouse and messages being spread over the Internet (Dictionary, 2013).
2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, insights from previous research within the field of customer loyalty and social media will be presented. It will be presented in the form of a literature review and used as a theoretical framework for the study.

2.1 Customer Loyalty

According to many researchers, profit will be enhanced when companies focus on retaining existing customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987). Developing and maintaining customer loyalty is consequently an important contributory factor to a firm’s profitability (Clark, 1997; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld, 2003). Due to the fast development of the Internet, the old ways of doing business have been overturned but when it comes to loyalty among customers, not much has changed. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) argue that the old rules are as vital as ever. To them, customer loyalty is still about earning trust from the right kind of customers, which will make them want to do all their business with that particular company. Both Oliver (1999) and Yin (1999) conclude that loyalty generally has been defined as repeat purchasing frequency and same-brand purchasing. Reichheld (2003) on the other hand means that loyalty is so much more than repeat purchase and that a customer who keeps purchasing products from the same company may not necessarily be loyal. It can be a result of limited options, personal inertia or indifference. Always flying with the same airline might for example be due to the fact that they are the only ones flying that route (Reichheld, 2003). Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) mean that the main factors that are influencing customer loyalty mostly depend on the products, services and prices that a company is offering.

Stratigos (1999) defines loyalty as a kind of commitment that is similar to a resistance to change. Loyal customers are also more tolerant when it comes to defects and flaws and they will continue to use the provided products since the business fulfill their personal needs (Stratigos, 1999; Reichheld, 2003). Staying with a company only because of the fact that they have good promotion campaigns is, according to Thatcher and George (2004), not seen as loyalty but more as un-loyalty. An un-loyal customer is also characterized by not complaining if problems or inconvenience occur, but instead simply switch to another competitor on the market. Companies can on the other hand expect to get complaints from loyal customers since they care about the business and want it to act in its best way. Such complaints should be seen as feedback and the input from the customers can help to improve the performance of the company (Thatcher & George, 2004). Grönroos (2000) have declared that paying attention to customer feedback as well as dealing with complaints and questions is an important part in building long-term relationships. Building a relationship between a customer and a business will contribute to both sides trusting each other and that will eventually lead to commitment (Grönroos, 2000). Braum (2002) declares that companies can do certain things to persuade the customers into being loyal
and one strategy is to make the customers a part of the daily business activities. This approach will make them passionate about the brand and, according to Braum (2002), a true loyal customer is someone who is passionate about the brand and not only about the provided products.

Reichheld and Schefter (2000) further state that customer loyalty is essential for an online retailer for mainly two reasons. It is a competitive necessity since figuring out a way to create exceptional value for the customers will make them stick around. It is also an economic necessity since it costs more to attract new customers on the Internet than to retain old ones (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Other findings in the traditional marketing literature also conclude that greater customer loyalty positively influences profitability by both increasing sales per customer as well as helping to reduce marketing costs (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987; Clark, 1997; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). This is, according to Reichheld and Sasser (1990), because of the fact that acquiring new customers entails some one-time costs in the form of advertising, promotions and so on. Having long-time customers who are loyal to the company will, on the other hand, provide free advertising (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). This is since loyal customers tend to make positive recommendations to their friends about brands they have utilized or been in contact with, which further reduces customer acquisition costs (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld, 2003). Referrals from existing customers are particularly lucrative on the web since word of mouse spreads even quicker than word of mouth. Customers can use e-mail (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000) or various social media platforms to broadcast a recommendation of a favorite online retailer to dozens of friends. In addition to reducing customer acquisition costs, having loyal customers can also reduce costs in the form of customer service and help-desks. This is since referred customers tend to turn to the friend who recommended them for help and guidance instead of calling the brands customer service (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Also, companies that have succeeded in establishing long-term relationships with their customers can usually charge more for their products. It is due to the fact that most customers prefer to pay a slightly higher price for something they know than to trust a less expensive competitor (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Bentley, 1999; Thatcher & George, 2004).

Trust plays a critical role in developing and maintaining loyalty for e-businesses and to gain customer loyalty you must first gain their trust (Hoffmann, Novak & Peralta 1999; Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Braum, 2000). Since business is conducted at a distance there are more risks and uncertainties that are magnified (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Hoffmann et al. (1999) argue that it is mainly the part concerning transactional security and privacy that influence customers in the online buying process. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) continue that the consumers cannot touch, feel or smell the products nor can they look into the salesperson’s eyes when they purchase the product. They instead fully have to
rely on images and product descriptions on the website and if they do not trust those promises, the will shop elsewhere (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Gommans et al., 2001). The traditional way of developing trust is therefore excluded on the Internet. For e-businesses, Gommans et al. (2001) mean that brand trust and loyalty in general, are particularly important since those components can be helpful in overcoming some of the Internet’s disadvantages. Such disadvantages are perceptions that the Internet is a dishonest, unsafe and unreliable marketplace (Gommans et al., 2001). A company cannot buy trust with promotions or advertising, they have to earn it by acting in the best interests of their customers, as Reichheld and Schefter (2000) put it.

### 2.2 Social Media

There is, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), confusion among academic researchers and managers in terms of what should be included in the definition of social media. They however define it as “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Their definition therefore implies that the content available on social media is not consumed passively. It is instead produced, shared and consumed by the users, which actively generates content (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013). Kietzmann et al. (2011) define social media as highly interactive internet-based platforms where users can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. Whereas marketing with traditional media, such as magazines, television and news websites, was focused on delivering a message, social media is focused on building a relationship and about conversation with others. It is consequently about receiving and exchanging ideas and perceptions with the customers and not just about delivering a message (Constantinides, Romero & Gómez Boria, 2008). Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that social media has become a significant factor in the influence of consumer behavior, including aspects such as awareness, information gathering, opinions, attitudes, purchase behavior and evaluation of the product. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) claim that, despite the fact that there is a huge interest in social media among companies today, the understanding of what the term actually means is not widely spread. As a consequence of this lack of understanding, companies often miss opportunities or threats given by creative consumers (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Using social media to engage with customers is therefore, according to Baird and Parasnis (2011), more complex than it might initially sound and there is usually a gap in terms of what consumers seek on social media and what companies are offering.

With the rise of social media, companies have increasingly less control of the information that is spread about them on the Internet (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), the power has shifted from those working in marketing and PR to the users of social media. It is no longer the
company who is in control of the relationship but instead the customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Through social media, information about brands "just happen", with or without the companies permission (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that it is the possibility for one person to write to a hundred, or even a thousand other consumers, about a product that has led to the great impact of consumer-to-consumer communication. According to Vollmer and Precourt (2008), consumers are nowadays turning away from traditional sources of advertising and instead turn to various social media platforms for information regarding products they wish to purchase. The fact that the customers are in control and that they are much closer can also affect a company’s marketing, sales and service efforts and therefore requires a different approach from the companies side (Constantinides et al., 2008; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). As a result of customers increasingly taking over typical company activities, Constantinides et al. (2008), claim that companies need to work much more “on-demand”. By this, they mean to only market the t-shirts demanded by the customers, create assortments suggested by the consumers or launch advertising campaigns that are approved or developed by their customer. Baird and Parasnis (2011) mean that companies need to embrace the power shift and instead of trying to manage the customers, they should strive for facilitating collaborative experiences and a dialogue that the customers value. They need to understand what it is that triggers customers to use social media to seek out a brand and also what it is that would make them reluctant to interact (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Consumers join brand communities and follow brands on social media to fulfill their need of being identified with groups or symbols that they wish to associate with, or that they find desirable (Laroche et al., 2013; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen, 2010). Mangold and Faulds (2009) also emphasize that consumers like to feel connected to other consumers that share the same interests and desires, which lead them to join communities that are centered around shared values and interests. This could for example be a fashion site for mens fashion. To find communities that share the same target market can provide a company with a huge advantage, such as excellent sponsorship or collaboration opportunities (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In their research, Baird and Parasnis (2011), have found that before consumers use social media to interact with brands, they need to feel that they trust the company and that they are communicating honestly. Transparency is consequently of high importance and a company that is not being transparent risk being perceived as manipulative and insincere. Mangold and Faulds (2009) share that opinion and state that when customers feel that they are well informed about a company and their products, they are more likely to talk about them. Hence, giving sufficient information about products is of great importance. Some customers also think that a passion for the brand is a prerequisite for interacting with that brand on social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).
Baird and Parasnis (2011) further found that customers, to a certain extent, feel connected to the brand after engaging with them via social media, but it is not what drives them to interact in the first place. To get recommendations, opinions and reviews from friends and family is also an increasing reason behind consumers social media use. The power of recommendations and endorsements from friends on social networks can be felt every time someone “re-tweets” a company’s status on Twitter or “likes” a company on Facebook. Companies should according to Baird and Parasnis (2011) take advantage of these tools and motivate customers to share their experiences with others. This can be done through creative and fun marketing campaigns on social media platforms where consumers are encouraged to like and share a company’s page. It can also be connected to charity if the company for example donates one euro to charity for every “like” they get on Facebook. Two of the reasons why some customers are reluctant to interact with brands via social media are privacy concerns and the fear of being spammed with news and updates (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

