From likes to commitment – a case study of micro companies’ social media usage

By Johanna Ahlén and Fanny Bengtsson

Degree of Master in Fashion Management
The Swedish School of Textiles
Report number 2013.11.6
May 2013
"Excellance is not a skill. It is an attitude"

Ralph Marston
Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Kask of Sweden for the giving of the opportunity and confidence to make this study and for the time spent on helping us. We do also like to send a thank you to the company Gococo for taking time to meet us and for a truly inspiring and rewarding interview. Further on we wish to give a huge thanks to all people involved in our thesis for great input and support during the process, especially thanks to the opponents groups and the supervisor Jonas Larsson, who have guided us through the entire process with helpful notes and thoughtful ideas. We wish to thank friends and family for support and caring during this period.

Lastly we truly want to give a huge thanks to each other, for great teamwork, great times and lovely spirit! We truly made this into a time of hard work, much laugher and great discussions that in the end rewarded us with much more than just text and written words.
Abstract

Title: From likes to commitment– a case study of micro companies’ social media usage

Year of publication: 2013

Authors: Johanna Ahlén and Fanny Bengtsson

Supervisor: Jonas Larsson

 Examiner: Lisbeth Svengren Holm

Language: English

Key words: Social media, Communication, Micro company, Fashion retail industry, Digital marketing, Sport and outdoor industry

“Which problems do micro companies face when using social media in their marketing and communication activities?”

“How can micro companies in the Swedish retail market use social media in their marketing and communication strategy?”

The purpose with the thesis is to identify, analyze and present the problems micro companies in the Swedish fashion and sport industry are facing when using social media as a communication tool in their marketing activities. Also relevant digital communication channels have been investigated and presented. Two case studies have been made with two Swedish micro companies in order to fulfill our purpose and answer our two research questions. The result from the interviews showed that micro companies, overall in the industry, could benefit from using social media as a communication channel, but they struggle to know how they should use it. We answer our research question through creating and presenting our own constructed model that companies should use in their business for planning their social media strategy and overcome the found problems.

The thesis is a qualitative research with an abduced approach. We did an active research with a case study on the two companies Kask of Sweden and Gococo. Through deep interviews, we got much information about how they work today and what problems they face when using social media. We have worked with four themes during the entire process: present, relationship, problems and future, to facilitate for the reader and for us. The study has high reliability for the investigated companies, and we also argue that it could be of interest for other fashion and sport micro companies at the Swedish market. An theoretical framework was conducted through researching the specific area and finding relevant theory and published material concerning marketing and communication, as well as digital marketing theory and publications about social media. The chosen material is presented in the theory chapter where an own constructed model is presented as a guideline for the reader. It will help the reader to find the theories and their elations to each other. We believe it to be a good way of ease the understanding and the relevance of the chosen theories.

The research shows that micro companies in the Swedish fashion sport industry faces different problems using social media as a communication platform for their company. Thus micro companies often have a very limited amount of resources and neither have the money, the knowledge or the time to manage a large marketing and communication social media can be beneficial if used properly. Though it comes with a few struggles. The main problems concerned around knowing who their real customer is, how to handle the relationship and create stronger connections with customers, difficulties in knowing which channels to use and how to handle them properly. They also found problems in knowing what how to communicate the right image and get the desired result of the published materials. Lastly the companies sometimes lacked a clear strategy in managing their social media platforms and raised questions about the language use, time consumption and who should run the activates.

With our "Four step-from likes to commitment" model we want to put attention to the most relevant steps a company needs to be aware of before starting and during working with social media, as well as be a strategy to handle and overcome the problems the previously struggled with.
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 4

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
1.1 Background ....................................................................................................... 1
   1.1.1 Problems in the market ........................................................................... 3
1.2 Focus topic: Social media .................................................................................. 3
1.3 Delimitations .................................................................................................... 4
1.4 Purpose and research questions ....................................................................... 4
   1.4 State of the art .............................................................................................. 5
   1.2.1.1 Example 1: Ung Cancer ..................................................................... 5
   1.2.1.2 Example 2: Nelly.com ....................................................................... 5
   1.2.1.3 Example 3: Gina Dirawi Swedish media profile ................................. 6
1.3 Case study ....................................................................................................... 6
   1.3.1 Focus case: Kask of Sweden ................................................................. 6
   1.3.2 Additional case: Gococo sportswear ..................................................... 7
Chapter summary .................................................................................................. 7
Introduction to model ............................................................................................. 8
1.6 Thesis outline ................................................................................................ 8

2. Research method ............................................................................................... 9
2.1 Research process ............................................................................................. 9
   2.1.1 Create knowledge .................................................................................. 9
2.2 Information gathering ..................................................................................... 9
   2.2.2 Interview implementation ................................................................. 10
   2.2.3 Interview questions: ........................................................................... 10
2.3 Analysis of data .............................................................................................. 11
2.4 Validity of the study ....................................................................................... 11
   2.4.1 A critical review of the research process .............................................. 12

3. Theory .............................................................................................................. 13
3.1 Marketing ......................................................................................................... 13
3.2 Communication strategy .................................................................................. 13
3.3 Digital communication ................................................................................... 14
3.4 Relationship marketing ................................................................................... 14
3.5 Social media ................................................................................................... 15
   3.5.1 Content marketing ............................................................................... 15
   3.5.2 Ambassadeurs ..................................................................................... 16

4. Empirical .......................................................................................................... 18
4.1 Common social media channels ..................................................................... 18
   4.1.1 Facebook .............................................................................................. 18
   4.1.2 Instagram ............................................................................................. 18
   4.1.3 Vimeo ................................................................................................... 18
4.2 Empirical data from case studies ................................................................... 19
   4.2.1 Present ................................................................................................... 19
   4.2.2 Relationships ....................................................................................... 20
   4.2.3 Problem ............................................................................................... 20
   4.2.4 Future ................................................................................................... 22

5. Analysis ............................................................................................................ 23
5.1 Present ............................................................................................................ 23
5.2 Relationships ................................................................................................ 25
5.3 Problems ......................................................................................................... 25
5.4 Future ............................................................................................................... 27

6. Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 29
6.1 Summary of the analysis .............................................................................. 29
6.2 Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 30
   6.2.1 Model “Four steps -from likes to commitment” ..................................... 30

7. Recommendations .......................................................................................... 33

8. References ....................................................................................................... 34
1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the reader to the Swedish fashion retail industry with focus on problems which micro companies* face when using social media for marketing activities. To facilitate for the reader and explain the focus area of this thesis, and also explain why it is written, we have added the “state of art” examples. These are examples of companies that have succeeded well in their social media communication.

1.1 Background

Our lifestyle is strongly connected with what we consume. We, as human beings, strive to share values with people in our social network, and we do this through buying products that are related with our lifestyle (Helman & De Chernatony, 1999). Retail brands are often linked with lifestyles values that respond to the lifestyle of a certain consumer segment. The brands try to target a specific market segment in order to distinguish themself from their competitors and therefore gain competitive advantages. A strong brand makes it easier for the retail marketers and consumers to collaborate to create a strong community. It is important to understand who the consumers are and understand what their image of the brand is. Today companies use social networks, which are groups of people who share ideas, information, values and thoughts, in order to reach consumers and communicate their brand. With the fast development of social media during the last couple of years, these specific kinds of networks have exploded in numbers and in users. The advantage for a company with a strong network of loyal consumers is that they have the ability to influence their consumers, which, in the long-run, can lead to more sales. However, this is not a new phenomenon. People have always bonded in social networks. Research shows that consumers tend to trust someone they look up to, respect or know and brands are not late to use this weak spot to raise sales by using ambassadors for the brand (Helman & De Chernatony, 1999). This market strategy has been used effectively and with the social media, companies reach many more people (Littorin, 2012) The ambassadors tweets, use Instagram, post and publish photos, videos and text and if a company can get them to write about their product and publish photos of their products, they automatically gain sales and brand awareness (Dowhy, 2012). To use ambassadors or “friends” of the brands is common in the sport industry where the athlete is sponsored with products from brands and in return they talk and write about the brand (Duncan, 2005). The aim of sponsoring is to affect the consumer and in turn that will have an impact the consumer’s attitude about the brand and lead to increase sales (Ohanian, 1990).

A definition of the fashion industry is: Manufacturing of and trading with clothes, shoes, textiles, bags and accessories (Kendall, 2009). It is a struggling market with decreased sales and many companies going out of business (Habit, 2013). So far, the numbers for 2013 show a drop with 7.8% in apparel sales, compared to the same period last year (Svensk Handel Stil Stilindex report, 2013). However, one segment of the fashion retail market, which has seen a growing interest and sales the last year at the Swedish market, is the sports and outdoor industry. In 2012, it saw an increase in sales with 9% (SCB, 2013) and analysts argue that it will be one of the winning industries in 2013. According to HUI Research** forecasting, the increase for 2013 will be around 2.5%. The Swedish sport and outdoor industry is occupied with several players, ranging from the really large ones like the

*Micro company: According to Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional growth, the definition of a micro enterprise within the SMF - category as; enterprises that employs not more than 10 people, and has a turnover of no more than 2 million Euros/ a year (Tillväxtverket, 2013). In Sweden there is 228 070 micro enterprises active, 21,69% of all the Swedish companies and enterprises (Ekonomifakta, 2012). Today, the average European based company has maximum six employees, and refers as micro enterprise and in Sweden was 95,9% of the total market micro enterprises in 2010.

Swedish retailer Stadium, offering a wide range of

** HUI Research: Handelns utredningsinstitut (HUI) came together with Turismens utredningsinstitut (TUI) in year 2010 and formed HUI Research in order to provide clients with reports of the Swedish retail- and tourism market.
sports products from several brands; to smaller independent brands focusing on niche markets and products. With the positive future many new players are entering the market. For smaller companies it is then extremely hard to compete (habit.se 2013).

Micro companies have benefited from the Internet where they have been able to reach a global market and find niche customers for their particular product without having to make large marketing investments or expanding their product range, a benefit and a possibility that the long-tail economy has provided (Anderson, C 2006).

With the long-tail economy Anderson (2006) argues that Internet, with the new techniques online and different new communication platforms, has opened up and democratized production and distribution of goods and made social media as important as it is today. Anderson (2006) states that the long-tail economy is one of the most important aspects for why social media works as well as it does and is so important for online shopping and marketing as it is in today’s viral world. The theory also brings forward three forces of long-tail:

1: The lengthening of the tail: More things are produced. Due to the new technologies as well as the growth of Internet, the production and distribution of a range of products and services becomes democratized. It also makes it easier as well as cheaper to handle and carry out products. Everyone can be the creator.
Fattening of the tail: The economies online create a larger market for niches while it gets easier to find and access niche markets and niche products. It is also easier and more profitable to reach niche customer segments than with traditional tools. Aggregators such as Google or iTunes, “pulls” all these products together and provides one offer, all in one place.

