How to market a fashion brand through Viral Marketing

- A case study of Swedish brand Burfitt

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Abstract
The digital Media landscape of today has brought new marketing possibilities. For the creation of radical advertising, a fashion company may take advantage of those new tools. The nature of the fashion industry is volatile and a fashion brand’s to be or not be depends on having a feel for the right trends as well as the marketing of the brand through the right channels. Fashion marketing of today is about spreading the word of brand through popular Social Media channels such as networks like fashion blogs, Twitter and Facebook. The most frequent way of marketing a brand by using Social Media is through viral marketing.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the viral marketing and its effects - like frequency in Swedish fashion blogs for example – related to the Swedish fashion brand Burfitt. The survey is made by mapping and describing the virtual network of Burfitt. Besides the empirical material collected, the thesis consists of relevant theories on Social Media and viral marketing.

Observations made and collected from the Internet is often thick and unstructured material. The main challenge is therefore to bring order into the material. There are no yet any specific methods developed for how to conduct an online survey, although the term virtual ethnography defines the work consisting of scanning the Internet and tracking links for the collecting of material. In addition I have made a semi-structured interview with Kajsa Leanderson, representative for Burfitt.

The results from the survey show that a small sized fashion brand, like Burfitt, is likely to gain advantages by creating viral marketing campaigns. For example virtual footprints made by mutual linking between different websites in a creative network of fashion business partners are significant for the nature of viral marketing. Moreover, almost all publicity (online) concerning fashion seems to be written with uncritical intentions. In addition most of the publicity, particularly what is published online, tends to be highly visual. The lack of critique together with the visual nature of online messages makes a great basis for viral marketing communications. There are also some restrictions with the nature of viral communications. The unpredictable nature of the Medias, as well as that of the fashion world, is not to rely on. In addition, due to the enormous information-flow on the Internet as well as the uncontrollable nature of viral communications it is probably for the brands best to limit the marketing efforts to channels and campaigns that are manageable. Another dilemma with the viral marketing is that the effects are hard to measure. Thus it could not be stated if the campaigns were really worth the efforts made. For summarizing, viral marketing is a smart, low-budget opportunity for a fashion brand to be seen and published online, but its character makes it difficult to control and the effects are hard to measure.
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1. Introduction

The thesis’ subject is discussed in this chapter. It is summarized in the main question: How to market a fashion brand through viral marketing? – A case study of Swedish brand Burfitt. Additionally the purpose of the paper and its delimitations are also represented.

1.1 Background – the fashion industry and marketing of today

The fashion industry of today is scattered all over the world. The industry and its many stakeholders are seen as an increasingly part of our societies and cultures as the industry affects not only the way we dress but also our production and consumption patterns. Fashion and its industry are common subjects for debates dealing with identity and gender stereotypes but also treating aspects of economic nature. In addition, the fashion industry has locally and globally, contributed to an economic and industrial development in many countries (Entwistle 2000; 208).

The stakeholders in the fashion business are many, the production speed is fast and the trends are changing from day to day. The true nature of fashion - the conscious one – is contributing to new fashion goods that are produced in an increasing pace. In order to reach the targeted customers the fashion companies have to not only produce the right product but also find the most suitable channel for marketing the product. Therefore one could see fashion and its components as a reflection (barometer) of different time periods (Hedén & McAndrew 2005; 53-55).

Given that fashion is a reflection of the state we are in, economically, politically and least but not less, artistically, makes the significant role media plays in the fashion business evident. According to Welters & Lillethun (2007), Medias are influencing the fashion industry and its consumers in two major ways. The first consists of fashion stakeholders (companies and individuals) who use different media channels as tools for promoting their products. Newspapers, the Internet and websites are examples of the first category. The second category is represented by the stylish, trend-setting persons whose looks are copied by fashion designers and brands as well as by consumers. The latter category is referred to as fashion leaders. Information about their looks, their opinions on fashion and what brands they are wearing (and not are seen wearing), is spread through channels such as fashion magazines, television and, last but not least, the Internet and blogs (Welters & Liløethun 2007; 275 -277).

The Internet plays a crucial role when it comes to the marketing of many fashion brands. The Internet is a channel for marketing but also a tool for creating and maintaining customer service and as a distribution and sales channel. A message can be spread very fast and to a broad audience to almost no cost at all, thanks to the Internet. All the benefits make Internet an indispensable marketing channel for fashion products (Hedén & McAndrew 2005; 64).

It is not only sales and marketing opportunities that have expanded thanks to the Internet, but also the information capabilities considering fashion. Fashion information is spread through various channels online. There are many "fashion-zines" created all around the world.
available only a mouse-click away. News, updates and offers are sent to iphones, email inboxes or Facebook walls. Never before has the fashion conscious consumer been so bombarded with different offers. The information explosion is contributing to a general confusion regarding in which direction the fashion is heading for the moment. The consequence of this confusedness is that the trend-setting people's styles and the specific product choices they make, often communicated via the fashion blogs, have become increasingly important for the fashion-conscious consumers and influences what purchases they are going to make (Walters & Lillethun 2007; 275 -277).

1.2 Approach to the problem
As discussed above in the description of today's fashion market, its players and channels, it seems like the Internet's impact on the fashion business is indispensable. The fashion industry is, as mentioned, a volatile industry and a fashion brand’s to be or not be depends on such different factors as having a feel for the right trends as well as marketing of a brand through the right channels to the right people. Much of today's fashion marketing is about spreading the word of brand through Social Media channels such as fashion blogs, Twitter and Facebook. I find it interesting to capture the phenomena of today by trying to define and map it. Therefore my intention is to explore how a fashion brand is marketed through viral marketing. I decided to have a closer look at how the Swedish fashion brand Burfitt is working with - and related to - the viral marketing. Additionally the effects of viral marketing are analysed.

It might be of relevance to define which channels are actually used when marketing fashion brands online. A website where the company's business idea and products are represented along with a brief story about how the brand was born and developed is together with a web shop quite common in online marketing strategies. Furthermore, a fashion company's products are likely to be seen and discussed in fashion blogs and other communities. This is an increasingly important part of marketing whether it is planned or not. Many fashion companies also have a “micro-blog”, a twitter account, where its customers can follow what happens. There are also customer clubs with "customized" offers sent to either e-mail or cell phone. An article published in Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet on the 26th of April 2010\(^1\), shows that the smaller players in a competitive business - this example takes up politics but it is not hard to apply the example on the fashion world - are often much better at using viral marketing than the larger and more established ones. With this in mind, small companies, like Burfitt, could use the viral marketing for the following reason; with a slimmed, hardly existing marketing budget, it is an effective and fast way for reaching out to as many people as possible.

1.3 The problem
Thanks to my education at the Swedish School of Textiles, as well as my more personal interest and fascination with fashion, I have encountered the traditional marketing used by

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fashion brands but also other, less traditional, approaches. For some years, the fashion interested consumer has been able to follow the phenomenon of fashion blogs. The fashion bloggers has become an increasingly integral part of the fashion business. Hence, the blogs also influences a fashion company's strategy and marketing. I have investigated how the fashion company Burfitt is mentioned in the fashion blogs and other Social Media. Do the comments made in fashion blogs affect a fashion brand? Does Burfitt work with bloggers? For covering the many aspects of the subject, ranging from the marketing strategy to the virtual network of a fashion brand, I decided the main question to be:

*How to market a fashion brand through viral marketing?*

In addition my intension was to find out more about how Burfitt works with marketing through online channels. What is viral marketing for the company and how does Burfitt try to control and direct what is said – planned and unplanned - about the brand and its products online?

### 1.4 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to explore, describe and analyze the virtual network of Burfitt. I want to map and understand how a small fashion company works with viral marketing in reality. A brief review of theories on social media such as viral marketing, word of mouth/word of web, word of keyboard/word of mouse and affiliate marketing are represented in Chapter 2.*Theoretical frame* for creating a framework for the empirical material collected. I also intend to map and analyse Swedish blogs related to Burfitt. Since the blogs are somehow the core of viral marketing – unintentional word spread online to more or less people very fast – it is of interest and importance to analyse the blogs related to Burfitt for making a complete overview of Burfitt’s viral marketing and virtual network.