**2.2.1 How To Use Social Media**

Kietzmann et al. (2011) declare that it is about time for companies to choose, either to get serious about social media and participate, or to ignore it. Mangold and Faulds (2009), on the other hand, mean that it is not enough to only participate. They therefore provide some advice for companies when planning their social media strategies, which include the usage of social media platforms and tools, as well as how to engage the consumers. They found that the possibility to give feedback makes customers feel more engaged and connected to the brand. They argue that the feedback given by customers, in the form of for example suggestions or criticism, can enhance the feeling of engagement towards the company through the encouragement of open and honest communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In terms of social media and honesty, Foux (2006) further argue that consumers perceive social media as a more trustworthy source of information compared to using more traditional marketing elements. Regarding information, Mangold and Faulds (2009), also mention that it is important for a company to provide exclusivity and make their customers feel special. By offering new and exclusive information, special deals and the possibility to subscribe to weekly e-newsletters, the feeling of exclusivity can be given to a subset of customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Except for providing exclusive information, it is also important to be interesting, when trying to get your customers to engage. Listening to the customers and trying to find out what they like and what they want to see will help companies in this matter (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Constantinides et al., 2008). People also tend to talk about things that are considered outrageous in some way. An “outrageous” marketing trick can have a huge impact on customers and make them talk about it (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Fast food restaurant Burger King did an outrageous marketing trick when they joked about the fact
that their lead item, “the Whooper”, was no longer sold. The reactions from the customers were videotaped and later very successfully used in the new advertising campaign (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Many researchers further emphasize the importance of making the customer a co-producer and interacting them in the company’s daily business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Constantinides et al., 2008; Baird and Parasnis, 2011). One way is to let them participate by for example voting on their favorite innovations or product ideas, which in the end will help a company to build the brand affinity that they seek (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Constantinides et al. (2008) mean that using the tools that social media offers can reduce some risks and uncertainty for the consumers shopping online. This is mainly due to the interactive and social dimension, both with the employees at the online retailer and with other consumers. The interaction is advantageous since it can enhance consumer confidence and trust in the online retailer as well as improve customer service (Foux, 2006; Constantinides et al., 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

According to both Brooks (2013), and Mangold and Faulds (2009), storytelling is something that can engage customers as well as increase sales. If a company tells a good story, it is likely that it is repeated by their customers, both through word-of-mouth and in social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). However, customers are according to Brooks (2013), not only interested in a story about the history of company but also the stories behind the products that they provide. Selling a product with a story is becoming a new marketing approach and marketers are working hard with using a unique and captivating narrative to create a personal connection between a product and the consumer (Brooks, 2013). Technology giant Apple is an example of a company that has been very successful in telling its story, which is one of the reasons that the brand has very loyal customers (Brooks, 2013).

Something else that has turned out to be efficient in terms of engaging the customers is various kinds of contests. Consumers can for example be asked to upload videos or photos showing them using the product and where website viewers can vote to determine the winner. Enabling people to see others using the product will, according to Mangold and Faulds (2009), entertain and engage customers at the same time as it communicates product benefits. By also letting consumers vote and be a part of finding a winner give them a sense of ownership and make them more connected to the brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). A final aspect that can increase customers likelihood to tell others about a company is the company’s involvement in supporting causes (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Baird & Parasnis, 2011) that are important to the customers and to which they feel emotionally connected. Such causes can be anything from finding cures to diseases and caring for the environment, to animal rights and child welfare (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Baird and Parasnis (2011) also highlight working with charity and suggested that a company can donate one euro to charity for every “like” they get on Facebook.
Since the field of social media is very active and changing, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), emphasize the importance of careful consideration when choosing to join and participate in a new social media platform. Since one of the main keys in succeeding on social media is to be active, it is important to choose the “right” platforms for one’s business and use them in an active way. One way of choosing the right platform is to find which one is used by the target group. It is preferable to be active on multiple platforms, but Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), declare that it is crucial to ensure that the use of the different platforms is done coherently. They need to be aligned with each other, the company’s image and the purpose of the specific social media activity (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Baird and Parasnis (2011) also point out the importance of making the customer experience seamless across all social media channels. Being active, is not only about responding to negative comments, claim Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), but rather to engage customers to participate in an open and active conversation. Social media is all about dialogue and participation so if a company is not sure what their customers value, they should according to Baird and Parasnis (2011), just ask them. Constantinides et al. (2008) claim that using social media communities to gain effective feedback and product ideas from consumers can provide a much faster turnaround time and cost reduction compared to using traditional customer surveys and focus groups.
3. Methodology
In this chapter, the methodology used in the study will be presented. A motivation of why the chosen methodology is preferred for this study as well as possible limitations with the methodological procedures will also be presented.

3.1 Mixed Methods Case Study
The chosen method for the research of study was a case study method, in which we used both qualitative and quantitative methods for collecting and analyzing data. The strength in using a case study is the ability to intensively study a single unit and to shed light on a question that applies to a bigger set of units (Gerring, 2004). We used it to intensively study a small online branded retailer, L’Homme Rouge, to shed light on the question of social media’s role in enhancing customer loyalty on the Internet. The reason for choosing L’Homme Rouge as a case study was first of all that L’Homme Rouge is a perfect example of a small online branded retailer. The brand is newly launched and highly active on social media due to the fact that they have a limited budget for marketing and PR. The aim was to reach generalizable conclusions that can be applied to other small online branded retailers. The main reason for choosing a case study research method is its suitability when examining a contemporary phenomenon in a reality-based context (Yin, 2009). However, one of the risks with using a case study method is, according to Bryman (2012), the inability to generalize the findings. A great deal of discussion has centered around this notion and researchers are still not agreed on whether it is true or not. Williams (2000) argues that case study researchers are able to generalize by drawing on findings from comparable cases that are investigated by other researchers (Bryman, 2012). Flyvbjerg (2006) claims that the statement regarding the inability to generalize is a common misunderstanding about case study research. He argues that a strategic choice of case immensely could increase the generalizability of the results (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Since L’Homme Rouge is a young company that is open to social media usage in their marketing strategy and has customers that already are present on various social media platforms, our choice of case can be seen as a strategic one. As a result of that, the possibility to generalize the results of the study is therefore increased.

As previously mentioned, the research for this study have been done through the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, which is called a mixed method design within the field of case studies. The ability to mix methods is an advantage made possible through the usage of a case study method. This was useful for this study since the aim was to collect complementary data from multiple sources, to best answer the research question (Yin, 2009). The qualitative and quantitative methods were used in two separate studies, an in-depth interview with L’Homme Rouge as well as a customer survey conducted with the brands customers. Using a case study design with mixed methods provides the study with more detailed and comprehensive information in comparison to
only using one of the methods (Denscombe, 2009). The use of a number of methods for collecting data is called methodological triangulation. By combining different methods, which in this study was done by conducting both an in-depth interview and a survey, the motive is to use the strengths of one method to fill in the weaknesses of another (Merriam, 1994). The triangulation will also appear in the analysis of the collected data, which is described further down.

3.1.1 Validity and Reliability
Validity and reliability are two terms that are used to prove the scientific relevance of a study. When it comes to validity, Merriam (1994) distinguishes between internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the level of which the results of the study are coherent to reality and if the results truly are capturing the reality. It also refers to whether the authors study or measure what they intend to (Merriam, 1994). The level of the internal validity of this study is considered relatively high due to the fact that the case study is done using two different data collection techniques. External validity refers to what extent the result of the study can be applicable to other situations (Merriam, 1994). The aim of this study was to present results that are generalizable and that can be applied to other small online branded retailers in their online marketing strategies. However, conducting case study research is, according to Bryman (2012), negatively influencing the external validity. Bryman (2012) questions the ability of the findings from one single case to be applied more generally to other cases. This risk has in this case, as mentioned above, been reduced by our strategic choice of case in line with the viewpoint of Flyvbjerg (2006). The use of triangulation throughout the analysis is also a factor that is increasing the validity. This since the use of multiple data collection methods positively affects both the internal and the external validity (Merriam, 1994). Due to the fact that we have collected and analyzed different kinds of data from both researchers and theorists as well as from our in-depth interview and customer survey, we have a greater opportunity to validate our results. This will lead to a richer explanation and a reassurance of the validity of the study.

The term reliability, on the other hand, is referring to the possibility of replicating or repeating a study and achieving the same results (Merriam, 1994). The use of triangulation when collecting the data is positively affecting the reliability (Merriam, 1994). The reliability of this study is negatively affected due to the fact that the online retailing industry has evolved and still is evolving at a rapid pace. The possibility to replicate this study and achieve the same results is difficult since the industry is known to change fast and therefore might not look the same in the future. This also applies to the social media platforms since they evolve and constantly change and therefore often are challenged by new ones that are entering the scene. We, as researchers and authors of this study, can also affect the reliability. The way we interpret theories, previous research and interviews can of course be difficult to replicate if someone else was to conduct the same study. However,
with a thoroughly elaborated theoretical framework and well-prepared questionnaires, the risk for this is reduced.

3.2 Collection of Data
In the mixed methods research, two methods for collecting data were used. First of all an in-depth interview with two of the founders of L'Homme Rouge and secondly a survey with the brand's customers.

3.2.1 In-Depth Interview with L’Homme Rouge
The in-depth interview with L'Homme Rouge was conducted with the intention to gather data regarding their current and desired future situation, in terms of customer loyalty, social media usage and overall background information of their current social media strategies. The interview lasted 40 minutes and was carried out at the office of L’Homme Rouge on May 6th, 2013 with the Managing Director, John-Ruben Holtback and the Sales and Marketing Director, Axel Trägårdh. Due to the above stated intention of the interview, Holtback and Trägårdh were both informants and respondents.

The interview was of qualitative nature and conducted in a semi-structured way, which means that we as interviewers prepared an outline of topics and questions (see Appendix 2). In order to come up with appropriate and relevant topics and questions, we looked to previous research done in the field as well as made sure that the questions were well connected to the chosen theoretical framework. Despite the preparation, during the interview we could freely choose the order and wording of the questions (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2010), as well as add new ones depending on the answers given by the respondents. We did however make sure that we accomplished the two tasks that, according to Yin (2009), are required during a semi-structured interview. These are to roughly follow the order of the topics and questions prepared as well as to formulate the questions in a way that does not create confusion (Yin, 2009). The questions asked in the interview where of open character, which allowed the respondents to speak more freely and gave them more control of the responses. A semi-structured manner also makes it possible to uncover rich insight as well as unexpected examples. It also results in a more fluid conversation and does often, according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2010), also result in more detailed answers, which is one of the main advantages with this type of interview (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2010).

The interview was recorded, giving us, as interviewers the possibility to be more alert, observant and able to follow up on interesting points. However, roles were decided beforehand to reduce possible confusion with the respondents. During the interview Hanna asked the questions and Susanne took notes. L'Homme Rouge’s office is located in Gothenburg, which meant that we had the privilege to visit them at their office and conduct
the interview there, rather than via telephone or e-mail. The benefits with doing the interview in person are the possibility to ask follow-up questions as well as clarity in the communication given by the possibility to read the respondents body language.