3: From “hits” to “niches”: Through social media and network platforms on Internet, recommendations and research gets easier and more important. Supply and demand is getting connected with filtering software. People can easily search and find what the look for and also get recommendations from other users or consumers prior to purchase.

According to David Carson, professor of marketing at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, the way micro companies use marketing and communication is different from the more traditional marketing in larger organizations (Carson & Cromie, 1990; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; O’Donnel, 2004). These differences relates to a limitation on resources within micro companies, either in financial resources due to the small size of the company, or limited resource of time or skills in the organization. There are also several researches arguing that it is not possible to manage marketing activities for a micro company the same way as in a larger company (Carson, Gilmore & Grant 2001).

With new technologies growing in importance for marketing- and communication activities within companies, the possibilities are increasing also for small businesses to use these marketing channels in their communication plan. They can utilize these social media channels’ nature of networking in order to create relationship with consumers. Social media, can therefore be a good communication strategy for micro companies and work coherently with their natural environment of restricted resources (Kotler, 2011).

1.1.1 Problems in the market
The numbers of sales- and communication channels are increasing rapidly together with new technologies, increased customer expectations, and the increased competition on the fashion- and apparel market. It is a challenge for brands to navigate all the different digital channels and to identify which ones that are most relevant and can produce most yields for the company. Most micro companies do not have the possibility to make big investments in marketing activities due to their limited assets. Although, micro companies are often flat organizations, which might enable them to have a closer connection with their customers but also to manage a coherent marketing strategy (Bergvall, 2013). Still, they often fail in their attempt to integrate social media into their business, often due to lack of understanding of how to use the digital medias properly (Forbes, 2013). One thing that small businesses often do wrong, when implementing social media into their business, is to see the new medias as a new direct marketing channel and use it only to push out products and drive sales numbers. But as social media guru Tim Rubin explains, social media is about being patient, and above all, it is a place where companies build long time relationships, communicate, listen to customers and find communities. It is long-time investment that hopefully will gain trust among consumers and therefore provide profit in the long-run. The key is to understand the difference between social media networks and more conventional tools in order to succeed with these new marketing tools (Forbes, 2013).

1.2 Focus topic: Social media
Social media has opened up new ways of communication and new ways to affect customers and create relationships. Ways that did not exist earlier. The company-consumer relationship, that creates loyalty to the company and added value to the consumer, has now moved to the virtual world and the need to interact and act in the same medias as the users are therefore important (Carlsson, 2009). Social media is growing in importance and the number of users of different social media platforms is high. In Sweden, 64 % of the population is using some form of social media. Facebook is the most commonly used (Stiftelsen för infrastruktur, 2012). Almost half of the
Swedish population uses a smartphone to access Internet, which is an increase by nearly a double from the previous year. Social medias and social networks are dominating Internet activities for people in the age between 12-20. People between 21-35 years old are just about as active as the younger ones. It is around 4.5 million active Facebook users in Sweden (nearly half of the entire population), 3.1 million of these users are logging in at least once daily (Dagens Nyheter, 2012). SEB’s survey showed a steady increase in the proportion of micro companies that finds business advantages in social media usage; for brand building, marketing, analysis, and for recruitment. Today more than every third (36%) company is using social media in their daily work (Hemming, 2012).

This information implies that companies can, and should, work closer to their consumer to offer customized information and product. Social media can then be a suitable tool for this. However, a common mistake companies do in their social media interaction is to not understand the difference between social media and traditional marketing channels, and it should therefore be handled differently. The new social media channels are not suitable for pushing out a large amount of information or pushing products, but should be used for communication, interaction and for listening. Success lays within how well a brand communicates and interacts with their consumers on the different networks. Business today needs to have knowledge in how opinions and massages are spread in the virtual sphere, and how consumers use social media to integrate with each other and with the brand (Fors-André, 2012).

Statistics indicates that micro companies can gain advantages from using social media in their business. 22% of micro companies report that they have made profit from marketing in social media channels and 72% of them report that they have found new time- and cost-effective ways to work. The basic use of Facebook, Twitter and Blogs are for free, thus the real cost for acting in social media is time spent by the company. According to a survey, 50% of micro companies report that interaction on social media takes more time than they earlier estimated. The huge increase of social media use in micro companies depends partly on the weak economy. The present market conditions forces micro companies to act creatively in order to stay in business, and social media is a great tool to reach new customers and maintain the relationship with the existing. All without having to make a large investment in the operations. Overall, social media makes the game between bigger and smaller companies easier (Acc2me, 2013) and smaller players can still compete against the large actors.

New techniques and digital marketing, with social media at the forefront, are great opportunities for micro companies to reach out to consumers and promote their brand and their products, without heavy investments. The key is to know how to navigate and use the tools in an appropriate and creative way. This in order to be relevant and interesting for the customers, as well as knowing which channels to use in order to reach the right customers. Digital media and the usage of Internet as a communication channel is also a good way to reach niche markets and find your brands target customers (Harvey, F 2003). A well-structured and thought-through marketing strategy is of high importance in order to create a communication plan for the digital media landscape (Gregory, 2013).

1.3 Delimitations
We chose to limit our study to micro companies in the sport- and outdoor industry, acting on the Swedish market. Micro companies are today one of the most common business-forms in Sweden and therefore we limit the thesis to sports and outdoor companies to make our communication strategy model (presented in the Conclusion) more relevant for these companies. We chose to not discuss traditional medias, but only focus on new digital medias.

1.4 Purpose and research questions
The purpose of this thesis is to identify, analyze and present the most relevant digital communication channels for micro fashion companies in Sweden. The thesis will highlight the problems that micro
companies often find when implementing and using digital media for communication and marketing. A model will be constructed and presented for navigating the social media channels in order to create customer relationships that lead to increased sales for micro companies.

Which problems do micro companies face when using social media in their marketing and communication activities?

How can micro companies in the Swedish retail market use social media in their marketing and communication strategy?

1.4 State of the art
This section is to introduce the reader into the importance of social media in today's society. It will highlight examples of companies and people who have benefited from social media communications platform and viral spread, both in their business and for privat use. The aim is to prove that social media is important and have greater opportunities in todays market place.

Many companies, both the industry leaders and the micro companies, are using social media in creative and innovative ways. This has led to many great success stories. While it is still a rather new way to communicate and to manage marketing activities, there are those who have managed to do it in a successful way. Here below are three examples presented, a non-profit organization (Ung cancer), a profitable online company (Nelly), and a famous media profile (Gina Dirawi). These three have all used social media to achieve growth and success. They have used social media in order to communicate their brand (or personal brand) and create knowledge and relationship with customers and peers. We chose these three based on their actuality and that they all are well known today. Parts of their success come from their successful way of working with social media and they are therefore of interest for this thesis.

1.2.1.1 Example 1: Ung Cancer
Ung Cancer is a non-profit organization founded by a young Swedish girl who struggled with cancer. She missed a proper forum where affected young’s could meet and talk with others who are facing the same struggles as she. She then started a forum at Facebook where people could share their experiences and thoughts. This was the start for Ung Cancer and today they are helping numbers of affected young people and facilitate places for them to meet. They provide information and knowledge and want to be the voice of young people with cancer. From the start, in 2010, they have now grown to become a great force for good and have through social media created a forum with 1200 members. They are using several social media channels to communicate and get in touch with their members and the society. Their Facebook-page has 68 147 likes and is their largest and most important communication channel, every update reaches around 10 000 people. Their webpage has 17 000 new unique visitors per month and around 40 % of them have found it through the Facebook-page. They are also using Twitter and Instagram to communicate their activities (ungcancer.se, 2013).

1.2.1.2 Example 2: Nelly.com
The well-established online-retailer nelly.com has grown into a huge player at the online market of fashion apparel and shoes. With multiple brands in their portfolio, they have become one of the most well-known Swedish online fashion retailers of today. Starting of with the founder Jarno Vanhatapio selling fashion clothes online from his apartment in 2003,
now the company has turned into an international online retailer with customers all around Europe. Early on, the company believed in the possibilities of social media and digital platforms for their distribution and communication. They established their Facebook-page 2009, in order to communicate with their customers and get valuable feedback about products, fit etc. They also wanted customers to talk to each other about the nelly.com products, and therefore social media was a suitable channel to work with. They wanted to take advantage of the viral spread of information that Internet made possible. Today they have 415 935 followers/likes on Facebook and they are also present at Twitter and Youtube. Although today, they have become a large company with many employees and a bigger turnover, they started up very small and used social media in order to grow and get their brand noticed. At first they only used digital channels for marketing. With several campaigns and competitions through their social media platforms they have used creative ways of getting a lot of “buzz” around the company with a limited amount of marketing investments. One example was an app they published where customers were encouraged to design their own dress. The cost for creating the app was 14 000 SEK and generated around 300 000 designed dresses only during a few weeks. 68 000 people linked to the nelly.com webpage during the period, and it all generated a growth in sales with almost 10 million SEK (Genborg, 2012).

1.3 Case study

Two case studies have been conducted for this thesis, one with Kask; the focus case, and one additional, with Gococo. They are both companies acting in the sport and outdoor industry, primarily at the Swedish market. The turnover for the sport and outdoor branch was 20,2 billion SEK in 2011, according to Tillväxtverket (2013). The industry’s present success relates to a mix of different aspects: colder and longer winters, lower prices on products, and the stronger relationship between fashion and sport trends, which is becoming more interdependent. A general problem for micro companies, like Kask and Gococo, is the lack of capital and resources. These two companies represent a big market and we consider it to be interesting to investigate how they can use social media in their communication (Verheugen, 2006).

1.3.1 Focus case: Kask of Sweden

Kask of Sweden is a Swedish fashion sport brand founded by two professional skiers, Kaj Zackrisson and Sverre Liliequist in 2001. The company consists of three employees, Sverre, Kaj and Peter Hulander who is CEO. Their head office is located in Borås. The net turnover for Kask was 9 781 000 SEK, 2011 and 7 838 000 SEK, 2010. They have increased their net turnover over the last five years. Their core product are hand-crocheted beanies that the founders, in the beginning, made for themselves to wear. The beanies then spread among friends and were soon to be seen on several skiers throughout the skiing community. The company has now grown into other, ski related, products as well, with function and performance in focus. They want to inspire people to be more unique and impulsive with bold styles and colorful Swedish design. They want their customers to be brave and explore new paths - simply “Live a little”, an expression that has become part of their brand image. Kask core values stand for being authentic, unique and impulsive with positive energy and being strong minded.