### 1.5 Delimitations

My intention is to map and analyse the virtual network and hence the viral marketing of Burfitt. The delimitation is done by restricting the virtual mapping to include only results that include specific words, further described in chapter 3.*Method*. Since the survey treats recent phenomena, most of the sources are from the last years and a time limitation is therefore automatically set. Research in this area has just begun. Because of time and information delimitations I decided to only study the results online related to Swedish blogs published from the 10th of April to the 10th of May 2010.

### 1.6 Disposition

*Chapter 1 – The introduction.* Includes the background of fashion and marketing today. Furthermore approach to the problem, the problem, the purpose and the delimitations made, are included.

*Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework.* Brief presentation of theories of relevance treating the new Medias. Also included, is a discussion on the literature used.
Chapter 3 – The method. The methodological approach and the decisions made are discussed. The challenge of virtual ethnography is also discussed. In addition, the mapping structure of Burfitt’s virtual network is described.

Chapter 4 – The empirical part I. Burfitt as company is described. Additionally, the marketing of Burfitt and its target group are captured.

Chapter 5 – The empirical part II. Fashion blogs and Burfitt, describes how frequent Burfitt is in blogs and analyses the word of mouse spread through blogs. Also treats negative and positive effects of the viral marketing.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions. Discussion treating the viral marketing and how it could be useful for a fashion brand of today. The problems with viral marketing are also discussed.

Chapter 7 – Reflections. Consists of what I have learnt from the study. Included are a credibility and reliability evaluation. Suggestions for future research are also found in the seventh chapter.

Chapter 8 – Source References. The multimedia nature of my subject is reflected in the sources found in the last chapter.
2. Theoretical frame

2.1 Discussion of literature

As a Master student I have encountered a certain amount of literature recently written on marketing. As a fashion student and with a fashion interest I have also encountered literature and articles treating fashion in different ways. In addition, the viral marketing and Social Media are not only concept but recent “strategies” for the marketing of a fashion brand. Therefore there are many articles and information on the subject published on the Internet. I think it has been helpful to have a look at those sources of information that are really up to date when trying to catch and describe a phenomenon of today.

There are not that many books written that treats the viral marketing theories and therefore I have read some (scientific) articles. Word of mouth is an “old school”-concept and there are a lot written on word of mouth. The more recent form of word of mouth - word of mouse - are not yet captured and defined in the marketing literature. Though, I found a book named Guide till det virtuella samhället – trender i maktkampen mellan den verkliga och den virtuella världen (2007). It is written by Bengt Wahlström with some help from his children. It was helpful for the context of the subject, although it also treated topics like communities and virtual worlds a lot. In addition, the book Sökmotormarknadsföring – så får du fler besökare och kunder via sökmotorerna (2006), by Urban Lindstedt and Christer Pettersson contributed to a better understanding of the Search engine marketing. The third book I would like to mention is Optimal marknadskommunikation (2009), by Micael Dahlén and Fredrik Lange. This book is up to date and treats the new digital society and the different marketing opportunities/channels offered. For the method I used the book Att fänga Nätet – kvalitativa metoder för Internetforskning by Sveningson et. al. (2003) a lot. I truly recommend this book to others conducting virtual ethnography. It was helpful for realize how to map and analyze the material I collected online.

The scientific articles read and used were recommended by the tutor and found in marketing journals available online. Some articles were published in Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet during the thesis process. In addition, there are also articles and “theories” on blogs and viral marketing that I have found mostly online from different sources.

I think the theory is an interesting mix of literature and articles that fits the subject of the thesis. Thanks to the empirical part as well as the ongoing discussion and use of Social Media, the theories get less abstract and more valid. For a better understanding of how to apply the theories to the reality for a fashion brand today I have made a summary in the end of this chapter. Still, I think it is of importance to point out that I am not confirming any of the theories. What I have done is an attempt to study, describe and analyze an ongoing phenomenon by applying it to Burfitt, marketing in general and the fashion business in particular.
2.2 The new media landscape

The Media of the 20th century focused on mass communication which was monitored and selected by representatives, like journalists, from the Media sphere. The mass communication reached – and still reaches - an audience through Media channels as newspapers, television and radio. The news in those channels is published at precise times. Wahlström (2007) discusses in the book, Guide till det virtuella samhället - trenden i maktkampen mellan den verkliga och den virtuella världen, the new Media channels and tools of the 21st century. The new Medias deal with an unlimited information-flow that is available all times. There is no longer any delimitation due to geographical conditions. Information could be spread at any minute, by a mouse click, to any country. The concept and success of mass communication is on its way out since the Media landscape becomes more fragmented. The challenge for the advertising creators of today is to respond to the advertising fatigue of people. Instead of trying, in vain, with great efforts, some PR-people are trying to take advantage of the new Media and use it for advertising in radical ways. The new Media landscape has brought a lot of tools to use. For example, a recent trend has been to let consumers be involved in the creation of advertising. Another trend has been to create campaigns aimed at spreading the word about a product's excellence by word of mouth. The concept includes both physical distribution taking place in reality as well as virtual distribution, spread online through blogs and communities (Wahlström 2007; 87-104).

It is not a recent phenomenon that people are uniting through social networks based on a common interest, belief or because of economical benefits. Social networks have been founded in all times. But the geographical aspect that used to be a barrier is no longer a restriction thanks to new technology and modern communications. Today businesses have grown to global organizations. For the moment there are thousands and thousands of social networks on the Internet. Among the most frequent used are YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Myspace and Flickr (Wahlström, 2007; 26-49).

2.3 Social Medias

Since Wikipedia – the online encyclopedia created by contributions from people all over the planet - is part of the new information society and also contributing to the concept of Social Media discussed in this paper, I decided to define Social Media further with some help from Wikipedia:

Social Media is a term used to describe the type of Media that is based on conversation and interaction between people online. Social Media are Media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Credible brands are utilizing Social Media to reach customers and to build or maintain reputation. As Social Media continue to grow, the ability to reach more consumers globally has also increased. Twitter, for example has expanded its global reach to Japan, Indonesia, and Mexico, among others. This means that brands are
now able to advertise in multiple languages and therefore reach a broader range of consumers².

I also took some inspiration from Wikipedia’s definition of Social Media for the creation of a model showing the three components of Social Media:

**Model 1. The three components of Social Media (Own model based on idea from Wikipedia)³**

The most frequent way of marketing a brand by using Social Media is through viral marketing⁴.

### 2.4 Viral marketing

The viral marketing is probably the major marketing trend the last ten years. Companies of all types and sizes are launching viral messages and videos via websites and YouTube for enabling the blogosphere to spread their message by word of mouth/word of mouse. Though, Viral marketing as a concept is far from a recent phenomenon; long before the birth of the printing press, broadcast Media and the Internet, word of mouth was the one and only way to market your goods (Ferguson, 2008; 1).

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A common way of using the viral concept for marketing a fashion brand is to provide people that could be seen as trendsetters and representatives for the brand with branded products\(^5\). Those people become ambassadors for the brand and they will then be likely to influence other people to buy the branded products. Nevertheless, the largest platform for the viral marketing is probably the Internet.

An article on the subject, written by De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008;1), defines what could be seen as the purpose of the using of viral marketing:

…is to use consumer-to-consumer (or peer-to-peer) communications - as opposed to company-to-consumer communication - to disseminate information about a product or service, thereby leading to more rapid and cost effective adoption by the market.

Furthermore, the authors’ state that the message spread could be of either intentional or unintentional art. That means that in the latter situation, consumers are not spreading the marketing-message by intention, the spreading is more spontaneous (De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008; 1).