3.2.2 Survey With Customers
A customer survey was conducted with the intent to get an understanding of L’Homme Rouge’s customers’ opinion regarding brands and social media (see Appendix 3). It also sought to capture their experiences of how well, or bad, brands use social media to connect with customers as well as their opinion concerning L’Homme Rouge’s social media usage. The online survey was constructed on the web based survey site FluidSurveys (www.fluidsurveys.se), and later posted on the L’Homme Rouge facebook page. Before the survey was sent out, a pretest was conducted with five respondents in order to find areas in need of improvement. The survey was then sent out and resulted in 85 responses but since three were unfinished, 82 questionnaires were declared valid. The survey was filled out by 66 percent men and 34 percent women with a majority in the age of 20 to 30 years. When the survey was posted, L’Homme Rouge had just under 1 400 “likes” on their Facebook page. Since there are no additional costs for each survey sent out on the Internet, compared to sending it by traditional mail, the choice of aiming broadly was made. Presumably, not all of the 1400 followers saw the post with the survey, since it was posted as a “news feed” and not sent out in a personal message to everyone. This may have contributed to the fact that it was challenging to collect a large number of responses. Perhaps, sending the survey in a personal message would have resulted in more responses. However, with the risk of irritating and spamming L’Homme Rouge’s Facebook followers, this was something that we together with the company, chose not to do. Also, our choice of aiming broadly decreases the certainty of knowing how many respondents have been reached by the survey compared with a traditional mail survey. Consequently, it results in a non-response rate that should not be compared with the equivalent of traditional mail surveys.

Since the quantitative survey was analyzed in a more qualitative manner, no specific sample size was required. Instead there was a need for a certain number of responses to meet empirical saturation, which is the point where a new interview will not contribute with any new answers (Kvale, 2009). This was reached at around 80 responses, where we noted repetition among the answers. By defining our sample selection as the followers on Facebook, followers on other social media platforms were excluded. Since all the respondents of the survey follow L’Homme Rouge on Facebook, there is a risk that they are biased. There is also a risk that the respondents answering the survey have a personal connection to the founders of L’Homme Rouge, and therefore conduct the survey as a favor. That might make them reluctant to give any negative answers or critique towards the brand.
The questions in the survey were mostly closed questions, but there were also a couple of open questions to get more nuanced responses (Østbye, Knapskog, Helland & Larsen, 2003) and a better understanding of certain aspects. As with the questions in the in-depth interview, we turned to previous research to construct relevant and appropriate questions that were well connected to the theoretical framework in the study (Bryman, 2012). The first 11 questions were more general about brands and social media, whereas the last five questions were specifically concerning L’Homme Rouge. The reason for this was that we wanted to get an overall understanding of what the respondents think of companies on social media, but also what they specifically think about L’Homme Rouge’s social media activity. Respondents were asked about their level of awareness of companies on social media as well as which different social media platforms they are personally using and preferring. The reason as to why a survey was conducted with the customers instead of another method, for example in-depth interviews, was the desired quantity of respondents and thereof the wider insight into the customers’ opinions. If in-depth interviews had been conducted instead, the amount of respondents would have decreased immensely, mainly because of the time constraint.

According to some researchers within the field of social media (Baird & Parasnis, 2009) there is often a gap between what consumers want to see on brands social media platforms and what they are offering. To further research whether this is the case or not, we chose to include a question regarding this in our research. We therefore first asked L’Homme Rouge to rank some different factors concerning why the think consumers have chosen to follow them on social media. We thereafter also included the very same question and factors in the online survey where the respondents were asked to do the same ranking. The results are presented in a model where L’Homme Rouge’s ranking is put in comparison to the one from the customers with the aim to examine whether this perception gap also appears in the case of L’Homme Rouge.

3.2.3 Validity and Reliability Concerning the Survey and the In-Depth Interview
There are of course aspects of the chosen methods of data collection that might have affected the validity and reliability of the study. Firstly, there is a risk that the questions were misleading and put in a wrong way, which in that case would affect both the reliability and the inner validity. However, by doing a pretest of the customer survey before sending it out to the respondents, the risk was reduced. This ensures that we, to a greater extent, measure what we intend to. It also reduces the risk of respondents misunderstanding the questions of the survey, which would give us wrong input for the purpose of our study as well as provide highly different answers in a replication of the study. However, when asking respondents of the survey which social media platform they prefer when following a company, it is important in the analysis to keep in mind that the
respondents were chosen because of the fact that they follow a company on Facebook. That might lead to some results being skewed in favor of Facebook.

In the in-depth interview, there is a risk that we as interviewers influence the respondents. They might become nervous because of the way we are asking the question, which could result in an apprehension of telling the truth, or they might be stressed if we have a shortage of time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). However, the risk of this was reduced through our non time constrained, open and semi-structured interview, which, as previously mentioned, allowed the interview to flow more freely in a more conversation-like form. The respondents can moreover also be affected by internal circumstances, such as hunger or bad sleep (Denscombe, 2009). This affects the internal validity and the replication of the study (Bryman, 2012). To minimize the impact of this risk, the interview was carried out at the office of the respondents and consequently in their comfort zone.

We have recorded the interview and thereafter transcribed it to further increase the inner validity (Saunders, et al., 2009). The inner validity will increase due to the fact that, by doing this we are able to process and emphasize what is relevant for the study and secure that we only analyze what we intend to. As previously mentioned, the questions in both the survey and the in-depth interview were carefully considered and well connected to the theoretical framework, which increases the internal validity (Bryman, 2012). By using open questions, however, the reliability is decreased since the replication of the study is made difficult by the possibility for the respondent to answer freely. The fact that the respondents opinions are tied to context, which makes them change over time, leads to a negative impact on the reliability because the result of the study can only be applied to the moment in which it was conducted (Saunders, et al., 2009).

3.3 Analysis of Data
The findings collected through the different methods were tied together in the analysis and matched to each other through triangulation of data. Matching and comparing the results from the two studies will make it possible to draw a collective conclusion (Yin, 2009). A combination of methodological triangulation and data triangulation was applied. To get at good flow in the analysis and touch upon all the important parts, the analysis was structured in accordance with the theoretical framework. Firstly, with the main implications from the literature concerning customer loyalty and secondly, with the main findings in the field of social media. All of the findings from the customer survey, the in-depth interview as well as the theoretical framework were matched and put in relation to each other to determine and suggest how social media can enhance customer loyalty for small online branded retailers.
4. Results

In the following section, the findings that have emerged from the case study of L’Homme Rouge will be presented. Firstly, the main findings from the in-depth interview with two of the founders of the brand will be introduced. Thereafter the results from the online customer survey will be presented in with the help of figures with texts describing the results.

4.1 Interview With L’Homme Rouge

L’Homme Rouge is a small fashion brand founded in Lund, Sweden, by brothers John-Ruben Holtback (Managing Director) and Carl-Johan Holtback (Financial Director) and friend Axel Trägårdh (Sales and Marketing Director). L’Homme Rouge has since the start in 2010 transformed from just selling knitted hats to designing and letting produce seasonal collections twice a year. According to Holtback and Trägårdh, they want to be perceived as a brand that is providing high-quality clothes with a timeless design. They want the brand to be seen as cool, esthetic and sophisticated. They also want to add some attitude to not be perceived as boring. The aim is to provide customers with a product that will transcend seasons and grow with the customer. They value CSR and sustainability and therefore do not want to be associated with any kind of fast fashion. By offering this to customers, L’Homme Rouge hope to contribute to decreasing overproduction in today’s society. Their typical customer as well as the one they mostly target is a fashionable man around 20-35 years old. However, Holtback and Trägårdh emphasize that they do not want to have a too narrow and specific target group. They have therefore chosen to for example also use women in some of their lookbooks as well as portray their products both in a fancy and a casual way on their image pictures.

L’Homme Rouge initially worked with marketing the brand with a concept they called “welcome to the family” to create a cosy and familiar feeling of the brand. They recently made an active choice to add some attitude to the brand and consequently turn away from the cosiness. They however still want to have a personal touch on everything they do by for example writing “this is Carl-Johan’s favorite” on a product as well as upload some pictures of themselves on the website. They also stated that they get a lot of feedback from friends on Facebook and Instagram and that the interaction always feels very personal. When it comes to feedback from customers, Holtback and Trägårdh cannot recall that they have gotten anything other than positive feedback. Most of it is via social media but they can sometimes also receive feedback or questions through e-mail. They make sure to try and respond to feedback and have gotten credit for quick responses and good service. One interesting point that was declared during the interview was that many people think that L’Homme Rouge is bigger than it actually is. This has come to their attention since they have had a few people, among others two people from France, who have shown interest in doing internships at L’Homme Rouge.
When marketing and making the brand famous, Holtback and Trägårdh explain that using friends and family as ambassadors have been helpful. They however say that they have not worked with it specifically but that it has come quite natural. They have gotten a lot of free marketing through Facebook since having a friend for example “like” the brand on Facebook automatically leads to some of their friends doing the same thing. Holtback and Trägårdh point out that they have always been interested in having loyal customers. This since it is an efficient way of, already in the beginning, tying the customers to the brand. They mean that their customers today are loyal because of the fact that they are friends and friends of friends. As the brand is growing and expanding into new markets, it is challenging and more difficult to develop customer loyalty since the personal relationship that, up until today has been provided through friends, is missing. Holtback mentions that it in these cases is interesting to see in what way the use of social media can be beneficial.

When asked how they believe that customers initially come in contact with the brand, Holtback expressed that it might be through a friend, online or from seeing it in a magazine. Wherever it is, he believes that it is important to make a good first impression and provide the customer with a good experience. This can be done with a good product of high-quality, nice looking packaging and an intriguing concept. The next step would preferably be to get the person to “like” the brand on Facebook or Instagram and maybe also sign up for getting e-mails from the brand. Even though the first contact with the brand not necessarily needs to result in a purchase, the founders have an ambition of always providing the customer with a pleasant and memorable experience. By doing this, and creating as much added value as possible around the products, they hope to increase brand awareness.