Kask has no real store of their own but is mainly selling and communicating through their web shop and different external distributors and retailers. They
have a shop-in-shop located in a multi brand store in the Swedish ski resort Sälen where all their products can be found. Otherwise their communication is mainly through word-of-mouth, webpage, Facebook-page with 1 487 likes, Instagram with 336 followers and Twitter-account. Kask are using “friends”, a group of professional skiers as well as amateurs, for representing and promoting the brand. They sponsor the friends with products and also retain valuable feedback for further developments of products. The friends work as brand ambassadors to communicate the brands values. The founders: Sverre and Kaj, who still work as the strongest brand ambassadors, are strongly related to the brand and therefore have a great impact on the brand image.

Today it is Sverre who handles Kask’s digital communication, with help from some of the friends of the brand. However, they do not have a clear communication strategy in how to monitor the activities. Their wish is to become more active on social media and reach a wider target audience without losing the brand core values.

1.3.2 Additional case: Gococo sportswear

Gococo is a Swedish micro company started by the twins Linnéa and Annie Wennergren in 2010. The company consist of three employees; Annie, Linnea and Ann-Charlotte Wennergren, who is in charge of accounting and finance. Their vision is to create first layer sports clothes with fresh design and with the highest quality. They started out with socks, their core product, which can be seen on several famous sport persons. The founders are themselves passionate athletes and therefore know the importance of high quality products and in using the right materials. All their products consist of the material Cocona, which today is a leading function material on the market. It has a set of unique qualities; fast drying, odor control and uv-protection, and have no chemical treatment. Gococo AB’s net turnover was 823 000 SEK in 2011 and according to themselves the net turnover will increase during the next year.

They run their own communication and marketing and have a clear strategy for how, and by whom, social media should be handled in the company. But they are still new in the area and do not know where they get most out of the social media activities. Today their focus is on Facebook with 2 178 likes, Instagram with 149 followers and their homepage online.

Chapter summary

Due to the strong competition on the Swedish sports market and with many players competing for the customers, the need to connect and engage customers into the brand becomes severer in order to survive. The forces of long-tail economy have brought customers and companies closer together and made niche markets and products profitable even for very small companies (Anderson, C 2009). With Internet growing and new platforms being introduced at a fast phase, the distribution of products and the possibilities of communicating have become almost unlimited. To stand out from the crown and make an impact is then extremely hard. Marketing has always been a way of differentiates a brand and communicate with customers, thus with new techniques and the growth of social media, companies are now able to reach their customers on new platforms and communicate with a much larger crowd. It also facilitates for a more customized and personal communication and interaction. It is a great tool in order to track customers’ preferences, likes and networks, and also enables customers to give direct feedback that can be beneficial for the company. With the potential of using “word-of-mouth” and the large spread of information, micro companies can reach a large group of people and communicate their brand in an effective way. It facilitates for a dialog that can enhance the brand image and the product, but also enhance the relationship between the brand and the customer. This can provide loyal customers. These aspects proves that a micro company like Kask can gain many advantages from using social media as a
marketing tool in order to connect with customers and communicate their brand. However, as stated above, the problem seems to be to know how to handle the tools properly. A strategic and well thought-through communication plan can therefore be helpful.

**Introduction to model**

For the theory chapter a model will be used in order to navigate the reader through the theories and show the relationship and connections between the chosen theories. It gives the hierarchy of the theories and is grounded in the basic marketing practice of 4 P’s of marketing. The model will give a quick guide to where in the marketing practice the present theory is placed and how it refers to the rest. The focus will be on the communication, one part of the promotional mix, and there the main focus will be digital marketing and social media. The aim with the model is to enhance the reading and connect the presented theories to each other.

**Figure 1.** Our own model, representing the outline of the theory chapter.

### 1.6 Thesis outline

The disposition of the thesis is developed into seven chapters.

Chapter one, *Introduction*: presents general information to introduce the reader into the Swedish fashion industry and explains how micro companies are working with their communication today and which problems they meet. The aim is to explain for the reader why the thesis is written.

Chapter two, *Research process*: explains the developing process of the thesis and use of method. It explains how the authors were working, whom they interviewed and how the data collection was made.

Chapter three, *Theory*: here a theoretical research review in the chosen area is presented. This will later on be analyzed with the empirical data.

Chapter four, *Summary of empirical data*: this chapter is presented under four themes; present, relationship, problems and future. This is done in order to give the reader a better overview of the material from the conducted interviews.

Chapter five, *Analysis*: the analysis is presented under four themes (the same found in chapter four); present, relationship, problems and future. It compares the theoretical framework with the empirical findings in order to find an answer to the research question and to construct a model.

Chapter six, *Conclusions*: here are our assumptions presented, that are connected to the aim of the research. It forwards a model, presented as a result of the thesis work. The aim of the model is to help micro companies handle social media in their daily work.

Chapter seven, *Recommendations*: here are our thoughts and ideas presented, thoughts that have cross our mind during and after the research process and also suggestions for future research.
2. Research method

2.1 Research process

This study is a qualitative research with an abductive approach. The first step of the research process was to create a better knowledge about communication in social media and how companies work, or can work, with digital media channels. We got the opportunity to construct a case study of the Swedish brand Kask of Sweden, located in Borås. When meeting the company, they told us about their problem areas and after deeper research about micro companies we found out that Kask's problems are common problems for the industry and for micro companies in general.

To strengthen the research we added an interview with the Swedish sport company, Gococo located in Gothenburg. We scanned the market and searched for a small, local fashion company with two-to-four employees. We found Gococo, who works in a similar way as Kask.

The study is a descriptive research with a qualitative methodology, which gives the researchers an opportunity to investigate a few entities deeper and get detailed information about the subject (Patel & Davidsson, 1991).

Our purpose was to investigate and illuminate the problems micro companies have today with social media communication. To answer the research questions we chose to make two case studies about Kask's and Gococo's Internet communication and social media usage. We also tried to find ways of how they can develop and take the next step in order to get a wider reach in social media in the future. Hopefully a development that will lead to increased sales.

A case study approach is used, thus the researchers want to get information about a phenomenon in its real-life context. We made an empirical inquiry, which aim is to investigate a few entities, companies, in a particular context (Gummesson, 1995). According to Bryman (2012) there is a risk of using a case study method; the inability to generalize the result. However, the outcome from our research and our conclusions are coherent with what theories explains about social media usage in business and our chosen companies are well representative for their business segment. Therefore we believe our results to be generalizable within the context of micro companies at the Swedish sports and fashion market.

2.1.1 Create knowledge

Earlier we mentioned the lack of accepted research in the area, which contributed to the study's abductive approach. The approach also referred to as the "golden middle way", is an approach where theory and empirical material intersperse alternately. The advantage of this method is that the researcher can start with empirical research, then search for theories and then collect more empirical data and so on (Eriksson & Wiedersheim, 1993).

The purpose for the thesis is to understand a specific area in business. According to Näslund (2002) the researcher can use an action-research; meaning the researcher observes an object with the aim to develop the object. The purpose of an action research is to solve a problem or find a solution for a process. Therefore this method suits the thesis's purpose. Studies were made of Kask and Gococo, with the aim to develop and present a communication model they can implement in their organization for their social media actions.

2.2 Information gathering

The first meeting for the empirical material was with Peter Hulander CEO at Kask. The aim was to get an introduction to the topic of the thesis and get information about the company and their main problems concerning social media and communication. This meeting then led us to an interview with Sverre Liliequist, founder and responsible for communication of Kask. The interview took one hour. The next interview was made with the founders of Gococo, Linnéa and Annie Wennergren at Gococo. This interview was one and a half hour long. Both interviews were held as open interviews without fixed questions. The main purpose with this method was to let the respondent talk about
communication in social media without being effected by our thoughts or concerns. According to Jacobsen (2002) a case study can be strengthened with additional research, as theoretical or/and other empirical material, in order to make it more generalizable. To strengthen the credibility of our thesis and complement the primary data we therefore collected a theoretical framework from literature, books, scientific articles and newspapers. During the theory collection process we used scientific databases to find articles in the area. We also used the university’s library in order to find litterature.

Two focus interviews have been made, and one additional with Peter Hulander at Kask, as an introduction in the company and for the case study. We have had continuing contact with Peter during the research process, were he has helped us to answer smaller question and provided us with company information. Interviewing only two micro-companies in the industry can give the study a lower generalizability. However, we argue that the chosen companies provided us with good and relevant information and that the results we present can be of interest for the rest of the Swedish retail industry, especially for micro companies at the sport fashion market. After the two interviews we felt saturation of data and decided, due to time limits, to move forward with these findings.

Additionally we made a review about three social media channels, Facebook, Instagram and Vimeo. We collected secondary data in order to gain more knowledge about the medias and be able to present some short facts about them. These findings are presented in the beginning of the empirical chapter.

**2.2.2 Interview implementation**

Before each interview we studied the chosen company’s social media channels and investigated how they handle them today. We discussed and tailor-made the interview for the specific time and company. According to Trost (1999) it is important to see an interview as a conversation between people and not as one ask question and one answer. To get the most out of the interview, he argues that the focus should not be on the questions or how the researcher declares them. He argues that it is more important to adjust the qualitative interview to fit the situation. Therefore we work with a framework as an interview guide, and not with fixed questions. It lets us, and the respondents feel freer under the interview and ease the conversational flow. According to Jacobsen (2002) this “middle way” of conducting interviews (not to have completely open or completely closed questions) is a common way to work in qualitative studies.

We contacted all respondents a few weeks before the interview and provided them with the information needed. They were to choose where and when the interview took place. This eliminates the risk of the respondent feeling uncomfortable, stressed or nervous with environment during the interview (Jacobsen, 2002). Two out of three conversations were held at the respondents’ offices. The interview with Sverre Liliequist took place over Skype, because he was not available during the interview period. Each interview was held in Swedish, since all respondents and the researchers have Swedish as mother tongue. To use mother tongue we avoided risks that can occur if not doing so. These risks are, according to Jacobsen (2002); miss-communication problems or translation mistakes. Using mother tongue also enhances the flow in the interview.

**2.2.3 Interview questions:**

We chose to not work with an interview guide with fixed questions. Instead we developed four themes that we wanted to have the respondents to talk and deliberate about, and it allowed both parts to talk free around the chosen themes. The reason to not work with fixed question was based on our knowledge about the companies. They work in the same channels, are in the same industry and we believed they would give us similar answers. The purpose of each theme was:

- **Present:** to get information about how the companies work today with social media and communication, which channels they are primarily using and get general information about the company.
- **Relationship:** to understand how they communicate and what information that flows in the channels and to know how they
work with their ambassadors and how these affect the end consumer. What kind of relationship they have with their consumers/followers in social media.