Aiming at the purpose or goal of viral marketing, it is important to analyse and understand why and how viral marketing can be useful and effective for a company. Which are its principal mechanisms? De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008; 2) state that it is of importance to note that the already existing literature on word of mouth differs from its electronic referrals counterparts in two ways: 1. The true nature of the viral marketing messages are electronic which basically means that there is no face-to-face communication. 2. Those referrals are usually of spontaneous character so the recipients of the messages are not really asking for information, and are therefore not keen to pay attention to them (De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008).

One can take for granted that viral marketing campaigns create awareness. But, as Ferguson (2008;1) puts it;

Do they build market share? Can marketers identify or create brand evangelists – those consumers who actively promote their favourite products and services to family, friends and business associates? Can their effect on the bottom line be measured? How can viral campaigns link to existing loyalty marketing efforts\(^6\)?

Furthermore Ferguson (2008) states that there are actual advantages with viral marketing: the very fast, no time at all process of spreading a message about a new product that generates  

buzz at a very high level and leverage brand loyal persons to promote assessment and activation. Still the marketer and/or the company has to remember that building true customer loyalty efforts a connection between the viral campaign and the front end of the usual customer strategy. Though, the viral marketing nonsense, which does not have any content, will help loosing the dialogue parts, and is just as mass marketing but for the digital age (Ferguson, 2008; 3).

2.5 Word of mouth
Ferguson (2008;2) is offering a definition of the similar but yet different concepts of viral marketing and word of mouth:

The difference between viral marketing and WOM is one of cause and effect. Viral marketing – which might take the form of influencer marketing programs, community-building portals, viral videos and street-level guerrilla campaigns – builds awareness and buzz; it’s the cause. Positive WOM, which theoretically leads to trial and acquisition, is the effect.

De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008; 2) are pointing out that the word of mouth communications have received interest from both academics and practitioners for the last 50-60 years. Many reports show how discussions/information exchange of a more private and informal art are influencing not only consumers' choices and buying decisions but also outline consumer expectations pre-usage thoughts and also post-usage perceptions of a product or service. Moreover some research suggests that word of mouth influence could be greater than print ads, personal selling and radio ads. On the other hand, others believe that some of all those effects have been overstated (De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008).

The word of mouth is often spread by consumers through Social Media such as blogs, communities, web-pages and also – of course – in real life, off-line. A company could work with the “unplanned” word of mouth by identifying (and collaborate with) the more influential people that are having opinions upon the branded products; neither the opinion is positive or negative (Dahlén & Lange, 2009; 550).

Dahlén & Lange (2009) state that the more word of mouth that is spread - no matter if it is positive or negative - the more likely are people to use the product or service. It is also clear that the word of mouth spread by the target group is more trustworthy than the message communicated by the company itself. The people that are consuming a product or a service have no personal interest in sharing their opinion about a product. That is why their opinions are considered more trustworthy than information spread by the company itself. (Dahlén & Lange, 2009).

The word of mouth spread by the targeted group is by Dahlén & Lange (2009) categorised into three different categories of receivers:

→ To the company – as positive or negative customer feedback.
→ To other customers – consumer-to-consumer communication spread in addition to the communication made by the company.

→ To the Media – could be an important (and devastating) part of the PR and communication strategy.

The first category, the WOM communicated from the targeted group to the company itself is helpful for the company. Feedback from its customers will help the company to improve its communication and products. In the end it will make the customers more satisfied. The second category is probably the most discussed and most appreciated way of spreading the word. The targeted group recommend the product (or service) to other people. Since people are more likely to rely on people they know, this category is the most effective way for spreading WOM. An international study of consumers’ attitudes towards branded products from 23 different categories showed that positive WOM was the most influential factor when it comes to making a purchase (Dahlén & Lange, 2009; 132-143).

Dahlén & Lange (2009) state that people are affected of both positive and negative word of mouth, although they are more likely to spread the word if it is positive. The third category of word of mouth spread by the targeted group is probably the less positive category since the WOM spread to the Media is often negative. It is because the Media in general have no interest in positive information about companies and their products. Even though the word of mouth spread through the Media often is negative it still reaches many people. In addition the news spread by the Media is apprehended as more objective than the word spread by the company or its targeted customers (Dahlén & Lange, 2009; 132-143).

Most of the word of mouth seems to be positive for the company in the end. But still there is also negative word of mouth. Dahlén & Lange (2009) are discussing how to identify and avoid the negative reactions. The most common negative word of mouth is customers’ dissatisfaction. The customer is for some reason not happy with the product. It could cause complains and, in worst case, an ending of the relationship. For avoiding dissatisfaction a company needs to communicate values and benefits that the customer can take for granted. If a company and its products promise too much value/benefits, the dissatisfaction is more likely to appear (Dahlén & Lange, 2009; 147-150).

The new digital society offers more public places to spread the word, and as a consequence more opinions are shared. Moreover studies on word of mouth have shown that people in general are rather focusing on negative than positive information since the negative information appears to be more significant. How much damage negative word of mouth causes depends on two factors: first, who is blamed for the negative WOM? It could be the company but it could also be the sender/publisher of the negative WOM. The second factor is the customer’s expectations on the company. Could the company respond to the negative WOM as expected from its customers? If the answer is yes, the negative word of mouth is causing less damage (Dahlén & Lange, 2009; 550-552).
2.6 Word of mouse/Word of keyboard

The electronically development towards the digital society has brought the concept of word of mouse, an electronic version based on the idea of word of mouth\(^7\). Today many advertisers have starting to use a variety of all techniques described to pass a message to their targeted customers. Since the late 1990s the electronic media has increasingly becoming more and more important and the word of mouse is mentioned as a “new holy grail” of marketing.

Thanks to the immediate nature of electronic communications, word of mouse can spread very rapidly, and several forums and communities have enabled the spreading of ideas in an increasing number of ways\(^8\). Word of mouse can be passed along from consumer to consumer in the form of electronic communications, but it can also manifest in other forms. For example on review sites, which allow users to post reviews and comments on businesses. It may also be spread through forums, chat rooms, and social networking sites. Many advertisers work with social networks in order to create a profile and build up word of mouse.

Word of mouth is built on reputation and so is word of mouse\(^9\). Many companies work to market a specific brand and brand image so that consumers visualize that particular company top of mind when they need a product or a service. Some says that word of mouse is an improved version of word of mouth, since the information-flow is so fruitful in the electronic medium. Furthermore, the archiving possibilities make it even more challenging for businesses to overcome a bad reputation caused by word of mouse.

2.7 Search engine marketing and Affiliate marketing

Search engine advertising is part of the "new" marketing. While traditional advertising aims to exposing a message to as many viewers, listeners and readers as possible (with a majority of relatively uninterested) Search engine marketing is targeting users who already have made a decision to search for something specific (Wahlström 2007; 107).

Lindstedt & Pettersson (2006) state in their book Sökmotormarknadsföring – så får du fler besökare och kunder via sökmotorerna that the search engines have really influenced companies and marketers over the last years. By actively searching for a word, a search engine is linking visitors further, to various sites related to that word. The user is then closer a buying decision compared with being exposed to a traditional advertising message. The search engines have become a cheap and effective way to acquire new customers. Those companies, who end up on top of search results and use sponsored links in a smart way, will attract more visitors. Search engine marketing with search engine optimization and sponsored links have thus changed our access to information and become an important part of the modern marketing mix (Lindstedt & Petterson, 2006; 15-16).

\(^7\) http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-word of mouse.htm 2010-05-09
\(^8\) http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-word of mouse.htm 2010-05-09
\(^9\) http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-word of mouse.htm 2010-05-09
There are two major categories when it comes to the search engines and marketing through them. The first of them consists of the organically organized search results represented by its relevance. The latter category consists of the links that are bought, the sponsored links. The organically organized results are the findings of the search engines searches in their own giant databases. This is free for a company but efforts an attractive webpage for ending up among the top results. The click frequency, which means how many of those who see a link actually clicks on the link, is higher for the organically organized search results. The sponsored links, on the other hand, are not for free and the ranking of the links is a question of money: how much is a company willing to offer? The more money you pay the better placement for the sponsored link. Once you paid, you are granted a placement among the search results which is not the case for organically organized search results (Lindstedt & Petterson, 2006; 50-51).