L’Homme Rouge is highly present on different social media platforms. They can as of today be found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Foursquare. Their biggest channel, and where they are the most active, is the brands official Facebook page. There they have the possibility to always post the link to the brands website to get both new and existing customers to enter the website. According to Holtback, one of the main goals when posting something on Facebook is after all to direct the customers to the website and to increase traffic on the website. They also use their Instagram account quite actively and they have noticed that Instagram is increasing in popularity. However, as opposed to Facebook, it is more difficult to interact with customers on Instagram since the information flow is more limited. Holtback and Trägårdh are aware of this and have therefore thought about using Instagram in a different way to create some added value for the consumers and communicate a more personal feeling of the brand. They therefore post pictures from business trips, fairs, products as well as some “behind the scenes” footage. To involve the customers on Instagram, they have the hashtag “lhommerouge” (#lhommerouge), which enables customers to hashtag themselves when they wear products from L’Homme Rouge or just post a picture relating to the brand. This hashtag is connected to their homepage.
and all the pictures with the hashtag will show up on their homepage, which shows existing and potential customers more of the brand. To further show customers a bit more of the brand, L’Homme Rouge also has a Tumblr blog on their website. There they simply post inspirational pictures that they would like to associate with the brand, with the aim of giving customers a “feel” of the brand.

When it comes to the posts that L’Homme Rouge has on social media, Trägårdh points out that everything is carefully thought through. He explains that they do not want to post something for the sake of it, but instead always have a thought behind it. To not spam the customers with too many posts is also very important. They mention that it sometimes is difficult to find content, but that they always try to post something that they think the customers find interesting. They are furthermore writing and formulating everything in a specific way, which is corresponding with their brand. By doing that they make sure that everything is coherent on their various social media platforms. When it comes to the tools that social media offers (share, like, comment, hashtag etcetera) Holtback and Trägårdh are agreed on the fact that they are very helpful. They also mention that they currently have many followers on Facebook that actively “like” and “share” content from L’Homme Rouge and that it is easy for them to follow. As previously mentioned, the brand also have their own hashtag on Instagram where consumers tag themselves wearing something from L’Homme Rouge which later ends up on the brand’s website. However, they confess that they initially had a higher ambition for the hashtag and thought that more consumers would see it as a fun thing. Their expectations were consequently a bit higher but they believe that the more products they will sell, the more they will be seen “out there”.

L’Homme Rouge has also tried to integrate the consumers on social media to also get feedback from them. Holtback and Trägårdh mention that they once asked the customers what they would like to see in terms of future products. They got a lot of feedback and ideas from their customers and also noticed that the customers liked the interaction. Another time, they posted a question asking the customers what was missing on their blog, but that on the other hand resulted in almost no comments. Trägårdh also reveals that they have had a competition on Facebook where people could propose suggestions regarding what the name for their famous knitted hat should be. The person with the best name suggestion won a hat. This competition was also successful in terms of integrating with the customers and providing them with an opportunity to have a say in the matter. Holtback explains that it of course is fun for a customer to know that he or she was involved in a small part of the business and that it also make them feel more connected to the brand.

When being asked about their future goals in terms of social media, Holtback and Trägårdh mention that they would like to be as early as possible with adapting new channels and platforms. They see that as a strategy to attract some extra followers. They also want to
work actively with their current platforms and interact with their customers, or “fans” as they sometimes call them. They mention some ideas of how to further develop their Tumblr blog by adding more “behind the scenes” features, add some interviews with their Creative Director Jonatan Härngren to give him the possibility to communicate his ideas behind the products. They both have the impression that consumers are interested in getting this kind of insight into a brand and also emphasizes that it further provides L’Homme Rouge with a personal touch. Another future goal is to work more with a kind of e-mail marketing and let customers subscribe to getting e-mails from the brand.

Collaborations of different kinds is also something that L’Homme Rouge want and intend to work more with in the future. They have already collaborated with Swedish blogger Andreas Wijk and provided him with some bathing shorts from the brand. He later posted pictures of him wearing them on his blog on kanal5.se. They have also co-operated in some CSR projects to contribute to a sustainable future. They have supported Musikhjälpen with products, which raised money to children growing up in the slum and have also been taking part in raising money to water wells in Africa. Another kind of collaboration that L’Homme Rouge also want to work more with in the future is collaborations between brands. They mention that it is popular and trendy at the moment and that they have started to work with it as well. However, since they are still quite small, they explain that it is a bit difficult, so it currently mostly includes “liking” other brands on Facebook that they find cool.
4.2 Survey With Customers
The results from the customer survey are presented below with the help of text and figures. The column showing “total quantity” is referring to the total number of respondents, while “quantity” refers to the number of answers on each statement. Some of the questions allow multiple answers where the respondents could pick more than one suitable statement. Due to this, the total sum of the percentage is sometimes more than 100 percent.

Figure 1: Which of the following social media platforms are you using?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vine</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own blog</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows all of the respondents are present on Facebook, and almost all are also using Instagram. Interesting to notice is that the fairly new social media platform Vine, which is focused around videos, is marginally more popular than Tumblr and Pinterest among our respondents. Respondents who chose to write something on “other” replied that they also use LinkedIn.

Figure 2: What is important for you to choose to follow a company on social media?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That I find the brand interesting</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That my friends follow them</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I won’t be &quot;spammed&quot;, meaning they update too much</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I will get discounts</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That I feel that they have honest communication</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total quantity: 82
It is according to almost all of the respondents of importance for them to have an interest in a brand in order to follow that brand on social media. A majority of the respondents also feel that it is important to not get spammed by the company, meaning that the company will not update their social media platforms too often. It is worth noting that having a friend follow a company on social media is not at all necessary for the respondents to follow a company. Another interesting point is that practically half of the respondents consider it important that a feeling of honesty is given in the company’s communication.

As figure 3 shows, more than half of the respondents would be willing to give feedback, or submit ideas if the company would ask them to, compared to 24 percent that would never give feedback or submit ideas. A little less than half of the respondents claim that they would have to be dissatisfied with a product or service in order to give feedback to a company. Lastly, 34 percent claim that they would give feedback or submit ideas when they are satisfied with a product or service.
Facebook is the obvious preferred choice among the respondents when asked about the preferred social media channel for following a company. However, since the respondents were asked because of the fact that they already are following a company on Facebook, the results are not surprising. Instagram is the second most popular choice among 30 percent of the respondents, followed by Twitter at 6 percent. Other answers included LinkedIn.

Figure 5: Have you ever followed a company on social media and later changed your opinion about that company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, to the positive</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, to the negative</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total quantity: 81

Figure 5 shows that 38 percent of the respondents claim that they have had a positively changed opinion about a company after following them on social media. 22 percent claim that they have had their opinion changed negatively. Almost half of the respondents declare that they have not changed their opinion after following a company on social media. One of the respondents failed to answer this question.

Figure 6: If "Yes, to the positive", why did you change your opinion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because I got discounts</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I got exclusive information</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I got insight &quot;behind the scenes&quot; of the brand</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the company posted inspiring photos and information</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I could interact with the company and give feedback</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total quantity: 32
The reason as to why 38 percent of the respondents in figure 5 had a positively changed opinion after following a brand on social media was mainly because of the fact that the company posted inspiring photos and posts. That the company showed how it works “behind the scenes” as well as provided exclusive information was also contributing reasons.

Figure 7: If "Yes, to the negative", why did you change your opinion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because the company posted too often</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the company's posts were boring</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the company posted information and photos that I've already seen on the website</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the company posted the same on every social media platform</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because the company try to push their products on me</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total quantity: 18

The reason as to why 22 percent, on the other hand, experienced a negatively changed opinion after following a brand on social media, was mainly because of the fact that the company posted too often, but also that they posted boring things. At 28 percent each were the reasons that the company posted the same things on different social media platforms, and that the respondents felt that the company tried to push their products on them. Other reasons include: “The company tries to act like social media experts” and "the company posted stupid things that were not in line with their image".
When shopping on the Internet, 61 percent of the respondents would shop where they have shopped before, rather than on new and different webshops.

Regarding the statement "Companies that use social media in their communication with their customers are more likely to have a significant competitive advantage over those that do not." a majority of 88 percent agree that the statement is true.
Figure 10

The model above shows results from proposing the same question to both the customers as well as L’Homme Rouge to see if a possible perception gap occurs. When asked which three reasons that were most influential in the decision of following L’Homme Rouge on social media, the company’s guess was in line with what the customers actually responded. They both stated, “Interest in the brand” as the main reason. The second reason, “To receive information about products and assortment” was also picked by both L’Homme Rouge and the customers. The reasons “Exclusive information” and “To feel connected to the brand” were furthermore stated as top reasons in both the interview and the survey. However, as seen in the model, the third and fourth reasons have switched places, which indicates a slight difference. Worth noting is that L’Homme Rouge placed “Discounts” far down whereas 11 percent of the respondents in the survey placed it in the middle. To be able to get or give “Customer service” via social media does not seem to be of importance since it was put next to last by both the customers and L’Homme Rouge. Respondents who chose to write something under “Other reasons” mainly wrote “to show support” and “I know the founders” but also “for their inspirational pictures and them being fashion role models.”
As the circle diagram in figure 11 shows, a total of 99 percent of the respondents would recommend L'Homme Rouge to someone they know. Only one percent replied no in the question.

To get an understanding if there is something that L’Homme Rouge is missing on social media, the respondents were asked to freely fill out what that might possibly be. Out of the 82 respondents, 57 did not write anything on the question. There were consequently 17 respondents who had suggestions and ideas about what is currently missing. More “behind the scenes” pictures that, for example capture the production process, as well as more inspiring photos is something that the customers desire. One respondent wrote that since Instagram is basically only pictures and no text, they can and should update more often there without the risk of tiring and spamming the followers. Competitions, more products and various recorded videos from the brand were also suggestions that the L’Homme Rouge customers had. Some respondents also wish that the brand join the social media platforms Vine and Pinterest. Lastly, two respondents desire discounts as well as maybe a clearance sale.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked to freely come up with some crazy, fun and creative ideas concerning what L’Homme Rouge can do on social media. Many suggestions were given and the dominating and most frequently mentioned ideas were videos and competitions. Respondents suggest unique, “masterpiece” videos that attract a lot of viewers. To further work with videos, some respondents suggest that L’Homme Rouge create a YouTube channel where they upload videos showing “behind the scenes”, interviews, insights from fashion fairs, release parties, concerts etcetera. One respondent mentioned a previous transition from text to pictures and stated that future social media will include voice or video. Various competitions was also a popular suggestion such as
most creative L’Homme Rouge outfit, best picture of the day will win a product, design contests where the winner will be able to continue working with the brand and so on. Respondents emphasize that they want to be involved and that the brand should have competitions that benefit both the customers and the brand. Worth mentioning is that one respondent stated that an efficient way to get more “likes” is to give the followers on social media the possibility to purchase the products earlier and also give them some discount during a certain amount of hours.