- **Problem**: to understand the problematic in the industry and what the companies see as problem in the market and in their business, as well as problems related to social media activities in the company.
- **Future**: receive information about where the company wants to be in the future and understand how they think social media will be developed in the future. Which channels they want to use and how to manage them accordingly.

### 2.3 Analysis of data

All information from the respondents has been recorded, for a higher reliability of the empirical material. Afterwards we transcribed and summarized the material. We sent it to the respondents to get approval of the data in order to make sure that the information had been interpreted correctly. We chose to divide the empirical information in 4 themes; present, relationship, problem, future. According to Kvale (1995) this is an advantage for the researcher in order to get an overview of the data. Kvale & Krinkmann (2009) call it the narrative structure; meaning the researcher creates a story of the interview material based on relevant parts from the interview. We do not present the total interview conversation, because of the huge amount of information and the risk to eventually bore the reader. A presentation and background information about the respondents and the brands are presented in the beginning of the empirical chapter followed by an empirical story of the respondent’s thoughts and answers. The decision to divide the chapter into the same four themes we worked with during the interviews was in order to create a red thread in the text and to facilitate for the reader, as well for ourselves. These themes further follow into the analysis chapter. According to Kvale & Krinkmann (2009) this is a beneficial approach to avoid that the researchers miss to analyze important empirical data against theoretical findings. Further more, it facilitated for us when we were to present the conclusion and result of the study. This method is called “meaning through ad hoc-method”; meaning that the researcher mix different methods and then later on present text, models, pictures and figures (Kvale & Krinkmann 2009).

The analyses lead us to the conclusions that are presented in the model, ”Four steps- from likes to commitment”. It is our own constructed model based on the findings from the empirical- and theoretical researches. The model will be explained more in detail in chapter six.

### 2.4 Validity of the study

For a high validity the researcher needs to follow a design structure during the entire process (Kvale & Krinkmann, 2009). The authors need to make sure to truly examine what they claim to observe and the arguments need to be well anchored in the theoretical framework. It is important for the researcher to understand the research process in a qualitative study, thus the researchers own thoughts can affect the outcome of the research and the gathered material (Patel & Davidson, 1991). According to Jacobsen (2002) there is a difference between internal and external validity. Internal validity questions whether the researcher really measured what they claimed to do. To secure the validity of our research we have, during the process, remained constantly critical to all assumption and questioned each others thoughts and conclusions. Being aware of disagreements and personal characteristics strengthens the internal validity.

The external validity indicates if a research and the results can be generalized (Jacobsen, 2002). We believe our study to be generalizable and that it can be applied to other micro fashion companies, active on the Swedish market. The case study is based on Kask, a typical micro fashion and sport company. Therefore will other companies similar to Kask, be able to take advantage of the communication plan/model, we present in the conclusion chapter.

Regarding the lack of theoretical research in the social media topic, we took a decision to add newly released articles from social media consultants, PR experts and other gurus in the area. To create a solid and well-
formulated theoretical framework, we choose to mix newer sources of social media with older and well-established research about marketing, relationship and communication. We are aware of the constantly new researches that are published in the area and therefore, the validity in the research can be lower in the future if new and better theoretical research is presented and new technologies occure.

2.4.1 A critical review of the research process

We are aware of the fact that we could make the result more generalizable if we were to investigate and interviewe more companies. The reason for not taking this study further with more companies is the lack of time. However, we do not consider the range of our empirical data to have affected the results.

One problem during the process was to know when to stop searching for further information. It was difficult to know when we had enough empirical and theoretical data to present a relevant solution and a valid result. However, after an intense research and a discussion between us about the materials, we believe to have reached a saturation of information in both empirical and theoretical data. The interviews with both Kask and Gococo result in similar information, whiteout leading question from us as researcher, therefore we felt a saturation of collected information and could proceed with the conducted materials.

We are aware of the risk that respondents could have given us incorrect information during the interviews, or hesitated to share some private company information. However, we never got the feeling of them doing neither of it under the process, and the topic and the questions we asked were not of that character. So we had no reason to believe the information to be wrong. Looking back on the framework we had for the interviews, we feel that the operationalization process went well and we got the information we needed from the respondents.
3. Theory

To introduce the reader into the theory chapter, a model (presented earlier in the thesis) is presented to guide the reader throughout the chapter, and show how the chosen theories are related to each. The model starts with the traditional marketing mix, the 4 P’s and then leads down to communication, digital communication and social media. The model ends with two important aspects of handling social media in a communication strategy. It is our own constructed model.

3.1 Marketing

Marketing activities are used for communicating a brand or a product’s value to the customer, in order to sell the products or promote the brand. Marketing is also to do with attracting customers and engage them with the brand and the products. A traditional and well-established model in marketing strategy is the 4 P’s of the marketing mix (Armstrong & Kotler, 2005). The model brings forward a mix of four aspects that marketers have to consider when undertaking marketing activities. The four P’s stands for: Price, Product, Place and Promotion, which all refers to aspects of marketing a product. In order to make the most favorable mix, marketers have to consider their target customer’s buying behavior, lifestyle, preferences and where to reach them in order to create a well-working marketing mix.

3.2 Communication strategy

Communication is one part of the promotional mix, or the marketing communication mix. It is a set of different tools used by an organization in order to communicate and send out a message and reach customers (Armstrong & Kotler, 2005). The most common tools are: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. In conventional marketing communication, it is the organization, or the brand, which is the sender of the message. Previously it was thought of as a “one-way” communication where the brand holds the control of how the message was encoded and transmitted to reach the target audience. But later on, theories are now suggesting a new model where the communication is thought of as a “two-way” communication where the message is encoded and decoded simultaneously by the brand and the audience. Where communication between brand and customers are a relationship where both parts are giving and receiving information and feedback.

The communication has grown from being a one-to-one communication, then one-to-many and now it is a complex sphere where the communication is a many-to-many sharing of information. Where everyone can be connected to anyone, very much because of the growth of Internet and social media. This has led to companies taking a more integrated position within the communication with customers, where they listen to customers and auditing the information sharing in the viral word. They are focusing more on creating relationship with their customers than pushing advertising and promotional content (Gummesson, 1995). The new communication methods have also made the customer become part of the brand creation process.
and the branding procedures; they have taken more control over the brand image.

**Figure 2. Model 1: the linear communication model where the conversation is a one-way communication between the brand and the audience. The brand is the sender and the audience is the receiver, who is not part of the message creation (inspired by Shannon and Weaver, 1949)**

**Figure 3. Model 2: the transactional communication model where the information is going both ways, and the message in both encoded and decoded by the brand and the consumers simultaneously. Both parts are sharing insights and message. The audience is also creating the message simultaneously (inspired by Barnlund 1970).**

### 3.3 Digital communication

Digital marketing is one part of the direct marketing tool set. (Armstrong & Kotler, 2005). It is a discipline within the marketing field concerning the digital media platforms. Still, it is a rather new form that many companies are yet starting to discover the importance of. With a growing number of different digital platforms for communicating and reaching customers, the knowledge about new techniques and medias are getting more and more important in order for companies to successfully operate and navigate their activities around the digital landscape (Hill & Aniko, 2010). With digital marketing the relationship between customer and company changes, due to the integration and two-way communication platforms. Sharing information becomes easier and the messages can travel much faster and spread among a much larger crowd, than ever before (Kotler, 2003).

Digital marketing has also enabled companies to create more customized and personal communications and also enabled customers to give feedback directly to the company. It also has enabled a more deep and transparent way of creating relationship with customers. Platforms for digital marketing are normally: webpage, e-mail, social media, video etc. Althoug the number of platforms is growing constantly. For companies it is crucial to know which of them their customers are using and how to use them in order to satisfy and reach their customers and build relationship (Kotler 2003).

### 3.4 Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is the communication between company and consumer, and the aim is to understand the customer demand and control what the customer wants and needs. The purpose is to open up for a win- win relation that in the long run leads to loyal customers. However Gummesson (1995) states that this is not always how it works. Stone & Woodcock (1995, page 11), defines relationship marketing as; "Relationship marketing the use of a wide range of marketing, sales, communication and customer care techniques and processes to: First: Identify your named individual customer. Second: Create a relationship between your company and the consumer- a relationship that stretches over many transactions. Third: Manage that relationship to the benefit of your customers and your company". Research in relationship marketing argues that relationship marketing is crucial for business revenue and to survive in business. Therefore, it is important to manage and take care of the relationship between the company and the consumer (Bendapudi & Berry, 1997). It is value creation for both the customer and the company (Grönroos, 2002). Relationship marketing has its roots in customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It is more profitable to take care of the relationship with an existing customer, than to create a new one. A satisfied customer will likely come back for more. He is also more likely to spread the word about the service and product to others, i.e. word-of-mouth (Dahlén & Lange, 2003).
3.5 Social media

Social media gives the users the opportunity to communicate with each other through text, sound and picture. The difference between social media and mass media is that social media has the capacity to communicate many to many in the same channel and under the same conditions. It also enables the users to forward the message (Eriksson, 2012). The user area of social media is wide, from marketing, creating relationships, newsflash, entertainment to cultural exchange and so on. According to Carlsson (2009) social media can be technology-oriented. However, the phenomena’s are not about technology but about creating conversations and a way for communication between individuals. Companies are now, more than ever, using social media in their business. 40 % of the Swedish companies are using social media, which is a higher number than the EN- average of 35% (Larsson, 2012). Haenlein & Kaplan (2010) states that a media differ itself from other medias, depending on how social active the user currently is. Higher social presence gives the communication partners a higher social influence on each other’s behavior. For companies, in order to build a strong brand and achieve a strong position on the market, the consumers need to have a positive and strong connection with the company. It is important that the company knows their position and how they should implement the social medias in the strategic business plan and market communications (Dahlen & Lange, 2011).

Social media is based on relationships between individuals, companies, acquaintances, companies to companies and individuals to individuals etc. (Gummesson, 1995). The channels give companies an opportunity to directly communicate with their target group. Facebook is today one of the largest channels for these type of interactions. According to Holmström & Wikberg (2010), the main reason for a company to act in social media is in order to create relationships, strengthen the brand and to benefit from the fast communication. Important to understand is that social media is not a selling channel, it’s a communication platform, building on a two-way communication where the company needs to be active and serious (Hammer & Hanborg 2012), yet not push the products on to the customer.

The cost and resources for using social media in business can be excessive. Although, opening up a brand site on Facebook or Instagram is free, to maintain and uphold the company page can be costly due to the time needed to operate it properly. The committing sufficiency of resources is the main reason why companies fail in their attempts of using social media. Someone needs to be in charge and take the time to run the page, and time is money for companies. Although with a free distribution of messages between the user and the company, social media can be one of the best communication channels for the company (Carlsson, 2009).