Wikipedia defines the latter concept of sponsored links – Affiliate marketing - as:

...a website that directs traffic through ads to Internet users to another site. An affiliate program is an agreement where those who run an online business (an online store, for example) pay a fee, or commission, to the affiliate partner for forwarding traffic to them. Those who are affiliate links, therefore, further visitors to the business side as return for payment10.

2.8 How the new Media has changed the marketing – a summary

The 24-hour information availability
The concept of “new Medias” defines the 24-hours news availability that has dramatically changed the media landscape over the last decade. Information could be spread at any minute. Thanks to the Internet, the whole world is available a mouse-click away. The new Media landscape has brought a lot of marketing tools, advertisers and PR-people might take advantage of those tools for advertising in innovative ways.

Fashion business welcomes Social Media
One of those tools is the Social Media. Swedish Television’s programme Fashion11 confirms the influence of Social Media on the fashion business lately, in the programme sent on the 19th of May 2010. Many fashion brands use Social Media-tools for sharing the catwalk-shows with fans all over the world. For the most influential fashion bloggers, those who have a seat front-row, Social Media plays a crucial role. For example they stay connected to their blogs and their readers - the audience - by publishing new images and comments every now and then. Part of the Social Media concept is the social networks, such as Facebook and YouTube, frequently used by many people. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Wikipedia states that the most frequent way of marketing a brand by using social media is through viral marketing.

Viral marketing messages spread by consumers and ambassadors

10 http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affiliaten%C3%A4tverk, 2010-04-18
11 http://svtplay.se/v/2006387/fashion/del_1_av_10__new_york, 2010-05-22
The aim of using viral marketing for branding is defined by De Bruyn & L. Lilien (2008) as the use of communications from consumer-to-consumer or videos made to spread information and knowledge about a certain product or service. The underlying intentions are to marketing a product or service in a rapid and in-expensive way which hopefully leads to adoption by the market. Collaboration with people that get clothes or other products for free – a personal sponsorship – is a common way of using viral marketing for the marketing of a fashion brand. Those people are referred to as ambassadors. The aim of marketing a brand by using ambassadors is to influence other people to buy the branded products. The people that become ambassadors for fashion brands – like Burfitt - are considered very stylish. Those are trend-setting persons whose looks are copied by fashion designers and by other, less influential, consumers. The ambassadors are often what the fashion business call fashion leaders. For adoption of a fashion brand, the use of a fashion leader as an ambassador is a smart way to convince the market. A fashion leader could be a famous person, such as an actress or a singer, but it could also be a person working with fashion, a stylist or a model for example.

How to measure the effects of viral marketing efforts?
The examples above may clarify what viral marketing actually is and how it could be used in the marketing of a fashion brand. Even though the use of ambassadors and the videos creates awareness, do they build market share, as Ferguson (2008) asks? How can the effect of those efforts be measured, if it could? The measuring could be done in different ways; either in quantities such as how many visitors a website got each day, or in loyalty terms like feedback from customers and target group.

The prevention of negative WOM
Probably the most famous of the marketing concepts - word of mouth - aims to spreading the word about a product's excellence – but it could also be of unfortunate, negative character. People sharing opinions about products are considered more trustworthy than information spread by the company itself. Since people are more likely to rely on people they know, this category is the most effective way for spreading WOM. People are affected of both positive and negative word of mouth, but they are more likely to spread the word if it is positive. This is, of course, good for companies. When it comes to negative WOM, customers’ dissatisfaction is most likely to happen. By keeping a dialogue with the customer for rapid and effective dealing with dissatisfaction, it is easier to prevent negative WOM.

The nature of word of mouse
A more recent member of the “viral marketing family” is word of mouse (word of keyboard). It is built on reputation and spread from consumer-to-consumer, as its pioneer: word of mouth. Though, the nature of electronic communications allows word of mouse to spread very rapidly. Hence, the word of mouth effects could be broader spread. If used in a smart way, the word of mouse could generate much publicity for a fashion brand.

12 De Bruyn & L. Lilien, 2008; 1.
13 Ferguson, 2008; 1.
“Googling”
Also worth mentioning is one of the latest channels for marketing a brand: by Search engine marketing. It is less focused on spreading the word to as many people as possible but more focused to spread the advertising to the right consumers/viewers. Search engine marketing is basically the results when actively searching for a word by using a search engine (Googling) that links visitors further to sites related to that word. Those companies who end up on top of the search results will attract more visitors to their websites. There is also a similar concept called Affiliate Marketing. A brief explanation of the concept is when a company makes an agreement with an affiliate partner by paying a fee to the affiliate partner for forwarding traffic to the company. Since Burfitt does not use the sponsored links for marketing I will not describe it further, just make sure to mention it.

3. Method
The third chapter is treating my method of research and approach to the subject. A case study of Burfitt was made by combining the result of a qualitative interview with the empirical data collected from the Internet.

3.1 Method of research
To get an overview and a deeper understanding of a single company – Burfitt - a field study has been made. The study consists of a qualitative interview and the study of documents. A qualitative interview is characterized as an interview of discussion-art with no solid answers. The interview was conducted the 10th of May over phone with Burfitt co-owner Kajsa Leanderson. According to Andersen (1998) the structure was that of a semi-structured interview with a questionnaire that was written on beforehand. The questionnaire is enclosed to the thesis as Appendix I. In addition to the interview, I conducted a qualitative study, a field study, by observing the Burfitt website and pages that were related to the website. I followed the outgoing links from Burfitt website. I also tracked links leading to the Burfitt website by examining a number of pages that contained the keyword Burfitt. Due to delimitation restrictions and for achieving reliable results I did only two searches (with time and language restrictions) by using Google. For summarising what I have done; to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the viral marketing and the company, Burfitt, I have combined the technique of field study with that of a case study (Andersen, 1998).

3.2 The survey data
In order to get information for the theory chapter of the paper I have studied and examined relevant, current literature, articles and observations made by journalists, researchers and bloggers. My survey and study of the Burfitt website as well as the "googling" I have done with the keyword Burfitt is data of primary character. In addition, the results I achieved by categorize and analyze the pages I found as a result of the "Googling" can also be described as primary data. My method for research is, as mentioned, qualitative, as the intention is to interpret and analyze the data collected for achieving a deeper understanding for my subject (Andersen, 1998; 150).
3.3 The method of data collection

Online observations are done to gain insight into a social context needed to be understood and described. For a researcher the aim is to understand the online environment as the creators and users of it does. The Internet is a place where individuals interact by creating groups and cultures. The new communication venues offered by the Internet forces a researcher to face the fact that there is no predicted way for making the observations. The observations could be made by finding and following comments made in a chat or a fan-page, for example. The research approach is not obvious simply because there are no developed methods for how to do. Since the Internet is the place of the observations made, and part of studying the Internet is about moving between different pages/sites to observe and explore ongoing activities, I have conducted what Sveningson et. al (2003) call virtual ethnography. Virtual ethnography can briefly be described as a field work that develops gradually. The observations made end up in field notes (Sveningson et. al, 2003; 72-117).

The interview made for the thesis was conducted over phone since the Burfitt office is situated in Paris. The structure of the interview was a qualitative, semi-structured interview. After reading the theory I set up a questionnaire with the main questions related to the subject and the survey. I felt that Kajsa Leandersson, the co-owner of Burfitt interviewed, spooked in an ease and spontaneous manner but still without losing the purpose of the interview. Even though I am writing my thesis in English I feel that it was wiser to make the interview in Swedish since Swedish is the mother tongue for both Kajsa and me. The avoidance of language misunderstandings is of importance. I think it makes the empirical part based on the interview more reliable (Sveningson et. al, 2003).