Another respondent wrote that they want L’Homme Rouge to do something crazy that no one has ever done before to make them think, “these guys are so cool”. To design a showroom in the form of a tree house was also a crazy idea that was suggested. Another interesting implication is that some respondents think that L’Homme Rouge should connect and involve music in their communication. One of these respondents suggested that they have something similar to “the song of the month” which they present on their blog and Facebook and that they also can design and sell some t-shirts with prints relating to some of the songs they have presented. To somehow connect their brand to Spotify is also desired. Some final suggestions include collaborations with famous bloggers, more personal and inspirational pictures and a page on photo sharing website Pinterest.
5. Analysis of Results and Discussion
In this section, the findings from the research of online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge and their customers will be analyzed and discussed with the help of the theoretical framework on customer loyalty and social media. The main statements will be highlighted and put in relation to what have emerged from the in-dept interview and the survey. Finally some suggestions concerning how to use social media to enhance customer loyalty will be presented.

5.1 Customer Loyalty
As a result of the explosion of social media, the contact between consumers and companies has catapulted and is now closer and more active than ever (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). In the enormous jungle of social media platforms on the Internet, getting your existing customers to stick around is something that has proved to be essential for an online retailer (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). After examining online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge, it has become clear that it is also something that they value and strive for. Due to their limited budget, they are right in wanting this, since it cost more to attract new customers than to retain old ones (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Even though the ways in which companies do business today have drastically changed, Reichheld and Schefter (2000) still argue that the meaning of customer loyalty is the same and as important as ever. The study contributes to an understanding of the fact that except for being a competitive necessity, having loyal customers will also positively influence a brand’s profitability (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987 Clark, 1997; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Two of the main findings in the literature within the field of loyalty are that trust as well as recommendations from friends or family are of great importance.

5.1.1 Trust
According to Oliver (1999) and Yin (1999), a customer who constantly chooses to purchase products from the same company is showing loyalty to that brand. However, Reichheld (2003) on the other hand means that there is a very important factor missing in this definition and that is earning trust from the consumer. A company first has to gain the trust of their customers before they will be loyal. The traditional literature presented in the study indicates that most researchers (Hoffmann et al., 1999; Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Braum, 2000) are agreed when it comes to the importance of trust. It is moreover particularly important when developing customer loyalty on the Internet since it is a dishonest and unreliable marketplace (Gommans et al., 2001; Foux, 2006). Since the business of an online branded retailer, such as L’Homme Rouge, is conducted at a distance, there are more risks and uncertainties in comparison to a normal brick and mortar store and the traditional way of developing trust is excluded. The customers are not greeted by a salesperson and assisted in the store, nor do they have the possibility to touch and feel the
products that they are purchasing (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). The literature concerning loyalty has shown that a company cannot buy trust. They have to earn it and this is done by acting in the best interests of their customers (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

It is worth noting that the findings from the survey also indicate the importance of trust. This since 61 percent of the respondents replied that they would rather shop at a webshop where they have previously purchased something (see figure 8). That can be seen as an indication that consumers value trust since they probably have developed a form of trust by previously purchasing something from the company. They have experienced the whole shopping procedure, they know the payment conditions and they know what to do if problems occur and so on. This is something that small online branded retailers as L’Homme Rouge should take into account since a few or maybe even one successful purchase experience might be enough for the customer to trust the brand and return. On the contrary, if a customer has problems trusting a brand, he or she will, according to Reichheld and Schefter (2000) and Gommans et al. (2001), immediately turn away and shop somewhere else.

Baird and Parasnis (2011) emphasize that before consumers make the decision to interact with brands on social media, they have to feel that they are communicating honestly. This statement is in line with the findings from the customer survey with L’Homme Rouge’s customers. When asked about what is important for them to start following a brand on social media, 44 percent value that they feel that the brand is communicating honestly (see figure 2). This indicates that the brand needs to be careful and considerate in terms of what they upload on social media to not risk being seen, as Baird and Parasnis (2011) put it, manipulative and dishonest. However, during the interview with L’Homme Rouge, it was clear that they have a thought behind every post and that they do not want to post something just for the sake of it. They are therefore seemingly aware of not writing things on social media that they cannot stand for or verify.

A relatively easy action that companies can do to earn trust and reduce the risk of being seen as manipulative and insincere is to always have a lot of information available. Both Baird and Parasnis (2011) and Mangold and Faulds (2009) have found that transparency is an important aspect to make a consumer trust a brand. A consumer who feels that information is lacking might instantly get the impression that something is not right and that the company has something to hide. In the case of L’Homme Rouge this indicates the importance of providing a lot of information regarding everything from products, terms and conditions and customer service to future projects and production. Providing sufficient information about the products can be achieved by having good and truthful product images, detailed information about fabrics, a descriptive guide for sizes, provide information of how to wash the garments etcetera. To give customers a glimpse of future
collections and products, the brand could put together and show some mood boards with inspiration. By having a lot of information available, the consumers are also more likely to talk about the brand since they feel that they are well informed (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The power of getting consumers to talk about a brand will be discussed further down.

When asked about how they work with developing trust among their customers, L’Homme Rouge replied that they initially used the phrase and mentality of “welcome to the family” to promote their brand. They have now stepped away from it since they wanted to add more attitude to the brand. They however still actively work with trying to provide the brand with a personal touch and therefore put down effort on engaging with the customers. They do that by being fast and active when it comes to responding to feedback as well as asking the customers about future desires. Grönroos (2000) have declared that paying attention to customer feedback as well as dealing with complaints and questions is an important part in building long-term relationships. Since succeeding in attaining long-term relationships with customers will contribute to both sides trusting each other, it is important for L’Homme Rouge and other small online retailers to strive for that (Grönroos, 2000). It will enhance customer loyalty and most likely increase the possibility of them recommending the brand to their friends (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Bentley, 1999; Thatcher & George, 2004).

5.1.2 Recommendations
As briefly mentioned further up, it is important and also beneficial for a company to get the consumers to talk about their brand. So called word of mouth is frequently mentioned in the literature and researchers such as Oliver (1999) and Reichheld (2003) conclude that it is one of the strongest indications that a customer is loyal. They are only willing to recommend their friends about a brand when they trust that brand. To get customers to recommend and talk about a brand is also lucrative since it provides free advertising (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). With the help of social media and the tools available, it is nowadays easy to recommend friends about brands since “word of mouse” spreads even faster than “word of mouth” (Reichheld, 2003). Recommendations and endorsements from friends can be seen everytime someone “like” a company on Facebook or “re-tweets” their status on Twitter etcetera. L’Homme Rouge shared that they as of today have very loyal customers and that it is a lot thanks to the fact that it is friends and family and their friends. They have also experienced that it is efficient to have friends “like” their brand on Facebook and share content that they upload. A question that was proposed in the survey with their customers further indicates that they are loyal since 99 percent are willing to recommend the brand to their friends (see figure 11). However, some effort might have to be put down to actually get them to do so and Baird and Parasnis (2011) mean that companies need to encourage their customers to spread their brand with the help of social media tools.
To encourage consumers to share their experiences with brands on social media can be done by fun and creative marketing campaigns (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). One idea is to reward the followers on Facebook or Instagram when they share the brands page. By for example writing that every follower will get a reward when the brand reaches a certain amount of followers will most likely make them share it with friends. To increase the number of followers on Instagram, L’Homme Rouge could upload a cool picture on Facebook telling consumers that they have some exciting news or a surprise on Instagram, which might make them go in there and check it out and follow the brand on Instagram as well. The brand can also connect it to causes that are of interest to the consumers and donate money to charity for every “like” they get on Facebook (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). A suggestion for L’Homme Rouge could be to use the popularity of their famous knitted hat and make a special limited edition of it. An example would be to produce a pink knitted hat and join the fight against breast cancer. It could be promoted during the time of the year when focus is put on breast cancer and hopefully get some attention among bloggers and in media.

L’Homme Rouge are working with trying to get their customers to share the brand and their products by using their hashtag #lhommerouge on Instagram. Since it shows up on the brands website, it is a fun and creative way of showing other consumers what the products look like “in action”. Mangold and Faulds (2009) state that seeing a product in motion is both fun and entertaining for others since it more clearly communicates product benefits. For L’Homme Rouge to get more spin on their hashtag and encourage more customers to use it, they could address some competitions. By for example asking the consumers to upload a picture of them wearing the brand and then let all the followers vote and decide the winner is both fun and rewarding for both parties. By letting the customers vote and be a part of finding the winner, they will feel even more connected to the brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This kind of competitions are also something that their customers, according to the survey, would desire and advice the brand to do. More suggestions concerning how to take advantage of social media will be discussed below.

5.2 Social Media - Embrace the Power Shift
The study has, as already mentioned, found that trust and recommendations are two important factors in terms of customer loyalty. Since social media, according to Constantinides et al. (2008), is focused on building relationships, it is a useful tool for a company in the process of gaining trust from their customers. It is also about producing and sharing content (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013), which is why it also is useful in terms of getting consumers to recommend brands to their friends. The survey confirms the research and revealed that a majority of the respondents agree that companies using social media to engage with customers will benefit and reach a competitive advantage over those who do not (see Figure 9). Companies are increasingly taking advantage of the possibilities
that social media offers and use it to engage with their customers as much as possible. However, consumers are no longer passive recipients, which makes it challenging for companies to control what is being said about them (Vollmer & Precourt, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Baird and Parasnis (2011), there has been a shift in power regarding who is in control of the information that is spread about a company on the Internet. The consumers are now in control and are actively spreading information by producing, sharing and consuming content (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013). For a company to embrace the power shift, seven suggestions concerning how to use social media to enhance customer loyalty have been developed. Every suggestion is presented as a headline and further discussed below.