3.5.1 Content marketing

Content marketing is a marketing technique where emphasis is put on delivering a more valuable and relevant information to the target customer, information that hopefully will get the customers attention. In today’s media world customers are used to a constant stream of information from companies and therefore it has become more difficult to get their attention through marketing. With content marketing companies are stepping away from advertising with the only purpose to sell, and are instead trying to engage and invite their customers to a more rewarding information. Yet still with the prospects of making profit in a longer perspective (contentmarketing institute, 2013). Marketing material becomes more of an editorial piece with
information and valuable content, than pure advertisement. “Basically, content marketing is the art of communicating with your customers and prospects without selling. It is non-interruption marketing. Instead of pitching your products or services, you are delivering information that makes your buyer more intelligent” (contentmarketinginstitute, 2013).

With content marketing, companies communicate with the aim to educate their customers about their products and therefore hopes to create a stronger connection with their customers. They want the customers to trust and like the company and therefore, hopefully, buy their products. Content marketing has become more common due to the growing importance and usage of digital marketing (Clark, 2013). Jennifer Rowley (Rowley, 2008 p.522) defines digital marketing as: “Digital content marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements profitably in the context of digital content, or bit-based objects distributed through electronic channels.” It is a form of marketing where word-of-mouth is used in order to share and spread relevant brand content. Users or customers are engaging and spreading the content in different media formats and platforms, making the viral spread both faster and wider. This has also proven to be a more effective way in order to reach higher trust from customers, compared to other more conventional methods. Research show that 90 % of customers tends to trust recommendations from friends and other users more than they trust ads coming from company sites (social media today, 2013).

### 3.5.2 Ambassadeurs

Consumers tend to have more confidence in what a friend, or other user of a brand, says than if the recommendations come from companies’ advertising (Kotler, 2003). How individuals’ percieves and process advertising and information from brands are related to their social networks (also known as tribes). Tribes referrers to small societal micro-groups, where the members share strong emotional links, vision of life, and a common sub-culture (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). “In contrast to a market segment, a tribe is a network of heterogeneous persons, in terms of gender, age, sex and income, who have a link because of a shared passion or emotion. The members are not just consumers but also advocates.” (Cova, 1997).

Companies are trying to create brand tribes: a form of communities that are more loose and informal compared to real brand communities (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). For companies a brand tribe can become very important for the success of the brand. Today’s customers are creating stronger relationships with brands, and also with groups around the brand. This gives companies implications to nurture the relationship and the sense of belonging that the tribe can generate. Customers today are using brands as signs in order to express themselves and their lifestyles and to show where they belong. Then, brand tribes also become a way of connecting with people alike and to share information, perceptions and knowledge about a certain brand (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009).

Although, a company can never truly have the entire power over a brand tribe and what content is shared among the individuals in the group. Therefore a tribe can be both good and bad for the company. Sharing brand experience and engaging with other customers and individuals are becoming more and more important and customers are influencing each other more than a company can influence the customer. Then, to control the message in the tribes, companies often use brand ambassadors. They can, through word-of-mouth, effectively spread the word about the brand and products and forward the image that the company desires. Ambassadors can, through their social networks, access the companies target group more honestly than the company can (Andersson & Ekman, 2009).
A skilled and qualified brand ambassador is someone that, in a non-commercial way, represents the brand and the right lifestyle connected with the brand. The main task is to create added value and strengthen the brand. Important for companies to know, when working with brand ambassadors, is that the motives of the ambassador can vary. It has to be an honorary and privilege task to be an ambassador and not a burden, in order for it to work properly. A qualified ambassador should put value to get first hand information from the target group and in a discreet way influence them with the right image (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). Thorstensson (2007) states that ambassadors must be prepared to defend the company and truly believe in the brand’s products. The best ambassadors are found among the users, owners, employees or agents. Companies should try to find the persons with the biggest social networks, who are active and true believers in the products and the brand. But most importantly; they have to be real. Marketers cannot create a good ambassador, thus it is not a hired fictional person but a real person inheriting the right characteristics that fits the brand image.
4. Empirical

This chapter presents the empirical data collected for this research. It starts with a collection of secondary data about three commonly used social media platforms. They will be shortly introduced and explained for the reader in order to give a good understanding of the platforms and their main usage. Thereafter the reader will find the material from the two in-depth interviews that were conducted. The material is sorted under the four themes introduced in the chapter for research method. This is done in order to make the reading easier and more understandable.

4.1 Common social media channels

4.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is the most common social media channel and it has more than a billion active users, monthly (in Dec-2012). The site is available in 70 different languages and approximately 80% of the users are outside Canada and the U.S. The core activities for the platform are: to share information, post info, like, comment and connect with new people. Facebook’s mission is to make the world more open (Newsroom.fb, 2013). According to Dann & Dann (2011) Facebook is created to connect people and companies, and to gather as much information as possible about the users. The platform gives a company an opportunity to receive demographic and geographic information about their followers or other users. With company sites and discussion platforms companies can reach their users, and potential new users, in an easy way. Facebook has a service, providing companies the opportunity to investigate and analyse what has been said about their company, but also information about who are affecting them and who is talking about their company (Andersson, 2009). There are many advantages for micro companies to use Facebook as a marketing channel. It is cost efficient, no printed advertising is needed, it is easier to personalize the information, and it is an opportunity for companies to “listen to” what is said about their brand and their products (Carlsson, 2009).

4.1.2 Instagram

“Instagram is a fast, beautiful and fun way to share your photos with friends and family” (Instagram, 2013). Instagram is a smartphone app that provides users to upload, share, like, follow and comment other users’ pictures. To use the service and interact on Instagram the users need to create an account. However, it is not possible for companies to create specific business profiles. Still, it is proven that companies can gain great advantages of using Instagram as a marketing channel in order to communicate with their customers. Statistics indicated that Instagram had 90 million users per month, 40 million pictures uploaded per day, and 8 500 likes per second in January 2013 (Resumé, 2013). It is easy to absorb visual communication for the target group on Instagram. Also, Instagram enables companies to easy, fast and in a professional way create a community of followers, consumers and potential consumers, that, in the long-run, can help the company to expand (Gunlow, 2012). Instagram provides a smart overview of the users photos, and companies can in an easy way use the platform to promote products, events, employees and news. They can ask their users to “tag” the company in a specific hashtag, which makes it easier for others to find pictures and users in the same category. Possible advantages of Instagram for companies are to create happenings and contest to increase followers and widen the range of the communication (Sprung, 2013).

4.1.3 Vimeo

Vimoe is a video website where the users can publish videos they made by them self. They can also choose to make them private or available for everyone to see. Vimeo have an application where the user can share, upload, editing and see other movies in their smartphone. The difference between Vimeo and their main competitor YouTube is that vimeo do not have any ads in their users videos, unlike YouTube (Vimeo,
Vimeo has grown dramatically the last years and went from 1.5 million to 5.3 million users between 2010 and 2011. For businesses, the site provides a PRO function, which allows companies to upload longer videos, use commercials in their videos, and get advanced analytical information (Pullen, 2011).

Companies, who choose to communicate with videos needs to be aware of the importance of keeping the video relevant, and in the right niche. The marketers must understand the brand and be one hundred percent sure of what kind of message they want to spread. In videos, it is an advantage if the company show: brand, logo, name or link to website in a tasteful way. It is important to be seen, and to make it easy for the user to share the media. To be seen is related with being findable. Tagging keywords makes it easier for the user to find relevant videos and to integrate it with different social media platforms, such as Facebook (Safko, 2010). Videos make users feel that they are closer to the person, or the company, that publishes the video clip. "If a picture is worth, 1, 000 words, then at 25 frames (pictures) per second, video adds up to 1.5 million words per minute!" (Safko, Page 521, 2010). Videos create connection between the sender and the receiver and the user can be more emotionally involved with the video experience and the brand, than with many other media forms.

4.2 Empirical data from case studies

The two persons who where interviewed from Kask of Sweden were Sverre Liliequisit, responsible for communication and development and the CEO, Peter Hulander. From now on all empirical information from Peter and Sverre will be referred to as Kask, in order to simplify for the reader during the empirical, analysis and conclusion chapters. The persons interviewed from Gococo, was Annie and Linnea Wennergren and they will be referred to as Gococo.

4.2.1 Present

Today Kask uses social media to communicate with their customers. They mainly use Facebook, and say that it is an easy and innocent communication channel that matches their brand and how they want to be perceived. "We don’t want to be to sales oriented in our communication, we want to be real" Kask said. Therefore they avoid publishing Facebook notes solely about products and sales. Gococo on the other hand, said that everything they post on their Facebook page, or other social media platforms is, in the long-run, about making sales. They want to create a diverse image of the brand and the products and bring forward both the product and the brand. Gococo also believes Facebook too be their most important communication channel, in order to reach and engage with their customers, although they are using other social media as well. Considering their activity on their Facebook accounts, Kask said that they try to update their Facebook page a few times a week. Then the updates are mainly about news in the industry or new cool movie clips. They try to put one hour every day on social media, in order to not loose out on interest from their followers. Gococo, on the other hand, are aiming to publish one to two posts every day on their Facebook page. However, they are more flexible when it comes to their other social media platforms. They argue about the importance of always remain active to still be interesting for their customers. They also argue that everything that is published should have a deeper content, which adds value to the brand and for their customers. They do not want to become an irritation for their followers by posting too much information.

Both Kask and Gococo mentioned that their business idea has changed over the year. Kasks business idea from the beginning was: “to make unique beanies to wear with pride” and their slogan is “live a little”. Gococos vision is to be top of mind when it comes to first layer products for sport, to have a fresh design in combination with pioneering quality and functionality. Kask and Gococo both talks about their competitors and the difficulties to stick out and get noticed on the market. When asked about brands that work well with social media, Gococo mentiones the brand Drop Of Mindfulness, a micro sport company producing sport clothes. Kask names the brand Houdini as one competitor that works well with their social media channels. According to Kask,
Houdini has many followers, and their Facebook account looks clean and inviting. Kask also said that they know Houdini to put a lot of time on managing their social media channels. Kask said that it is interesting to see how much focus they have on sales and products, yet whiteout becoming too pushy or a sell-out.

Kask states that they do pay much attention to competitors’ social media and communication. They believe that this can be both good and bad for them. They believe that the young generation sees through companies’ advertisement and posts on Facebook and Instagram and that they are more aware of companies’ attempts to advertise through these platforms. Kask also believes it should be more important to have “real/true” followers, than thousands of “fake”, or bought, followers. This is something that Gococo brings forward as important to have “real/true” followers, than thousands of “fake”, or bought, followers. This is something that Gococo brings forward as something unique. Their followers are engaged and are therefore great ambassadors of the brand, part of something unique. Their followers are often giving good response and a lot of feedback and are therefore a valuable resource for the company when it comes to product development and feedback.