The references used for the theoretical parts in the thesis were collected from different sources. I was already before I started to write the thesis fascinated with the subject, viral marketing and Social Media, and how it influences the fashion business. I also discovered a lot new articles and observations made in relation to the phenomenon during my writing process. I think it is a sign that you are really into something when you start to notice it everywhere. It is also a reflection of how popular this subject really is for the moment. The challenge for a researcher is to decide what to take into consideration and where to stop the collecting of information. I can admit that I feel content with the mix of sources: from serious research results to fashion blogs and newspaper articles. As mentioned, I think this cocktail is good and suitable for my subject. Still a researcher has to remain critical to the sources. The critical viewpoint is fundamental for the writing of a thesis and in my opinion a researcher has to remain critical to all kind of sources.

3.4 The study of websites online

Websites contain several components such as shorter texts, pictures/illustrations, sound effects, movies and other interactive elements. The composition reflects the multimedia nature of the Internet. There are a lot more aspects to analyse compared to a “normal” text or image printed on paper. The relationship between the different elements (texts) on a website is defined, according to Sveningson et. al (2003; 156), as its "intertextuality". Moreover, it is
recommended to analyse a site from a descriptive purpose. As a result, I began my empirical analysis by examining the structure and composition of the Burfitt website. Step two is to review its functions - what can the visitor do? The third step is to examine the links that goes out as well as the links leading to the website. By doing so I could more easily put Burfitt’s website in a viral marketing and fashion network context (Sveningson et. al, 2003; 119-171).

3.5 Tracking links online

Websites must not be seen as isolated entities since they are connected to each other through a virtual network by out- and ingoing links. The limitless character of virtual networks and links creates both opportunities and difficulties. There are no specific methods for tracking links leading in and out from sites. Each researcher must therefore “create” their own analytical model. Thus a categorization of links can be a good starting point for creating structure in the (often extensive) empirical material. The links reflect the relations between different sites. Therefore it is good to understand how different websites are related to each other. By tracking the links it is possible to create knowledge of how people, ideas and opinions are spread on the Internet. By studying the out- and ingoing links, an overview of the network around the website is created. The outgoing links put the originator of the website in a certain (virtual) context. A context in which a person (or company) already is accepted or where the person (or company) would like to be accepted. I would like to call it interest or image identification. Sometimes the linking is reciprocal, sometimes it is not reciprocal. According to Sveningson et. al (2003) the linkages are often done "to be accepted or recognized" by the people/pages that the links are leading to. The linkage could thus be seen as a power-relationship. It gives status to be linked to. The linking is therefore kind of a status barometer. The more links leading to a specific page, the higher the status of that site (and its originator). Of course, the context determines which of the ingoing links are of importance (Sveningson et. al, 2003; 119-171).

3.5.1 Mapping the Burfitt network

In order to map, understand and analyse the Burfitt network I have used information from several sources. As mentioned, I have done a qualitative, semi-structured interview with Burfitt co-owner Kajsa Leanderson. The transcription of that interview created a framework for Chapter 4.Burfitt. In addition, I have used information found in newspapers and online. The challenge, though, was to map the website and track its in- and outgoing links. The “challenge” consisted of organizing the material collected from two searches on Google, that led to almost 12 000 hits altogether. Due to time delimitations I decided to follow and analyse only those that were shown by Google. The excluded results were considered as “similar or identical” to the results shown.

I have focused on the information that is of relevance for my purpose. Therefore the thesis consists only of a brief – but sententious –part of the material collected. The results were organized into different maps on my computer. I decided to call them Burfitt in blogs, Retailers and Other sites. In addition I also created one map named Burfitt website with material collected from the website. I discovered seven outgoing links from the website. All of them are business partners, such as photographers. By mapping the Social Media used by
Burfitt, I also discovered a Facebook fan-page dedicated to Burfitt. I did not find any Twitter account though. My search on YouTube resulted in 9 results.

Recommended by friend of mine, working with PR, I searched within some Swedish networks/databases for those Swedish blogs that had published recent comments on Burfitt. To see if the results were different from those found by Google. Some of them were linked to the same database. One of them, called Knuff.se, resulted in 14 results. Knuff.se also provides the creation of a trend-graph (please see Chapter 5.Burfitt and blogs) showing how popular Burfitt has been in the Knuff.se network the last month. Furthermore, my search in the network of Bloggportalen.se resulted in 327 results. Only one of those was though published within the time period (10th April to 10th May).

3.5.2 Mapping the comments related to Burfitt

In order to process the collected texts and comments published online the researcher has to understand and interpret the expanded concept of texts online, including not only the text but also noises, pictures and icons. As mentioned earlier, there are no developed methods for the analysis of websites; therefore the researcher has to develop hers or his method. In order to facilitate the process, tools can be borrowed from various sources. Sveningson et. al (2003; 140) refers to critical discourse analysis to study the messages and their language online. Since language contributes to the understanding between people, it is fundamental for the establishment of relationships between people. It also speaks for a person’s cultural (and social) background. Language can therefore be used in different ways, as a tool for both marketing purposes and for achieving power.

For the survey, an analysis of the structure of the text (in blog comments, for example) was made for finding what Sveningson et. al (2003) call: interaction patterns. Then, the study of the text's schematic -the grammar structure - can be made (although it is less important for this study). Next step is to examine and analyze why the text is produced - what is the purpose of the text? The last step consists of relating the text to its social, political and historical context. They study is a mixture of deductive and inductive natures therefore I adjusted the order of the analysis a bit and started by categorize the writings related to Burfitt for social, political and historical affinities. According to Sveningson et. al (2003; 147) the critical discourse analysis model is suitable as starting point for various types of materials collected online. That is why I believed that it provided a good basis for creating order in the material collected (Sveningson et. al, 2003; 119-171).

3.6 Discussion of methods used

Observations made on, and collected from, the Internet is often thick and unstructured material. It often seems like an endless task to organize and analyze the observations. To create a fair and reliable analysis of the empirical material, a good description of it is needed. According to Sveningson et. al (2003), the main challenge is to bring order into the material. To facilitate the organization of the material, it is good to have a basis for further analysis. In my case, it will be the case study. In the fourth chapter, Burfitt, the company is described. Furthermore their work with viral marketing and social media like blogs and ambassadors is
described. As a result inputs for topics to analyze have been created. In order to remain critical to the collected material, Sveningson et. al (2003) suggest a few rules to follow. First, controlling who is (the sender) the creator of a website where information were found in the first place. How up to date is the information published on the page? I would also like to add a third one; how reliable is the information? In order to investigate and determine the latter, one can try to figure out in what purpose the information was written (Sveningson et. al 2003; 167-170).
4. Burfitt

4.1 Burfitt – the company

Suitable as introduction is a short piece about Burfitt retrieved from the website www.burfitt.com. And who could best give an introduction to the company if not the company:

The BURFITT collection is designed by Lovisa Burfitt and includes both jersey and woven pieces. All t-shirts are screenprinted by hand - *based on the original illustrations by the designer* - and sold in limited editions of 500 pieces. Each printed garment has a unique number in the necklabel. The look of the BURFITT collection is casual and luxury at the same time. Lovisa mixes rough, washed out fabrics with sheer silk and thin jersey and has an obsession for perfect finishing and little handmade details such as embroidery and covered buttons. The collection consists of very wearable garments that can be both casual and dressed depending on how and with what they are worn. BURFITT was founded in 1998 by designer and illustrator Lovisa Burfitt. After a couple of seasons the brand moved to Paris, and since 2004 it is owned and run by Lovisa Burfitt and Kajsa Leanderson (FAF sarl). The collection is produced in Europe, and all t-shirts are printed in Paris.