5.2.1 Be Interesting and Outrageous
The whole shift in power is an effect of social media, where the possibility for one single consumer to reach a large number of other consumers has evolved and increased over time. As a result of the shift of who is in control, a different approach is required from the companies side (Constantinides et al. 2008). Baird and Parasnis (2011) state that companies need to embrace this power shift. It is not worth putting down time and effort to try and stop negative things that consumers say about the company on social media, since the same rate of speed in diffusion can work as an advantage. The customer’s willingness to talk about a product or a brand can increase if the company launches a marketing campaign that can be considered interesting or even outrageous (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This statement seems to be reaffirmed by L’Homme Rouge’s customers who seem to be all up for interesting and outrageous ideas. 95 percent of the respondents claim that it is important for them to find the brand interesting in order for them to follow them on social media (see figure 2). Also, in the survey, one of the respondents stated that they want L’Homme Rouge to do something that would make them think “these guys are so cool”. Another respondent gave an example of a crazy idea, which was to make a showroom in the form of a treehouse. While it is a good idea, it is also understandable that it perhaps is a bit difficult to execute such a thing for a small online branded retailer like L’Homme Rouge. However, the idea of doing something that crazy, such as an astonishing design of a showroom, that will be noticed will most certainly make people talk about the company. If it is something worth taking a picture of, it will probably spread all over social media and be shared with everything from hashtags to re-tweets. The survey with the customers indicates that they want the brand to think outside the box. They are positive as well as curious for some craziness and uniqueness on social media and see it as beneficial to stick out from the crowd.

If an outrageous marketing campaign would fail, the negative effects on the existing customers might, according to Stratigos (1999) and Reichheld (2003), not be as big as one
might think, since loyal customers are more tolerant when it comes to mistakes. If they are truly loyal to the brand, they will most likely continue to be loyal and not turn away from the brand (Stratigos, 1999; Reichheld, 2003). With this in mind, L’Homme Rouge as well as other small online branded retailers are encouraged to take some risks regarding marketing and to not always take the safe way. It is in some cases better that consumers talk about your brand or your latest marketing campaigns, in contrast to no one saying or mentioning it at all. Even if it once in a while is some bad comments that are circling around, it might still create a buzz which can lead to other consumers seeking out the brand and finding it interesting.

5.2.2 Be Where Your Customers Are
L’Homme Rouge stated that they try to be in the forefront when it comes to starting up accounts on new social media platforms. This is a strategy to get a lot of followers right from the start, since there are less users on the newly started platforms. By being in the forefront of social media, the threat of being outplayed by creative consumers (Kietzmann et al., 2011) is reduced since the brand itself is early in adopting the new platform. However, when entering a new social media platform, it is of importance to choose carefully. One way of making sure that you choose the right platform is to find which one is used by the target market (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the survey with L’Homme Rouge’s customers, the most popular platforms among their customers are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Vine (see Figure 1). This shows that L’Homme Rouge to a great extent is present where their customers also are present. In L’Homme Rouge’s case, emphasize need to be put on communication through their Facebook page, partly because this is where they have most followers, but also because of the fact that the survey has established that Facebook is the preferred choice among the respondents when following a company on social media (see Figure 4). An important point regarding the usage of different social media platforms as well as a main key to success on social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is being active. Hence, L’Homme Rouge’s current tactic of entering all new social media platforms, and as a result due to lack of time not being able to be active on all of them, is challenged by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). Another important aspect is coherence between the different platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This is something L’Homme Rouge is well aware of as they work hard on creating the same unique “feel” around the brand, in all channels.

Being in the forefront is a way of keeping the brand interesting for the customers. Since 22 percent of the respondents are present on video platform Vine (see figure 1), it would be a smart move to start an account there. This is something that L’Homme Rouge mentions that they have thought about doing and it is also something that the customers, when asked to suggest ideas for the brand, desire and would find interesting.
"More videos... from e.g. fashion fairs, release parties, concerts etcetera."

"YouTube channel with “making of” videos. Some craziness and a lot of philosophical interviews/thoughts/ideas with the guys behind L’Homme Rouge."

To keep making the brand interesting as well as listening to the desires from the customers, L’Homme Rouge should work with putting together some videos showing “behind the scenes” footage from the production, fairs, fittings or photo shoots etcetera. Since Vine only allows videos of a maximum length of six seconds, an alternative would be to start using YouTube. These ideas are drawn from the fact that the top reasons as to why customers had a positive change in opinion towards a brand after following them on social media is that the brand posted inspiring photos and information as well as gave the consumers an insight “behind the scenes” of the brand (see Figure 6). To further be interesting and at the same time listen to what the consumers desire, L’Homme Rouge should consider connecting and involving music in their communication. One respondent mentioned a “song of the month” concept where songs that fit to the brand would be presented. The brand could, according to a respondent, also connect music in the design process by designing t-shirts with some lyrics on. Since Spotify was also mentioned, and most likely is a music platform where many consumers are today, the brand could also have a “L’Homme Rouge playlist” on Spotify with music associated with the brand.

Inspiring photos is something that is brought up several times in the survey, both in the question of what L’Homme Rouge is missing on social media as well as in the question where the respondents were asked to provide suggestions for L’Homme Rouge’s social media activity.

“More inspirational pictures on Instagram. Since they are only pictures, and not text, they can update more often without it being spam."

“Their own inspirational pictures.”

According to the survey, Instagram is the second most popular social media platform among the respondents, and as much as 88 percent of the respondents are present on Instagram (see Figure 1). It is also the second most popular platform when following a company on social media, with 30 percent of the respondents choosing Instagram over the other platforms (see Figure 4). During the interview with L’Homme Rouge, it was also revealed that they have noticed that Instagram is on the rise in popularity. They have further stated that they today use Instagram to communicate a more personal feeling of the brand by posting pictures from business trips, fairs, products and some “behind the scenes footage”. As previously mentioned these kind of pictures are also sought after by the
customers. However, the customers are also asking for more inspirational pictures. A suggestion for L’Homme Rouge would therefore be to continue to use Instagram, but also to use it more actively and inspirationally. It might not be enough to show “behind the scenes” pictures, but rather to take it a step further and make sure that the pictures are inspirational as well. Since they mentioned that they sometimes have a hard time finding content to post on Instagram, the advice would be to “stock up” on inspirational pictures, perhaps when they are on business trips or at fairs. They should not post all at once but instead have a supply of pictures to use when needed. It of course takes a lot of time to take pictures and also find things or locations that are cool and inspirational, but by putting down one day now and then to take a lot of pictures at once, they have the possibility to save pictures and upload them more frequently.

5.2.3 Involve Your Customers

Another important input regarding how to embrace the power shift comes from Constantinides et al. (2008). They suggest that companies should work more “on demand”, meaning that they should take in and utilize information and wishes expressed by their customers and seek to find rewarding collaborations between the company and their customers. That way they can aim at designing and producing products that the customers desire which will be rewarding for both parties. The findings from the customer survey have also shown that this seems to be of importance for the customers of L’Homme Rouge. The interest for a collaboration between the customers and the brand is expressed by the respondents several times throughout the survey. The suggestion of some type of design contribution from customers appears several times:

“Design your own L’Homme Rouge hat, and have it produced in the next collection.”

“Have a ‘design competition’ where L'Homme Rouge requests designs of a certain garment. The winning designer is allowed to take part in the production and gets the chance to continue to work with you.”

“Ask the customers to design the next collection.”

To be able to work “on demand”, a company needs to encourage its customers to give feedback in all its forms. Without getting feedback and input, it is impossible to make the customers a part of the daily business activities, which furthermore is an important driver for customer loyalty (Braum, 2000). If a company would succeed in making customers a part of the daily activities, it would make them feel passionate about the brand and more likely to interact with the company in the future (Constantinides et al., 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Baird and Parasnis, 2011). L’Homme Rouge has tried this approach with the establishment of their hashtag on Instagram (#lhommerouge) which is connected to
their website. However, the interview revealed that this has not been as popular as the
brand desired among the customers. It is difficult to establish if this is due to the fact that
the customers did not find it interesting enough or if they simply were not properly
informed of this hashtag. As stated in the research customers a willing to talk about a brand
if they feel that they are well informed (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), when applied to this
case, one could argue that in order for the customers to use the hashtag of a brand, they
must feel that they are well informed about both the brand and the hashtag’s existence.
Other suggestions to involve customers in the daily activities could involve their opinion on
future projects, events and as previously mentioned products and assortments.

The suggestion of working more “on demand” is of course possible to apply to various
levels depending on the company. As a fashion brand, with a clear and elaborated vision of
what they want to convey, the option of letting the customers design the next collection
might not seem tempting. However, to let the customers choose and vote between a
number of designs might be of interest since it is a good compromise of not fully involving
the customers but still letting them participate. As found in the interview, L’Homme Rouge
has already done such a thing where the customers could have a say about the color of the
next knitted hat which also was appreciated by the customers. Involving the customers like
this will first of all give them a sense of connection to the brand and secondly provide the
company with a better understanding of what the customers want, and consequently what
will sell. However, there were some useful insights raised during the interview, which
makes it a bit problematic and challenging. Being a fashion brand means working far in
advance and therefore being ahead of the customers in terms of designs, trends and colors,
meaning that the customers might not yet know what colored hat they would want in a
year or two. It is also understandable that most customers would feel unhappy or
disappointed with being asked about winter and fall clothes during spring or summertime.
Involving the customers therefore needs to be done in a smart and tasteful way to get the
customers interested and excited of contributing. It is also important to have in mind that
only involving the customers in a small part of the business activities will make them feel
connected. They do not have to become the new designers.