4.2.2 Relationships

Kask works with what they call “friends” of the brand, who are about 25 passionate professionals or potentially professional skiers. They say that these people have a lifestyle that matches the Kask brand image and are therefore great ambassadors of the brand. They communicate: “live a little”, and Kask knows that it is beneficial for the brand to have their products seen on these people. Considering the low turnover and the market conditions, Kask said they just pay four of the “friends” money (a small amount) and then only offers product sponsoring for the other ones. They calm to be generous with how much products they give away to their ambassadors, (a value of 10 – 15 000 SEK) and the only thing they want in return are for the skiers to do their thing. And when people ask them about the beanie or other products, they will tell them about Kask in order to generate “buzz” about the brand and the products. Kask explained that it is common that the non-professionals skiers want to have the same products and clothes as the professional athletes, and therefore makes the sponsoring beneficial for the brand.

Gococo is working a lot with sponsoring as well, both with bloggers and with athletes. It is important for them that the athletes have the right attitude and are dedicated to their sports and the brand. They are only sponsoring their athletes with products. They also participate at special events, such as smaller competitions or fairs in order to reach customers and communicate their brand. They do not require anything from the bloggers or the athletes in return for sending products, but only hope for them to write or talk good about their products. Gococo receive a great deal of requests from bloggers and athletes who want to become sponsored by the company, but they have become more and more restricted when choosing whom to work with. Especially since they cannot afford to give away free products to everyone writing them. Both Kask and Gococo believe sponsoring to be a value-driven cost that leads to increased sales. However, most revenue comes in form of brand awareness when their clothes and products are seen on athletes and sport profiles.

4.2.3 Problem

Kask’s Facebook account is controlled and runned by them selves alone, together with two to three of their so-called “friends”. However, the “friends” mainly post video-clips they created, otherwise they forward their news to Kask, who then publish the news. According to Kask, only eight “friends” forward their news to them, and they believe it is due to the fact that it takes a lot of time to be active on Facebook. Often the skiers do not have the time to post news for companies sake. Also riders are often sponsored by many brands and all brands want their athletes to speak and write as much as possible about them. However, the problematic also lies in the skiers risk, or fear, to become a commercial advertising icon for the brands they are sponsored by, and therefore risk their own image within the skiing community. They risk their authenticity as professionals and are therefore becoming much more restricted in their favoured communication for the brands the work with, said Kask. This is also
something that Gococo has realized, especially when working with bloggers. They have become more and more restricted with writing or receiving products from brands, since many are afraid of losing their readers’ trust. No one wants to be perceived as a “sell-out” for the brand, explains Gococo.

Kask has an oral agreement with their “friends” about helping them to collect relevant and cool news to publish on the brand’s Facebook page. They told that they have tried to have written contracts, but it did not feel right since many of the them are close friends to the founders. Although, they hope to find a more effective way of publish news on the social media channels and still benefit from using their “friends”. Gococo runs all their social media channels on their own, in that way the can have the entire control of what is posted or published. They are not using others outside of the company in the same way as Kask does with their friends. When it comes to Instagram, Gococo has just recently created two hashtags on Instagram which they encourages their customers and followers to use when posting photos related to the Gococo brand and products. This is nothing they can control of course, but through creating these special hashtags they can try to get the relevant pictures to fall into one place and easily be browsed by others. They say to have experienced a need from customers to create these hashtags in order to manage the pictures posted and help customers to know what hashtag to use when posting own pictures related to the brand.

Kask knows that they should need to put at least five times more time into social media, than they do today in order to manage it more properly. About six-seven months ago they realized that they needed to be better, before that it was mainly sporadic posts. They assigned one person in the company (Sverre) to be responsible for the digital communication. He claims to spend at least one hour a day on social media. However, Kask said that they have no personal interested in social media and therefore it becomes even more of a struggle to understand and work with. Further on, they explain the difficulties of knowing what they should publish, and when. In November to March it is easier, thus it is much more new and interesting information about the industry at that time a year. The rest of the year it is harder to find relevant news to post since it is an industry that fluctuates with the seasons. Kask wish that some of their “friends” had more responsibility for the brand Facebook account, and future Instagram account, during spring/summer season when they are occupied with product development and more production related activities.

Gococo also struggles to know what information to post. They say it is hard to know what is relevant and interesting for their customers. Sometimes they publish the same information, news or pictures on several platforms, just with the aim to post something and prove that they still are active. They also do this when the post is very important. Sometimes they have difficulties finding things to publish, although they are not as connected to the seasons as Kask is. Still, new products are often released at the same time and therefore it is hard to know how, or whether, to make them into separate news-post or collect everything into one and then risk having nothing to post later on when no new products are released.

Both companies find difficulties in knowing which language to use in their different media channels. Both are small companies with a very scattered distribution where the international customers are to be found in a variety of countries. Some followers are international and are using the webpages and Facebook pages in order to reach and engage with the company. Therefore, they explained, it is hard to know how to handle the language on these media channels, and still being relevant to the Swedish customers and homemarket. Gococo are trying to only use English in their social media channels, thus they regard themselves as an international company and have the aim of becoming more present at international markets in the future. However, they have experienced some bad response from Swedish customers about writing in English, but they still believe English to be more appropriate. Yet, they also forward the struggles and time-consuming of
using a non-native tongue when communicating through social media. Kask finds it hard to come up with a solution on how to handle the varied nationalities of their customers and their distributors. They are selling in China and parts of Europe and the Nordic countries, but all to a rather small extent. Therefore they question whether to have one Facebook-page that is international and for all their customers, or whether to have different Facebook-pages for each market/country and customize it for each and every one of them.

4.2.4 Future
For the future Kask believes that videos can be the next step for using social media in a commercial perspective. The see the potential of using both Instagram and Vimeo for publishing brand related pictures and videos in the future. They already created a "Kaskofsweden-account" on Instagram but say that they do not really know how to work with it yet. Furthermore, Gococo are also using Instagram but are still trying to figure out how to best work with it. They have even set up a youtube-account where they have published a few videos, and are planning on adding more in a near future. They believe that videos can be a great tool to provide the customers with a diverse image of the brand, and also present the founders behind the brand. They hope that the videos can give enhance the personal contact and provide relevant information and educate the customers about product features etc. They have thought of using both Twitter and Pinterest but claims to have no time to navigate and use them properly. Therefore they decided not to use them, at least for now. However, they believe it is important to be present at different channels and provide the same core values in all of them. But they also think it is good to use different medias in order to give a deeper and more diverse and authentic image of the brand. Since they want to be more personal and get a closer contact with their customers, they consider videos to be a good tool to use.

For the future, Kask strongly believes that they have to stay active on Facebook, because of the large audience there and the wide reach this platform provides.

Kask’s vision is to communicate the “live a little” feeling more clearly and in a new way. Earlier it was Kaj & Sverre that carried the feeling, but, as they said, they are getting older and they need the brand to be strong enough to stand on itself. Kask has the goal to increase the turnover of the company, since the founders want to be able to live of the company in the future. But in order to do so, they think they need to have more focus on the products to be able to sell more. Gococo responds differently to this aspect. They have chosen to have more focus on their products in their communication, and believes that all communication must lead to sales, although sometime in a longer period of time. However, they are still concerned about not becoming too pushy with their promotional messages. Therefore they believe to have the opposite problem of Kask. Thus, they are trying hard to educate their customers more about the brand values and about them, the founders, and their background in professional sailing-teams and as athletes. For the future, they want to build a deeper and more diverse image of the brand and getting their customers to know more about the foundation of Gococo. Not only do they want their customers to know about the products, but also give the customers a more personal image of Gococo.

Kask told us about the different amount of feedback that different types of published material get on their Facebook page. As an example the said that when they publish a video-clip from a professional skier they often receive a rather limited amount of clicks and likes. This differend a lot for when they publish sales-campaigns with great offers on products. Those kinds of posts received hundreds of likes and click’s to the webpage, about three times more many other posts. Kask said that they never believed that it would be like this. However, they think it could depend on whether their followers on Facebook already knows about the Kask-story and the core values, and therefore are more interested in receiving great offers. Gococo have somewhat the same stories, where customers and followers respond differently to certain kind of published materials, than how they thought they would react. They say that when
publishing a nice picture of the products, or similar, they often get great response from their followers. While, when posting pictures from an event or fair, which they as company representatives believe to be more interesting and newsworthy, often do not get the same amount of likes or response.

Both the companies explains that these findings can give a better understanding of who their actual target customers is, and give valuable information that they previous did not know about their customers. An example for Gococo was when they published the news about their new distributor, NK, on their Facebook-page. They did not believe it to be of any great interest, themselves but their followers gave a great amount of likes and good response on the post. This implied that their customers actually were more fashion conscious, than what they thought of them to be. It give a different image of what kind of customers they actually attracts through their channels, and sometimes it might not agree with the target customer group they thought of having. Hence, it can give new information about the customers and the followers, explains Gococo.

5. Analysis

5.1 Present

According to Anderson (2006), the forces of long tail economy have enabled the growing importance and usage of social media. Today, even business organisations see the potential in using social media, both for internal and external use. At the moment, 40% of Swedish companies are using social media (Larsson, 2013). What contrasts social media, as a marketing tool, compared with mass media, is the way the communication flows between the active contributors (Eriksson, 2012). With social media, communication becomes an integration between many-to-many, in the same channel and with the same conditions. The older models of one-to-one communication, or one-to-many, is no longer working in the same way as it did with mass media. Today, everyone is able to share information across the channel (Gummesson, 1995). This is something that Kask have benefited from and uses for their social media communication. They allow their “friends” to share videos and news on the company Facebook-page, and not only publish materials by them selves. Social media also allows customers, or followers, to share information and make conversations with both the company and with other followers, “friends” or customers of the brand. With followers, a company hopes to spread the brand further and benefit from the many-to-many conversational possibilities of Facebook, both through word-of-mouth and shared materials. According to Jennifer Rowley (2008), this is a more effective way to gain trust from the customers than other more conventional marketing methods. Customers tend to trust friends’ recommendations more than pure advertisement from the brand representatives. Kask explains that the “friends” of the brand expresses the right feeling and inherits the right image and lifestyle and therefore, customers tends to look up to these people and trust them. This suggests that it important for companies to work with these kinds of tools, as friends or ambassadeurs of a brand, to engage with customers in a more transparent and trustful way.