Kajsa Leanderson, who runs the company with Lovisa Burfitt, met Lovisa in Paris back in 2003-2004. Thanks to their different backgrounds; Lovisa is a designer from Swedish design school *Beckmans* and Kajsa worked with advertisement in Paris at that point, they thought the idea of running the business together would be great. Their first collection consisted of printed t-shirts and has expanded a bit since then. For the moment the Burfitt clothing are sold in Europe and America but also in Asia. Japan is the biggest market, at least from a turnover perspective. Leanderson admits that Burfitt has many retailers in Sweden but most of them are small and therefore the turnover from the Swedish market contributes to about 25 % of the total.

Burfitt has been in the hotspot recently thanks to the contribution to Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladets* wedding dress design competition. The wedding dress competition was launched by Svenska Dagbladet a year ago because of the wedding of the Swedish Crown-princess in June this year. Burfitt was picked as one of six Swedish designers for the competition. The competition was settled the 9th of May and the dress made by Lovisa Burfitt gained a majority of the online votes. Then there was an auction for charity with five of the

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15 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10
16 www.svd.se, 2010-05-09
six dresses and the Burfitt dress was sold for the largest amount. However, what is important here is not the money but the publicity for Burfitt.

In fact, this is not the first hotspot session for Burfitt this year. In February I went to Stockholm Fashion week by Berns for having a look at the catwalk-shows. The makeup company Max Factor is sponsoring one catwalk-show each year and this year Burfitt gained the Max Factor sponsorship. Winning the Max Factor Awards and being able to having the catwalk-show in Stockholm at fashion week generates buzz and more publicity than normal, of course.17 Although, Burfitt has been the winner twice this year, Kajsa Leanderson18 has neither noticed any remarkable difference when it comes to visitors at the website nor on the turnover rate. Of course there are some more visitors but not a significant increase. A reason for this could be that the people that are into fashion already know about the brands existence, the recent buzz about Burfitt does therefore not really affect the target group and the sales.

4.2 The target group

Kajsa Leanderson19 states that the targeted group for Burfitt brand is broad if speaking in terms of age, women somewhere in the ages between 25 and 45, but also older and younger customers. Although, there are two factors that seems to be significant when trying to capture the Burfitt customer. They are price and design. Since a printed t-shirt is sold for about 900 SEK the purchaser has to afford it – or be willing to pay that for wearing Burfitt. The second, and probably the most important target-group-segmentation-factor is the design. Kajsa Leanderson thinks that the common factor for the Burfitt customers is their interest in fashion and design. In an article in Svenska Dagbladet 20 the design of Burfitt is characterized as…”raw with a twist of punk and poetry with black as basic colour…” Furthermore Claude Cahun - or Lucy Schwob as her female name was - is mentioned as one of Lovisa Burfitt’s most influential sources of inspiration.

According to Kajsa Leanderson21 the Burfitt customer base is created and maintained mostly thanks to the website. Many of Burfitt’s regularly customers have signed up at the website or via e-mail. The relations are maintained through newsletter updates and other similar drives for spreading information about the brand and its products but also for offers and discount to established customers.

17 Researcher’s own observation made during Stockholm Fashion Week by Berns, 2010-02-01 to 2010-02-03
18 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
19 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10
20 Treijis, Erica, Reportaget, Svenska Dagbladet 2010-05-02.
21 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
4.3 The marketing of Burfitt

Kajsa Leanderson\(^{22}\) explains that due to Burfitt’s small sized business format there is no room for big campaigns. Instead there are image-photographs available for downloading. In addition Burfitt is present at fashion tradeshows. They are also working on more personal-based PR and marketing by sending “goodie-bags” with images, information about the production, and look-books, to persons such as journalists and stylists they want to work with. As mentioned above, the communication through newsletters is considered as an important contribution to Burfitt’s marketing strategy.

Another part that is more of unplanned character but still contributing to the marketing of Burfitt is the localisation of their head quarter in Paris instead of Stockholm. This differentiates the brand for other Swedish fashion brands. Kajsa Leanderson admits that this helps to create an attraction and excitement to the brand although she thinks that it is also a bit negative since the Burfitt brand is not always top of mind for Swedish stylists and fashion editors.

4.3.1 The online channels used for marketing Burfitt

The website has been around since we started up the brand in Paris back in 2004, says Kajsa Leanderson\(^ {23}\). The website offers a wide range of photos from all Burfitt collections since then. The visitor is entering the Burfitt universe through the website and as Kajsa states; it is an effective and very cheap way for communication. Twice a year, depending of the collection releases, the website is updated externally. One year ago Burfitt created a web shop in addition to the website. It is though run internally and hence not technically perfect but it is developed step by step. The web shop is a good channel for reaching the end customer.

In addition to the website and web shop there is a fan-page on Facebook. But Kajsa Leanderson says that the fan-page was once created by an intern and it is not really up to date by now. No Burfitt Twitter exists but on the contrary I discovered nine results on YouTube. The top result is a short movie called *Du crouquis aux vitrines with Lovisa Burfitt*. It has been viewed almost 3000 times since it was published on the 19\(^{th}\) of March 2007. “Yes, I remember that movie, it was made by a French guy and it was intended to be sold to French *Elle* or any similar fashion magazine but it did not ended up in anything but that movie on YouTube,” comments Kajsa.

What else is done in terms of spreading the *word of Burfitt*? “Each time our clothing is present in a fashion editorial we try to get our website address published. Since we do not have any Swedish office or any concept store, the website address is the most useable marketing tool for Burfitt”, says Leanderson. “Otherwise people would not know how to get in touch with us”. Furthermore, she admits that the new marketing possibilities, thanks to the Internet, have helped to enhance the brand value and also to reaching out to potential customers.

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\(^{22}\) Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.

\(^{23}\) Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
4.3.2 The ambassadors of Burfitt

About a year ago Noomi Rapace – the Swedish actress most known for her role as Lisbeth Salander in the Millennium trilogy – contacted Lovisa Burfitt for proposing collaboration. She was by then already an established customer but she needed a special-made dress for the Cannes Film Festival 2009. Lovisa Burfitt made that dress and since then Noomi Rapace has been an ambassador of Burfitt. For Burfitt it is a good way of displaying the clothing.

Moreover, Burfitt has collaborated with Swedish models and bloggers Ida Pyk and Filippa Berg. They have done some modelling for Burfitt. Additionally to their modelling they have wrote about Burfitt, and published photos of Burfitt products in their blogs (Chapter 5.2 Burfitt in blogs for further details concerning the collaboration). Kajsa Leanderson thinks that they are great ambassadors for Burfitt although she adds that collaboration with Burfitt has to be a natural thing.

4.4 The website

"The website is an effective channel for communication - and inexpensive – once you are linked to the website, you are about to entering the world of Burfitt". The website (and web shop) of Burfitt is created in a simple, light design. There are pictures of models wearing the Burfitt clothing mixed with shorter fragmental “texts”. All texts are written by the purpose of informing the visitor/customer about practical and technical details concerning the clothes, legal terms when purchasing online etc. In addition there is a movie called “Friends of Burfitt”. The movie shows people, most women and kids, wearing Burfitt clothes.

For briefly summarise how the website is organized and what it is containing, a short description of it follows: The first page shows the picture as seen above with models wearing the latest collection. Ten more pages follow with images based on the same editorial-idea, S/S 2010. On the left hand there are different headlines to choose between/click on. Beginning

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24 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
25 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
with Spring/Summer 10 that shows the editorial-story as mentioned, next topic is Previous Collections, containing collections from A/W 2007, followed by the topic: Stockholm Show F/W 10/11. Friends of Burfitt is next, showing the movie mentioned, of inspirational art and spirit. Then there are all Burfitt Retailers represented by name, address and phone number. In addition, Contact, where the visitor finds information about Burfitt, press offices, photographers etc. Last topic is called Press Login, for getting further a username plus password is required.