5.2.4 Understand and Listen to Your Customers
Baird and Parasnis (2011) mean that for companies to embrace the power shift they need
to understand what it is that triggers customers to use social media to seek out a brand and
also what it is that would make them reluctant to interact (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). The
interview showed that L’Homme Rouge has a good understanding of why their customers
chose to follow them on social media. They guessed that an interest in the brand as well as
to get information about products and assortment are the two main reasons to why
customers chose to follow them on social media. That is completely in line with what the
customers responded when they were asked the same question. The possible “perception
gap” that Baird and Parasnis (2011) mentioned is therefore non-existent in this case, which bodes well for the brand in their pursuit for loyal customers. Around 50 percent of the respondents claimed to have changed opinion about a brand after following the brand on social media (see figure 5). Top reasons as to why customers changed their opinion negatively were because of the fact that the company posted too often and that the posts were boring (see figure 7). This is in line with the findings in the interview, where L’Homme Rouge clearly mentioned that they do not want to post too often on their social media platforms, nor do they want to share uninteresting posts. However, the literature suggests that it is hard to know what the customers find interesting unless you ask them (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). An interesting insight cited previously by the respondents is one of the advantages with Instagram. Posting pictures is not as easily being seen as spamming, as compared to text. Since L’Homme Rouge already seems to have a clear understanding of why their customers follow them on social media, the suggestion is therefore to ask the customers what they find interesting and take advantage of that to not lose followers. They should also take some risks and not be too restricted by their fear of spamming the customers. As previously mentioned, the already loyal customers will not turn away from the brand because of a few mistakes.

5.2.5 Encourage and Respond To Feedback
Building long-term relationships between a company and a customer will contribute to both sides trusting each other and that will also, according to Grönroos (2000), lead to commitment. An important point in this regard is that companies need to put down a lot of time and effort to build relationships with their customer and make them feel connected to the brand. The research indicates that there are several ways in which this can be done and the possibility for a consumer to give feedback is, as previously mentioned, one of them (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Grönroos (2000) and Braum (2002) among others also emphasize the importance of feedback in building long-term relationships. It is important to be receptive and open for feedback from the customers and when for example negative feedback is given, the company also needs to deal with it (Grönroos, 2000). Thatcher and George (2004) claim that the loyal customers are the ones that submit complaints, whereas the ones that do not, could rather be seen as un-loyal. Furthermore, they mean that loyal customers submit their complaints in an effort to help the company to improve. As previously mentioned, the survey indicates that L’Homme Rouge has loyal customers, since a total of 99 percent of the respondents claim that they would recommend the brand to someone they know (see figure 11).

Figure 3 shows that 56 percent of the customers claim that in order for them to give feedback or submit ideas, they need to be asked to do so. L’Homme Rouge mentioned that they cannot remember receiving anything other than positive feedback from their customers, something they understandably perceived as something solely positive.
However, the question that arises is whether the customers really have been given any good opportunities to give feedback. The interactive nature that social media has makes it rather easy to handle feedback from customers and also follow-up on complaints and questions (Constantinides et al., 2008). It is not only beneficial for the consumers to be able to easily submit ideas and input but to a great extent also for the companies. They can gain effective feedback from their very own customers regarding product ideas, the design of their website, their customer service and so on, and it is much faster compared to using traditional marketing tools (Constantinides et al., 2008).

The suggestion would therefore be to try to open up for feedback, positive and negative. This could be done through a “Questions & Answers” (Q&A) event on their Facebook page, where customers are given the opportunity to ask what they want or perhaps through a live chat with the customers. Another suggestion is to simply ask customers continuously what they would like to see. For example when posting a picture on their Instagram from a business trip to Shanghai, they could ask “Guess where we are now?” or “What would you like to see from our trip to Shanghai?”. These types of questions make it interesting for the followers and have shown to be well received in L’Homme Rouge’s earlier attempts. The interview with L’Homme Rouge revealed that one of their previous attempts to involve their customers resulted in a lot of feedback and ideas from the customers and a positive response regarding the initiative and interaction. However, another attempt resulted in almost no feedback at all. The advice would be to not see it as a defeat, but rather as a learning experience, where they will reach an understanding of what their customers like and what creates a dialogue.

When receiving feedback from the customers it is of great importance to be responsive and make the customers feel that they are being heard (Grönroos, 2000; Thatcher & George, 2004). L’Homme Rouge stated that they always try to reply to comments and questions on Facebook and other social media platforms and have experienced that it is appreciated by the customers. It also provides them with a great feeling of being seen and heard by the brand, which is an important part in building and developing trust. Thanks to that, the customers might also be less apprehensive when the opportunity to give feedback arises. L’Homme Rouge is doing a good job since consumers, according to Baird and Parasnis (2011), usually feel connected to a brand after engaging with them on social media. To ask for, and provide them with a possibility to give feedback is also important and will further enhance their feeling of engagement (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Paying attention to their consumers input on social media is consequently a good way for L’Homme Rouge to encourage the consumers to keep interacting with the brand. The feedback that they get is also valuable for them since it will give them the possibility to improve as well as act in the best interest of their customers (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).
5.2.6 Provide Exclusive Information

According to the survey, 47 percent of the respondents value when companies give them exclusive information through social media (see figure 6). Mangold and Faulds (2009) claim that a feeling of exclusivity can be given through offering new and exclusive information, special deals and the possibility to subscribe to a weekly newsletter. L’Homme Rouge has started a loyalty-club via e-mail with the aim of offering exclusive information and making the customers feel special. A suggestion would be to continue developing this, and always keep in mind that giving the customers an exclusive feel and making them feel special is important. Today, L’Homme Rouge for example present one of their shirts as “Carl-Johan's favorite”, to give it a personal feeling and it also gives the consumers some kind of exclusive information. To further provide exclusivity, L’Homme Rouge could give the customers who are signed up for the e-newsletters a sneak peek at future collections, reveal release dates and give them the possibility to pre-order products. The future knitted hat, which might risk running out of stock, can be desirable to pre-order. Something closely linked to providing exclusive information is storytelling. Selling a product with a story is, according to Brooks (2013), a new marketing approach. It will create a connection between the product and the consumer and make them even more eager to make a purchase. L’Homme Rouge already has a compelling story about their company and its history, but Brooks (2013) mean that today’s customers also want to hear the stories behind the products. To further use the power of storytelling, L’Homme Rouge should therefore also tell captivating and unique stories about the history of their products. For the consumers to know that a shirt for example is inspired by street painters in Barcelona or is manufactured in a small village in India makes the product become richer. If a company tells a good story, it is also according to Brooks (2013) more likely that the customers will repeat it.

5.2.7 Collaborations

As mentioned earlier in the analysis, it is important to be on the social media platforms where your customers are (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to researchers, consumers follow brands on social media and join brand communities to fulfill their need of being identified in a certain way. This need can be fulfilled by the connection to a brand or a symbol, or by connecting with other consumers with the same interests and desires (Laroche et al., 2013; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Schembri et al., 2010). As an effect of this, people with the same interests and desires tend to join communities that are centered around the same things (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It can therefore be beneficial for a company to find communities that consist of people with interests and values that align with the company’s values. A suggestion for L’Homme Rouge would be to find a website with which they share the same target group and take advantage of what Mangold and Faulds (2009) call excellent collaboration opportunities. As brought up earlier, such a website could be a fashion site for men, for example Manolo.se, which is Sweden’s leading
fashion blog for men. The collaborations could for example be sponsorships or competitions of some sort, as suggested by the respondents in the survey.

“Competitions - the best outfit wins.”

“The most creative outfit, featuring a L’Homme Rouge product, wins.”

Another way of finding these communities of consumers sharing the same interests and values can be to find other brands that share the same target group as L’Homme Rouge. This could be another brand which products has a similar style and which could work as a complement to L’Homme Rouge’s products. An example could be a shoe brand. Collaborations between brands could take form in sharing each others Facebook pages as well as exchange “likes”, perhaps with the help of a collage or a street style picture where both of their products are featured. When interviewing L’Homme Rouge, they mentioned that they are currently working a little bit with these kinds of collaborations with brands that they find cool, and they want to put more time and effort on it in the future. Another type of collaboration, which the respondents in the survey desire, is collaborations with bloggers.

“Collaboration with a famous blogger.”

“More blog-collaborations.”

L’Homme Rouge have previously had a collaboration with blogger Andreas Wijk on Kanal5.se, where they upon his request sent him a pair of bathing shorts which he later posted on his blog. Collaborating with bloggers in this regard is not a new phenomenon. However, to be seen on Andreas Wijk’s blog, 19th of April 2013, was a new way of collaborating between bloggers. Andreas Wijk and another famous Swedish blogger, Angelica Blick (on Nyheter24.se) did a common blog post called “today’s outfit”, where they simply show their outfit and write where the clothes come from. What was new was that they did it together and took a picture of both of them, which they later posted on their own blogs. Andreas Wijk’s outfit was consequently shown on both his own blog as well as on Angelica Blick’s, which makes it reach out to a bigger crowd. A suggestion for L’Homme Rouge would be to try to be featured in this kind of collaborations between bloggers in order to reach their female customers as well. It can also reach out to a lot of girlfriends who might find the brand cool and influence their boyfriends to seek out the brand. This example indicates that it is not only brands that have started to collaborate to attract new customers, but also bloggers.
6. Conclusion

The final section presents and concludes the results of the study that have emerged from examining a Swedish online branded retailer and their customers in terms of customer loyalty and social media. The research question that was proposed for the study was to examine how small online branded retailers can use social media platforms to develop and maintain customer loyalty on the Internet.

The initial literature research that was conducted in the early stages of the study has revealed that gaining trust as well as getting customers to recommend a brand to their friends are two important factors in terms of establishing customer loyalty on the Internet. This has also emerged from the study of small online branded retailer L’Homme Rouge and their customers. If the customers feel that they do not trust the company they will turn away and shop elsewhere. Customers who feel hesitant in trusting a brand will also be more restrictive in terms of sharing information and referring to the brand, which makes it harder for the company to develop and maintain customer loyalty. The study has found that a company cannot buy trust. They have to earn it by acting in the best interests of their customers.