Facebook is the most commonly used social media. According to Carlsson (2009), micro companies can take great advantage of using Facebook as a communication channel in order to reach customers. Facebook is cost efficient, easy to personalize and a great tool for “listening” to what customers think of the brand. The two micro companies Kask and Gococo have both chosen to use social media as a key communication channel, due to limited amounts of resources within the companies. They are both using Facebook, and trust this channel to be their most important communication channel. As Dann & Dann (2011) declares, Facebook was created to connect people and gather information, which gives a strong implication for using it in a company in order to reach customers and engage them with the company. But it could also be a resource to collect information and feedback from the customers. Gococo said that they use Facebook in order to connect and engage with
their customers but also uses the page to collect feedback from customers about products etc. Kask also uses their Facebook-page in order to communicate with their customers on a more personal level and consider this channel to be transparent and innocent and therefore match the brand in a good way. Both companies said to perceive their followers on Facebook to be a valuable resource for the company, both for sharing and for retaining important information.

According to Gummesson (1995), social media gives companies an opportunity to directly communicate with their target group. Both Kask and Gococo have found it valuable to use social media in order to get a direct contact with customers and get to know whom their actual target customer is. For both, these channels have enabled them to get new information about their customers and get clues about what they like and who they are. As for Gococo, they found out through Facebook, that their real customers are more fashion conscious than they thought them to be.

Hammer and Hanborg (2012) declares that for companies using social media for marketing and communication, it is important to observe that social media is not a channel for selling the products, but a communication platform for a two-way communication. Then it becomes important for the company to be active and serious when using social media. Kask said that they are afraid of retaining an image of being fake, and not be perceived as authentic when using social media for marketing the brand. They say it is hard to know what to publish, or not to publish, in order to stay true to the brand and relevant for the customers. They want to be active in the communication and publish relevant content, without loosing credibility. Gococo has experiencined this dilemma as well. To maintain reliability among their customers, they are focusing on creating clean and professional social media platforms, especially their Facebook page. They have a clear strategy for staying active and post relevant news on the platforms, and focus on one-to-two post per day. They are truly thinking through the content before publishing it on the different platforms. But, even though Gococo are using their social media platforms for communication and connecting with customers, they still are aware of the importance of using the channels in order to create sales. Making sales is the main goal in the end, as they put it. However, Kask are still struggling. They do not have the same clear vision for their social media activities, and do not want to be to “pushy”. Yet, they still want to make their business profitable and get their customer to buy their products. This dilemma has become more significant due to the growth of social media marketing (Clark, 2013). A way of handling it is to use content marketing. Content marketing means to deliver more value and relevant information to the customers, in order to educate and engage the customers to become stronger connected to the company. It will lead to a greater trust among customers and therefore generate more sales. It is a way of converting long-time relationships into profitable customers.

Instagram is another social media platform that can be a powerful tool for companies in their marketing mix. It provides a platform where companies easily can create a community of followers and customers/potential customers that, in the long-run, can help to expand the brand. It is a fast and easy, yet professional, way of using followers in order to create word-of-mouth and get viral spread (Guntlow, 2012). Gococo has an Instagram account but they are still working on a strategy of how to use it properly. They think it is a nice way of sharing photos, which can enhance the brand image and spread the brand. It is also interesting to see customers’ own pictures when wearing Gococo products, said the company. These pictures can be found under the two hashtags that the company created. Hashtags that they encourage people to use when taking photos of the products or referring to the brand, when using Instagram. Kask do also have an account on Instagram, as mentioned earlier, however they are not yet using it very often. They have a very limited knowledge about the platform and therefore do not know how to handle it properly. Although, they wish to use it more in the future and expects that it could be a good way of creating stronger brand awareness.
Gococo claims to feel more unconventional and not as strict when posting on Instagram, unlike when publishing on Facebook, and they are more flexible and playful with the content. However, they found out that customers did not know what hashtag to use when posting photos of them using Gococo products. Therefore the pictures were hard to find and to browse for customers, so the company decided to create two hashtags in order to sort out the pictures and make them easier to find. According to Gunløw (2012), creating a named hashtag for the company, and boost customers to use it, is a good way to make it easier to find pictures in a specific category or brand.

5.2 Relationships

It is hard for companies to control the information spread at the digital platforms concerning their brand or their products. Both good and bad content about the brand can get viral both quickly and very broad. A solution, which has showed good results, is to use brand ambassadors (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). This is something that both Kask and Gococo uses and perceives as a valuable investment. Individuals affect each other in their social networks and they tend to trust what other members believe or think, more than they trust brands and companies (Veloutso and Moutinho, 2009). The advantages of consumers trusting their friends more than a brand (Kotler, 2003) is why Kask uses their “friends”, and Gococo sponsors their athletes, and let them communicate the brand image. They want to show their products on the “right” type of person that both inherits and can strengthen the brand image. Kask believes it to be important to have people who portrays their brand value; “live a little”, and therefore they work closely with about 25 professional or potentially professional skiers. Kask’s return of investment for sponsoring is to get the skiers to talk about the products when it feels natural to do so; when they feel about it or when someone asks them about the products the are wearing. They said several times during the interviews that they do not want to risk loosing the authentic image of the ambassadors and jeopardize breaking that image. According to Andersson & Ekman (2009) it is the non-commercial aspect that is most important when using brand ambassadors, they have to be authentic. The ambassadors’ primary task is to create added value and strengthen the brand. Content marketing institute (2013) states that the aim of content marketing is to communicate with customers and educate the consumer, without making direct sales promotions or push products. This is something that Kask also explains, while they claim it is their ambassadors purpose to talk with customers and teach them about the Kask products and the Kask brand values.

Thorstensson (2007) states that brand ambassadors should consist of individuals that truly believes in the products and the brand, and Andersson & Ekman (2009) points out the importance of having motivated ambassadors, who feel privileged to wear the products. A skilled and well-qualified brand ambassador has to be non-commercial, and represent the lifestyle, as well as the values, of the brand. During the interviews, Kask and Gococo claimed to carefully choose whom they sponsor, due to the high cost of sponsoring as well as the fit with the brand image. They work with both professionals and amateurs and a crucial aspect in choosing the right people, is their dedication and their attitude towards the brand and their sport. Both Kask and Gococo experieince sponsoring to generate value to the company and to their customers and enhance the relationships between them. Anderson & Ekman (2009) states that through ambassadors, a company can come closer to their customer without being too obvious about the sales aspects of the sponsoring. Kask thinks that this is beneficial for companies, especially when more and more individuals are able to “see through” normal and more conventional advertising on Internet.

5.3 Problems

Operating social media activites takes time and, according to Carlsson (2009), the cost and the resource consumption are the main reason that companies fail in their attempts of using social media, especially micro companies. Kask thinks that they should need to put at least five times more time into their social media activites, compared to what they do today, in order to make it succesfull. They have tried to develop more routines for publishing on Facebook, but without really succeeding with it. The problem appears to be the lack of engagement, knowledge and
time from the ones responsible for it. Facebook’s purpose is to connect people with each other and with companies (Dann & Dann, 2011). For micro companies, Facebook can be a marketing channel that is more cost efficient, in relation to printed advertising (Carlsson, 2009). The two interviewed companies are running all their Facebook, Instagram and blog channels by themselves. However, both wish to do it better, and more efficiently, in the future. Kask lacks a fluent stream of news on their Facebook account, in contrast to Gococo, that has a clear strategy for how often they should publish on Facebook, Instagram and their blog. According to Gummesson (1995) the purpose of a relationship should be a win-win situation between the company and the consumer, but as Hammer & Hanborg (2012) state, companies needs to be active, relevant and serious in order to maintain and create a good two-way communication in social media.

Both Kask and Gococo questions which language to use for their social media platforms, and they both mix Swedish and English for their published materials. Nevertheless, Gococo claims that to try to only use English, but they have then received some complaints regarding the language from Swedish customers.

It has showed that Instagram can have great advantages for companies, when used as a marketing channel. It is a platform that is easy to understand and companies can quickly and without cost create a channel for their customers to hashtag their pictures (Guntlow, 2012). Kask and Gococo both just recently started up their Instagram accounts and neither of them has managed to get this channel under total control yet. According to Sprung (2012), companies can use Instagram to create contests and happenings to easily increase followers. Gococo has encouraged their customers to use two hashtags, created by the company, in order to collect pictures of individuals and products that are connected with the brand and therefore get the pictures easier to find and browse.

For videos, according to Safko (2010) brands need to publish only relevant videos that are in their niche market, and make sure to keep it easy for the users to see and share them. Kask allows some of their “friends” to post videos on Kask’s Facebook page. They have an agreement with their “friends” to help the company to collect relevant information for the company’s Facebook page. According to Safko (2010) social media can be beneficial for companies in order to tag and share videos and pictures with their customers. “If a picture is worth, 1 000 words, then at 25 frames (pictures) per second, video adds up to 1.5 million words per minute!” (Safko, page 521, 2010).

In order to communicate their brand value: “live a little”, videos can be a great channel, Kask explains. Additionally, Gococo was also talking about the advantages of using videos to communicate product information and teaching their customers more about the brand and special product features. According to Bendapudi & Berry (1997) companies can use videos to communicate with their customers, which then, due to a stronger relationship, hopefully leads to increased sales.

Kask explains that it is hard for them, as well as for their brand ambassadors, to communicate product information whiteout being to product oriented. According to Hammer & Hanborg (2012), companies need to post relevant information on social media in order to attract consumers, and both Kask and Gococo finds it hard to know what kind of information their customers finds relevant, but also to know when to publish. A problem for both of them is that everything happens during the same period, i.e. their industries are somewhat sesonal and fairs or product releasas tends to be happening at the same time during the year. Therefore they experience time periods when they have no information or news to publish. For Gococo, new product arrives at the same time and for Kask the season for skiing is short and all attractive information about the branch and products are only relevant during a few months. In today’s media world it is hard for companies to reach through the wide stream of messages and connect with the end consumer. But when using content marketing, companies are stepping away from the purpose to sell and instead try to engage with their customer on a more personal and authentic level.
all tries to engage their “friends” into the brand and each other more than what the company can do. (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). Customers influence than when the company does it themselves the company's Using brand ambassadors is an effec and the product features. educate and engage customer deeper into the brand content. personal customers t about the branch or & Lange, 2003). customers can be likely to spread the word likely to come back for re-purchase and also more likely to spread the word about the brand or the products. Consequently, in the long-run, loyal customers can be profitable for the company (Dahlén & Lange, 2003). Both Kask and Gococo are both having a advantage of the characteristics of Instagram for marketing activities when creating happenings and contests, with the purpose to increase followers and widen the viral spread and increase their network. Kask and Gococo are both having an Instagram account but Kask is only using it in a small scale so far. Gococo is sharing pictures of events and day-to-day activities on their Instagram account. They have also created hashtags for their customers to use, in order to gather all relevant pictures in one place. Still they say they are not yet truly aware of how to use this

5.4 Future

According to Saiko (2010), videos are a good way of giving customers the opportunity to feel closer connected to the brand and to the people behind the brand. Videos can make the receiver feel more emotionally involved with the sender. However, Saiko (2010) argues for the importance of having good and relevant content in the videos. They have to secure that the message the company want to send is relevant for the customer, and inline with the company’s values and image. Grönroos (2002) argues that creating relationships with customers can be valuable both for the customer as well as for the company. He also states that relationship comes from customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. Therefore using videos as a way of creating a connection with the customer and build a stronger relationship can provide loyal customers. Loyal customers are more likely to come back for re-purchase and also more likely to spread the word about the brand or the products. Consequently, in the long-run, loyal customers can be profitable for the company (Dahlén & Lange, 2003). Both Kask and Gococo finds using video for social media communication interesting for the future, and both are already more or less using it for promoting the brand or share clips and news about the branch or the products. As Gococo claims, they want to create a stronger connection to their customers through their videos and become more personal, yet still deliver relevant and valuable content. Video is, according to them, a great tool to educate and engage customer deeper into the brand and the product features.