Furthermore a web shop, as mentioned by Kajsa Leanderson, is present at the website. There are different categories: S/S 10, A/W 09, S/S 09, Sale, Shop by style (ranging from baby to underwear), Contact (Burfitt office address, phone number, fax and e-mail), Sign In (as Kajsa Leanderson also mentioned for receiving newsletters and shop you have to sign in) Shopping Cart. Finally, the visitor could find four topics at the bottom of the site. They are: About Us (as copied for introduction to this chapter), Legal Terms, FAQ and Credits. The very last mentioned, Credits contains three links leading from the Burfitt website.

4.4.1 Links leading from the website
As discovered there are seven links leading out from the website. The links were tracked to some of Burfitt’s business partners’ websites (the photographers, Louise Enhörning and Julia Hetta, for example). I followed the links and in almost all cases I ended up on a website where I could, somehow, get a track back to the Burfitt website. One of those was Lovisa Burfitt as the illustrator Lovisa Burfitt. It seems like the mutual linking is a channel for the creation of a broad virtual network for creative people in the fashion sphere. The mutual – or reciprocal – linking is a free and favourable - win-win - marketing tool.

4.5 Links leading to the website
The online research for finding links leading to the Burfitt website was made with help from different tools. For a further description of the method used, please see chapter 3.Method. The search ended up in many results. For simplify the organisation and description of those results a categorisation was made. I categorised the results as: Burfitt in Blogs, Retailers and Other sites. The first mentioned, Burfitt in blogs, is further described and analysed in Chapter 5.Burfitt and blogs. Those are not reflecting all results founded but they cover the majority of the results.

4.5.1 Retailers
Since Burfitt does not have any physical concept store for their collections the online channels are fundamental for their existence. Most of the results in this category showed a website of a retailer (Kii, Tjallamalla, YWFS, Oii, Branten and Volangshop among others). Burfitt was either represented as one brand in the store assortment of brands, or as a new page with only Burfitt items on. Even though there is not that many comments published in direct relation to the retailers, there is some viral marketing about Burfitt observed in relation to the Retailers:

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26 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10

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One of the retailers, Oii\textsuperscript{27}, presents Burfitt on their website with a short piece about Burfitt. Oii informs the visitor that Carine Roitfeld (French Vogue Editor-in-Chief) was spotted in Burfitt at the red carpet during the Cannes Film Festival. The retailer Kii\textsuperscript{28} is probably most frequent of the retailers among the search results. The Kii-results ranges from the Kii website to the Facebook page. An explanation to Kii’s relatively high frequency is that Burfitt starts with capital letter B. B and hence Burfitt are thus present at the top of Kii’s website. Therefore Burfitt is likely to appear at search results concerning Kii and vice versa - the nature of search engines.

4.5.2 Other sites
During my research process a circumstance that caused publicity and viral marketing for Burfitt occurred. Many results are leading to sites showing pictures and comments of the wedding dress, designed by Lovisa Burfitt for the wedding dress competition. The sites related to the wedding dress ranges from wedding blogs to newspaper websites. For summarising: all comments found in the meaning of commenting on the Burfitt dress were positive for Burfitt. Additionally, the sites that published information/texts about the wedding dress linked to either the Burfitt website or Lovisa Burfitt’s website. For example a short piece about the dresses appeared in the news-feed website iCITY.se\textsuperscript{29}.

Often Lovisa Burfitt or Burfitt were found on the right hand side at the top of a website/blog listed as: favorites/inspiration or something in that sense. For example at the website of Stina Johnson\textsuperscript{30} a link to Lovisa Burfitt is found below: Look look. In addition, there are some occasional sites related to the Max Factor Awards (as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter) and Blocket – a Swedish E-bay for the selling of Burfitt items. Also found is a news site publishing a notice on an exhibition initiated by the Swedish Institute in Shanghai called “New Identity” with Burfitt as one of the contributing designers\textsuperscript{31}. For summarising it seems like Burfitt is often in the hotspot, always in a fashion or art related context, but not necessary published in a fashion network though.

5. Burfitt and blogs
The influence fashion blogs and bloggers have on the fashion business today must not be underestimated. As a visitor at Stockholm Fashion week by Berns I noticed that bloggers are a) the major group of fashion related people visiting the catwalk-shows, b) the bloggers are seated front row at the shows. The front row seats are reserved for the people that are considered as most important.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{27} http://www.oiidesign.se/designers.php?designerid=87, 2010-05-10
\textsuperscript{28} http://webshop.kii.se/, 2010-05-10
\textsuperscript{29} http://www.icity.se/artikel/1174/Moderna_prinsessklanningar_pa_PUB.html
\textsuperscript{30} http://www.stinajohnson.blogspot.com/, 2010-05-24
\textsuperscript{31} http://apollo.fl-net.se/nyhet/viewNews.do?id=185175, 2010-05-10
\textsuperscript{32} Researcher’s own observation made during Stockholm Fashion Week by Berns, 2010-02-01 to 2010-02-03
5.1 **Blogs**

Already back in 2005, *Business Week* published an article entitled *Blogs Will Change your Business*. Today, five years later, it is *de facto* that bloggers have an increasingly impact on the fashion consumers and on the marketing of branded products (Wahlström, 2007; 201).

On the 5th of May 2010 there were 86,182 registered blogs at Swedish bloggportalen.se. Bloggportalen.se is a network-site for Swedish blogs. The blogs are categorised by topic. Fashion and design blogs are the second biggest category, there were 20,062 blogs enlisted in that category.

One of the most influential fashion bloggers in the world, Scott Schuman, declares in his book *The Sartorialist* (2009:5);

> The comments on The Sartorialist website make the blog a living fabric. The audience interaction made me realize the variety of interpretations the same look can provoke. I might be totally entranced by a young lady’s hairstyle, while someone else won’t be able to stop looking at her flip-flops.

5.2 **How Burfitt works with bloggers**

Kajsa Leanderson states that Burfitt finds the blogs as an interesting and effective channel for reaching out to the end-customer. Burfitt has collaborated with bloggers a couple of times by sending a product like a t-shirt for example, “because it is funny to see if it will lead to

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34 Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
anything”, says Kajsa. Most of the times the result could be considered as positive since the bloggers that received the products have published pictures of the products with a comment. In addition Burfitt work with the Swedish bloggers Ida Pyk and Filippa Berg. They have done some modelling but also written about Burfitt in their blogs. It is a win-win situation and as mentioned earlier they are both ambassadors for Burfitt. Kajsa says that the blogs and its creators are interesting phenomenon but still it has to be “natural collaborations”. Even though she is aware of all those fashion blogs out there she states that Ida Pyk and Filippa Berg are their major and most important collaborators.

Thanks to the blogs, some of the famous Burfitt t-shirts have been sold out very quick. One with the print Today I am a boy was actually copied of an Asian retailer and then the copy were sold through web shops. “Thanks to some bloggers that wrote about it, we found out about the copying. That is a positive effect of the blogs”, says Kajsa Leanderson. “The t-shirts with prints in a Graffiti manner have become popular because of the bloggers. Earlier, Burfitt made some t-shirts with Kate Moss on, but they did not get that much publicity. So, it feels like a relatively new phenomenon”, states Kajsa. Although Burfitt is mentioned more often nowadays, it seems like it is mostly young people who writes about Burfitt. “Perhaps because they think of Burfitt as a cool brand, but even if they write about Burfitt it does not necessary mean that they also purchase Burfitt”, continues Kajsa Leanderson. Another impact of the blogs is people visiting the website of Swedish Elle that happen to end up on Ida or Filippa’s blogs and then are linked forward to Burfitt.

For the future Kajsa Leanderson thinks that the bloggers will still be around, but probably in a more “grown-up” version, as journalists, she suggests. When it comes to spreading the information Kajsa thinks that there will probably be more developed and sophisticated forms of today’s search engines.