The study further provides compelling evidence that social media is an effective tool when it comes to trust and recommendations. This is mainly due to its interactive nature, which is useful for establishing relationships with consumers as well as providing them with possibilities to share content. It also provides the companies with a great possibility of both receiving and responding to feedback from the customers, which in the end will be beneficial for both parties. Previous research reaffirm that social media has become a significant factor in the influence of consumer behavior, including aspects such as opinions, awareness, information gathering and purchase behavior. The findings in this study indicate that social media also has become a significant factor in the influence of customer loyalty.

As a result of the shift concerning who is in control of the information available on the Internet, small online branded retailers as L’Homme Rouge should focus on talking with their customers and not at them. By doing so, they have the possibility to influence the discussions that are taking place on social media platforms, to make sure that they are coherent with the company’s future goals as well as with the customers interests. The study has found that by following the above-mentioned suggestions and joining and shaping the discussion in the “correct” way, it will make customers more interested in engaging with the brand. The company will then act in the best interests of their customers, which will make them trust the brand and that will make them loyal. Eventually they might also, with the help of social media and word of mouse, share their experiences with their friends.
7. Limitations and Future Research

As with most research, there are of course limitations to this study. Consequently, future research could strengthen and further extend the results. This section discusses the limitations as well as presents some initial directions for future research.

Due to a shortage of time, only one small online branded retailer was selected and examined for the study, which to a certain extent restricts the generalizability of the results. It would consequently have been beneficial to examine a bigger number of small online branded retailers to be able to further strengthen and extend the results of this study. It could also have been interesting to look at some bigger online retailers to get an understanding of how they work with developing and maintaining customer loyalty. While this was not our aim, it seems to be of likely importance, which is why we recommend future research to not only look into small online branded retailers but also to examine and take some bigger ones into account. Since some researchers link customer loyalty with repeat purchase, future research could further investigate how repeat purchase will be affected when a company has worked with developing trust and gaining recommendations. It could also be of interest to examine the philosophical concept of trust and what it actually means to trust a brand. In conclusion, some key factors that seem to be important when using social media to attain customer loyalty online have been identified. However, much more needs to be understood and a bigger sample of online branded retailers and their customers needs to be examined to further understand the full power that social media possesses in enhancing customer loyalty on the Internet. We have provided some directions for future research and our hope is that future research will take our findings into account in order to continue to expand the knowledge of this important area.
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Appendix 1

L’HOMME ROUGE

ss13 lookbook

aw13 prelook

SS13 OCEAN TEASER

L’HOMME ROUGE
Appendix 2

Interview guide with L'Homme Rouge
This is the interview guide used in the in-depth interview with John-Ruben Holtback, Managing Director and Axel Trägårdh, Sales and Marketing Director on May 6th, 2013, in Gothenburg. The interview was conducted in Swedish but the questions below are also translated into English.

Frågor om L’Homme Rouge / Questions about L’Homme Rouge
1. Hur vill ni att era kunder ska beskriva ert märke? Vad står märket L’Homme Rouge för? / How do you want your customers to describe your brand? What does L’Homme Rouge stand for?

2. Vilka egenskaper vill ni inte att era kunder ska förknippa L’Homme Rouge med? / What characteristics do you not want your customers to associate L’Homme Rouge with?

3. Vad gör ni för att kunderna ska lita på er och vilja handla hos er? Gör ni något speciellt? / What do you do to make your customers trust you, and want to shop at your webshop? Anything special?

4. Hur kommer det sig att ni är intresserade av att ha lojala kunder? / Why are you interested in having loyal customers?

5. Vad tror ni är det bästa sättet att få nya kunder att handla hos er (hitta ert märke)? / What do you think is the best way to get new customers to shop from you (find your brand)?

6. Hur tror ni att kunderna “hittade till er” första gången? / How do you think your customers “found you” the first time?

Frågor om sociala medier / Questions about social media

8. Vad har ni för mål med att använda sociala medier för framtiden? / What are your goals for the future, regarding social media usage?

9. Känner ni att ni har “koll på” vad kunderna vill veta eller se på era sociala medie-kanaler? / Do you feel that you “know” what your customers want to know or want to see on your social media channels?
10. Vad är viktigt för er att kommunicera ut via de sociala mediaplattformar som ni använder? / What is important for you to communicate through the social media platforms that you are using?

11. Har ni olika mål med de olika platformarna? / Do you have different goals with the different platforms?

12. Hur mycket tid lägger ni ner på att interagera med era kunder idag? Hur mycket vill ni lägga ner på det i framtiden? / How much time do you spend on interacting with your customers today? How much time do you want to spend in the future?

13. Har ni någon gång frågat kunderna någoting på Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etcetera? (Alltså haft någon form av dialog?) / Did you ever ask the customers anything on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etcetera? (Any kind of dialogue?)

14. Får ni mycket, eller någon, feedback från era kunder? (till exempel problem, önskemål, kommentarer) / Do you get a lot, or any, feedback from your customers? (for example, concerning problems, wishes, comments)

15. Har ni någon gång involverat kunderna i “de dagliga aktiviteterna” på företaget? / Have you ever involved the customers in the “daily business activities”?

16. Drar ni nytta av de verktyg som finns på sociala medier? (“share”, “like”, “re-tweet”, “comment”, “@” “hashtag”) / Do you take advantage of the different tools that are available on social media? (“share”, “like”, “re-tweet”, “comment”, “@”, “hashtag”)

17. Använder ni vänner/familj för att sprida L’Homme Rouge? / Do you use friends/family to spread L’Homme Rouge?

18. De projekten ni skriver om på hemsidan, har ni gjort några sådana, eller har ni några på gång? / Considering the projects that you write about on your website, have you done any projects, or do you have some projects coming up?

19. Har ni haft något samarbete med till exempel ett annat företag eller en bloggare? / Have you ever had any collaborations with for example other companies or a blogger?

20. Hur ser ni annars på ett eventuellt samarbete? (t.ex. med bloggare eller ett företag med samma target market) / What is otherwise your opinion concerning a possible collaboration? (e.g. with a blogger or a company with the same target market)
Appendix 3
Customer survey (conducted online)

L'Homme Rouge survey


Du har fått denna enkät för att du följer L'Homme Rouge på Facebook. De första frågorna är av allmän karaktär och de 6 sista frågorna är inriktade på L'Homme Rouge. Tack på förhand för din medverkan!

Kön
☐ Kvinnan
☐ Mannen

Ålder
☐ Under 20
☐ 21-25
☐ 26-30
☐ 31-35
☐ 36-40
☐ 40+

1. Vilken/vilka av följande sociala medier använder du?

Markera alla som passer in
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Twitter
☐ Tumblr
☐ Pinterest
☐ Vine
☐ Egen blogg
☐ Annan [ ]

2. Vad är viktigt för dig i valet av att börja följa ett företag på sociala medier?

Flerval möjligt
☐ Att jag tycker att markn är intressant
☐ Att min vänner följer dem
☐ Att jag inte kommer bli "spammad", dvs, få för många uppdateringar från företaget
☐ Att jag kommer få rebatter
☐ Att jag känner att de har en örlig kommunikation
3. Vad skulle få dig att ge feedback eller skicka idéer om nuvarande och kommande produkter till företaget?

Flerval möjligt
☐ Att de frågar mig om det
☐ Jag vill att de ska förbättra sig
☐ Att jag är missnöjd med en produkt eller service
☐ Att jag är nöjd med en produkt eller service
☐ Jag ger alltid feedback eller skickar idéer till företag via sociala medier

4. Om du följer ett företag på sociala medier, vilket av följande föredrar du?

Endast ett svar
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Twitter
☐ Tumblr
☐ Pinterest
☐ Vine
☐ Blogg
☐ Annan [ ]

5. Har du någonsin följt ett företag på sociala medier och sedan ändrat din uppfattning om företaget?

Flerval möjligt
☐ Ja, positivt (Gå till fråga 6)
☐ Ja, negativt (Gå till fråga 7)
☐ Nej (Gå till fråga 8)

6. Om "Ja, positivt", varför fick du ändrad uppfattning?

Flerval möjligt
☐ För att jag fick rabatter
☐ För att jag fick exklusiv information
☐ För att jag fick se hur det funkar "behind the scenes" på företaget
☐ För att företaget la upp inspirerande foton och inlägg
☐ För att jag kunde interactera med företaget och ge feedback
☐ Annan anledning [ ]

7. Om "Ja, negativt", varför fick du ändrad uppfattning?

Flerval möjligt
☐ För att företaget postade inlägg för ofta
☐ För att företaget la upp tråkiga inlägg
☐ För att företaget la upp information som jag redan sett på hemsidan
☐ För att företaget la upp samma information på alla de sociala medier där jag följer dem
☐ För att företaget försöker påtvänga mig sina produkter
☐ Annan anledning [ ]
8. Fördrar du att shoppa på nya och olika webshopar när du handlar på internet eller köper du hellre från någon du redan shoppat på?

- Nya och olika
- Där jag shoppat innan

9. Påstående: "Företag som använder sociala medier i sin kommunikation med sina kunder kommer troligtvis nå en högre konkurrenskraftighet än de företag som inte gör det." Vad anser du?

- Jag håller med
- Jag håller inte med

10. Vilka är de tre främsta anledningarna till att du valde att följa L'Homme Rouge på sociala medier?

Valj tre stycken:

- För att få information om produkter och sortiment
- Rabatter
- Exklusiv information (nye produkter, "behind the scenes", release datum etc.)
- Intresse i märket
- Kundservice
- Eveneldeltagande / tävlingar
- Känns samhärighet till märket
- Förslag idéer / Ge Feedback
- Annet: __________

11. L'Homme Rouge använder i dagsläget Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr. På vilken/vilka följer du L'Homme Rouge?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Annet: __________
12. Finns det något som du anser att L'Homme Rouge saknar på sociala medier?


13. Skulle du kunna tänka dig att rekommendera L'Homme Rouge till någon du känner?

☐ Ja
☐ Nej

14. Vilket betalningssätt föredrar du när du handlar på internet?

Endast ett svar
☐ Med kort
☐ Via Paypal
☐ Överföring via bank
☐ Faktura

15. Avslutningsvis, om du skulle få ge ett galet/religt/kreativt förslag på vad L’Homme Rouge kan göra på sociala medier, vad skulle det vara?


Slutför enkät