Using brand ambassadors is an effective way of target the company’s customers more honestly and true than when the company does it themselves (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). Customers influence each other more than what the company can do. Kask tries to engage their “friends” into the brand and allows few of them post own videos on the Facebook-
platform in the best way. They are publishing more spontaneously and do not contemplate as much on what they publish, as they do with their Facebook-page.

Content marketing is important when using social media for communicating the brand. With content marketing, companies are more focusing on delivering more valuable information and invite their customers to a more rewarding interaction (contentmarketinginstitute.com, 2013). The aim is to educate the customers and build stronger relationships. You want create trust, which can lead to future sales and loyal customers (copyblogger, 2013). Gococo wants their future videos to become a channel where they can deliver a higher content message with information and features about the products. But they also want to educate their customers more about them as founders and the core values of the brand. They want to inform their customers and give a higher value to the content of their advertisement in social media. Kask also wants their social media marketing to have a more valuable and rewarding content, they want to remark the "live a little"-feeling, which is the core value of the brand.
6. Conclusion

This chapter will bring forward the problems and thoughts, which has been discussed earlier, that micro companies can experience. We also present how they should work with social media in order to achieve their goals. These discussions will then lead forward to our conclusion, and end up in our own constructed model; “Four steps – from likes to commitment”. The model is as a suggested communication strategy for managing social media as a communication channel for micro companies. The model presents four steps that a company should consider when creating and implementing social media in their communication.

6.1 Summary of the analysis

We have investigated how fashion retail micro companies can use social media as a marketing channel. The research questions were as follows: “Which problems do micro companies face when using social media in their marketing and communication activities?” and “How can micro companies in the Swedish retail market use social media in their marketing and communication strategy?”. Social media is an effective two-way communication channel that gives companies the possibility to build relationship, communicate with customers and affect their customer, over Internet. During the research process, it appeared that micro companies in the Swedish fashion industry often lack a clear social media strategy and finds it hard to know how to handle the social media channels. The results of the case studies shows that companies lack time to manage different social media channels, they have problems deciding who should be responsible for publishing and running the channels and finds it hard to simply know how the process should work properly. These were the companies’ main problems regarding their social media channels. Other pinpoints found during the study were difficulties in how to handle international customers/followers. The companies questioned whether the main language on their platforms should be English, for published materials. Results also show a problem with the knowledge about their customers or followers at the social media channels. Both the companies had found out new information about their customers, mainly through their Facebook page, and were then questioning who their actual target customers are and what their preferences are. Last, the study gave implications that the companies find it hard to know what kind of message to send out and how to do it properly with social media platforms. They also found it difficult to know which channel to use for what kind of message or published materials.

With all this information we decided to create our own model, which includes the five problems companies can face working with social media and tries to give insights about how to face these problems. The model also includes five benefits that a company can gain if using social media in their business. In the next chapter, 6.2, the model will be explained more in detail.
6.2 Conclusion
With our gained knowledge from our research we here present our own created model: “Four steps-from likes to commitment”. The model should be used as a framework for micro companies when they create their social media marketing strategies. The model is presented below, followed by a deeper explanation of each of the four steps.

6.2.1 Model “Four steps -from likes to commitment”

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4. Model "four steps - from likes to commitment"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Find customer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the first step the company will have to focus on investigating who their customers are, in order to know what their preferences are and what they like. It is also important to track where these customers are and where to communicate with them i.e. which channels they are using in their day-to-day life and where they go to find information and news. This is a foundation in order to know how to talk and communicate with the customers and where to communicate with them. Facebook and other social media platforms, where the focus lies on connection, realtionships and networking, are great tools in order to track customers and get information about their lifestyle and habits. There are also possibilities to find new customers that can be of interest due to the connections and networks of already established customers/followerson Facebook. Theses platforms also make it possible to talk directly to the customer and get first hand information and feedback. It can also give the company new information about their customer’s habits or preferences, information that the company previously did not know or cared about. This makes it easier to personalize the messages and campaigns in order to have a successful social media presence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 2: Value Driven variables**

In the second step the company needs to decide on their ambitions or motives for their presence in social media, in order to know where they should act. Research on social media indicates that companies can benefit from being active on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, YouTube and Instagram. Operated properly, these platforms can increase the companies’ sales, create higher brand awareness, and work as a channel for information or feedback, as well as a being tool for trust and relationship building. However, it is important to know that social media can sound as a dream story for the companies to use, but in order to succeed they need to know what their desired outcome is. Without a clear digital strategy, the return of investment in these channels will become smaller, than for companies with a well-established digital strategy. It is impossible for a company to be everywhere and do everything, so it is important for the company to find their own mix of channels an their best fit in the social media jungle, in order to achieve their goals.

**Step 3: Choice of channel**

After getting to know the customer and established the value driven variables for the social media presence, the next step is to decide which channel/channels to work with. When you know your customer and where to find them your channels should be inline with these findings, in order to reach out and get the best coverage. Also, the choices of
channels are strongly connected to what values and what message the company want to send and what the intention of the communication is. Different channels are more or less good at achieving different outcomes for different marketing activities. For example, Facebook is a great tool to track customers’ habits and lifestyle and find new networks and communicate directly with the customers. Instagram, on the other hand, do not have the same possibility to give information about the customers but instead can lead to acquiring new customers and engage the customers with the brand through hashtags or competitions etc. Both Facebook and Instagram are time consuming to manage and it is important to be active and engage in the activity and communications that is ongoing. Videos are another social media channel where companies can engage with their customers and invite them to a higher level of engagement and sharing. A Video can be a powerful tool in order to give high content information and deliver a message in a more appealing and rewarding way than with writing material. However, videos are a difficult tool to manage, while it demands for high quality material and high content messages, and it can be both time-consuming and expensive. Yet, for companies where videos are a part of the industry and easily can be conducted or already are a common tool or part of the lifestyle of the customers, videos can be easy to implement into a company’s social media activities without being nor time-consuming or hard to manage.

The company will also have to decide on how many channels they are willing, or have the capability, to work with. It is not only to start up an account or a page just because it seems appropriate or interesting, there have to be an incentive for using the different platforms and also, a company have to have the resources and capabilities to handle it properly, or else it can become harmful for the brand. Social medias presence demands a rather high activity, thus they have to be updated continuously.

It is an ongoing project that has to be managed accordingly, or soon the customers will loose interest

Facebook:
+ networking
+ get info about customers
+ feedback
+ for communication
+ build relationship
- time-consuming
- expensive to manage
- time-consuming

Vimeo:
+ short clips, easy to watch
+ sharing on other medias
+ PRO function for companies
+ higher level of engagement
- expensive
- demands higher level of content

and go elsewhere.

Pro’s and con’s for three social media platforms:

**Step 4: Planning process**

Now, when the company knows to whom they want to communicate, and why and where they will act, it is time for the five steps in “the planning process”. This is the last, but the most important step, which requires consideration on five points:

1. **How much time** is the company willing to spend on social media, and how much time is required in order to fulfill their goals?
2. **Who** should be responsible for the channels’ structure, and who will operate them?
3. **Consider what kind of written language** to use on the platforms. This includes; the tone of the language, which form it is written in, as well as specific expressions only used in that typical industry. And ofcourse whether

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instagram:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ engage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ fun and easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ create communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ great for competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ viral spread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- no information about</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to use English or the domestic language of the specific market.

4. How frequent should the company publish text, pictures or videos onto their chosen channels.

5. How big budget should the company earmark, or are willing/able to spend on managing the channels, this includes both cost in form of time and money.

The outcomes/benefits
The company has now achieved to identify; their consumer, value driven variables, what channels to use, as well as how they should operate the chosen channels. If done right, the company can become successful with their social media presence, and save both time and money on their marketing and communication. Hence, social media is more cost and time efficient than traditional marketing for micro companies, due to the low setup cost and the wide reach. Lastly, the most valuable outcome of the four-step model is: the possibility to affect the target consumer and create loyal customer, that in a longer time period can generate growth in sales and a larger profit for the company.
7. Recommendations

This thesis’ focus has been to identify what problem micro companies can have when using social media for marketing and communication. With presenting theories and empirical data about the found problems, examining how two micro companies are using social media today, and exploring what aspects that seems to be important when using social media, a communication model was created and presented in order to answer our research questions. We therefore believe to have fulfilled the purpose of our thesis.

With more time and resources it would be interesting to look further into how this model can be applied into business, in real life, to investigate the actual outcome and thereby secure the utility of our created model. The next step could be to further develop the model and include a more specific social media strategy guideline that micro companies can use.

The study’s reliability could be strengthened through integrating more micro companies, at the Swedish retail market, into the study. During the process, interesting insights came up and we believe it could be interesting to look closer into how the employees’ knowledge and personal interest in social media affects the business result of using social media in a company. Considering the few number of employees in a micro company, and information from our respondents, we got the impression that the employees’ personal interest is essential for how well they use social media in the company and into what extent.

For further studies it would be interesting to add the consumer’s thoughts on how they experience brands social media activities. Through a consumer’s point of view, the “four steps- from likes to commitment” model could become more stretched and perhaps adapt better to micro companies an the present market conditions.
8. References


Acc2me Archives (2003), (Online) Available: http://www.acc2me.se/archives/13 / (2013-05-09)


Kotler, P. (2011) Philip Kotler’s contributions to marketing theory and practice. Review of Marketing Research, Volume 8, 87–120


Visiting adress: Bryggaregatan 17 • Postal adress: 501 90 Borås • Website: www.textilhogskolan.se