5.3 Burfitt in blogs

There are as mentioned dozens of fashion blogs out there. Some of them, related to Burfitt, were studied for this survey. The results of the virtual ethnography made were categorised in three categories. The results of two of them Retailers and Other sites are presented in the fourth chapter. Burfitt in blogs, the third category, is analysed below:

Ida Pyk is one of the ambassadors and in addition bloggers whose name is most frequent among the search results. She is one of eleven bloggers for Swedish Elle. Below the headline Nicest for the moment, at Ida’s blog-website Lovisa Burfitt is linked to. On the blog of Ida Pyk, there is one published contribution consisting of an image of Ida Pyk wearing a Burfitt dress. There are 19 comments to that image. The comments take the form of a dialogue between the blogger and her readers. They want to know more about the dress and the shoes Ida is wearing. She responds, e-mails Lovisa Burfitt questions regarding the clothing and then informs about how to get in touch with Burfitt and purchase the Burfitt

35 http://elle.se/ida-pyks-blogg
dress. She must thus be considered a great ambassador for Burfitt. Some of the comments are expressions of how beautiful they find the dress. There are also some other results related to Ida Pyk. For example one concerning what Ida is wearing in Swedish online magazine *Glamour*\(^37\). On the photo she is wearing a t-shirt designed by Burfitt. Filippa Berg\(^38\) is also blogging from the virtual network of Swedish Elle. In addition she is model and ambassador for Burfitt. As her colleague, Ida Pyk, she is linking to Burfitt, under the headline *Favorites* from her blog.

Lisa Corneliusson\(^39\), writes about and posts images from the Burfitt A/W collection 2010/2011. She is “un-nuanced in love with” the Burfitt A/W collection. Also included is a link to the Burfitt website and two comments on the collection, both of positive character. Furthermore Ebba von Sydow\(^40\) appears among the results. She was once the pioneer of Swedish fashion blogs but today she works for Swedish Television reporting about the wedding of the Swedish Crown-princess in June. She has published an image of the wedding dress with a comment “Lovisa Burfitt’s dress would be at its best as an evening party-dress”. Even though Ebba thinks that the dress designed by Swedish fashion brand *Whyred’s* designer Behnaz Aram would be better for the wedding she is not discrediting the Burfitt dress. Among the readers’ comments there are two comments on the Burfitt dress, both positive. The wedding dress appears – of course - in *Lottas Kungliga Modeblogg*\(^41\). On the 10\(^{th}\) of May 2010 a picture of the wedding dress with a comment on the dress and a link to the website of Lovisa Burfitt are published. In addition there are 17 comments. Most of them concern the Royalties though.

An example of the not-so-famous-but-still-very-many-fashion-bloggers is that of Petra Lovisa Eriksson\(^42\). She has published images of Burfitt items in her blog (the bag designed in collaboration with H&M for *UNICEF* and t-shirts). The headline silently shouts: *Nice nice nice nice – I want*. There are also some comments concerning the t-shirts: “they are really nice!”. In addition there are a couple of comments about the price level. As Kajsa Leanderson mentioned, the Burfitt items are frequent in blogs but for younger *fashionistas* the price could be a barrier for making a purchase. The UNICEF bag is also published at the blog/website Gazet.se\(^43\). Below the topic they call *Eco-nice* one image with comments concerning the bag designed by Lovisa Burfitt in collaboration with H&M for UNICEF are published. The text is informing about the project “All for children” and the bag is part of that charity project. There are a lot results similar, all concerning the bag made for UNICEF.

The examples above are a small selection from the material collected online. They are picked since they are representative for the rest. What could be added for summarizing the fashion


\(^{38}\) [http://elle.se/filippa-bergs-blogg](http://elle.se/filippa-bergs-blogg), 2010-05-11

\(^{39}\) [http://rodeo.net/fisac](http://rodeo.net/fisac), 2010-05-11

\(^{40}\) [http://www.detkungligabrollopet.nu/ebbasblogg](http://www.detkungligabrollopet.nu/ebbasblogg), 2010-05-10

\(^{41}\) [http://lotta.svenskdam.se/](http://lotta.svenskdam.se/), 2010-05-10

\(^{42}\) [http://petralovisaeriksson.blogg.se](http://petralovisaeriksson.blogg.se), 2010-05-10

\(^{43}\) [http://gazet.se](http://gazet.se), 2010-05-10
blogs related to Burfitt is that many of the fashion bloggers (famous and infamously) are fans of Burfitt brand. Some of them are also photographed wearing Burfitt clothing. Most of the comments concerning Burfitt in blogs are (very) positive. Often there is a link leading to either the Burfitt website or Lovisa Burfitt’s website as illustrator. Even though the two websites are not immediately related to each other, this mutual, (virtual) sisterhood draws attention to each other. The two-sided design-capabilities of Lovisa Burfitt walk hand-in-hand – illustrations and fashion. They are not really separated, rather influencing each other. Though, the website of Burfitt concerns the clothing and not the illustrations and vice versa.

In addition to the fashion blogs there are also blogs about everything (and nothing), not with a certain fashion approach, that happen to publish something that has to do with Burfitt and therefore ends up among the results. A majority of those blogs have some kind of art orientation, publishing illustrations or links further to Lovisa Burfitt as illustrator. For example there is one blog called Kreativ Karneval that links to Lovisa Burfitt below the headline Illustrators. The comments concerning the illustrations are very positive. In addition there is one blog, emmasappleoftheday, with a published image of a fanzine named The friends of Burfitt which is also the name of the movie mentioned, shown at the Burfitt website. According to the blogger, the fanzine consists of people photographed in Burfitt clothing.

5.4 Positive and negative WOM caused by viral marketing

As shown by all examples from the categorisation of search results on Internet there are a lot of viral marketing activities going on. The viral activity; the videos, the wedding dress-publicity and collaboration with bloggers for example, results in word of mouth and its counterpart word of mouse. It seems like some of the viral marketing activities are more intentional (video on the website, fanzine, ambassadors, UNICEF bag and mutual linking) while others are more unintentional (all publicity concerning the wedding dress, some of the blogging, video on YouTube). Most of the WOM spread is hard to control, although Burfitt collaborates with some fashion bloggers. However, all comments found, made in relation to Burfitt as brand, company or clothing are (very) positive.

Since no negative WOM were discovered, I will just add the prevention Burfitt does of the spread of negative WOM as described by Kajsa Leanderson when answering the question whether all publicity could be seen as good publicity or not:

It depends on what type of negative comment it is. If it is something about the quality of a garment as shrinking in the wash it is not so great. Is it in a blog, it is difficult to influence. However we try to fix the problem when contacted by unsatisfied customers’. But of course, we prefer positive

44 http://lovisaburfitt.com, 2010-05-10
45 http://lovisaburfitt.com, 2010-05-10
46 http://kreativkarneval.blogspot.com/, 2010-05-10
47 http://emmasappleoftheday.blogspot.com/, 2010-05-24
publicity. We have not yet encountered any direct negative publicity about the brand\(^{48}\).

5.5 **Suggestions for further viral marketing efforts**

The adaption of all material collected from different sources has resulted in two ideas for the future when it comes to the creation of viral marketing campaigns for Burfitt. Since Japan is the largest market from a turnover perspective, it could be fruitful to collaborate with a blogger and/or other creative people with relations to the fashion sphere in Japan. In addition, a *news-feed* at the website publishing running updates about the brand could enhance the website. There are so many different projects of interest going on, like the exhibition in Shanghai and the bag designed with H&M for UNICEF. The news-feed could also be connected to the subscription newsletter.

5. Conclusions

In the conclusions’ chapter of the thesis I am discussing the viral marketing and its effects for fashion brands in a general manner. The main problem of the thesis, leading the direction for the virtual ethnography and analysis made was written as a question:

**How to market a fashion brand through viral marketing?**

Almost all (online) publicity concerning fashion seems to be written with uncritical intentions. This is not news or necessary bad but still quite shocking since fashion and clothing are part of the human cultures and also have contributed to the industrial and economical development in many countries. Therefore it is a bit surprising that the art and universe of fashion is not examined the way other cultural expressions are. However, there are debates concerning the uncritical approach of fashion Medias today, going on, but still most of the publicity is written with the purpose of informing or admiring. In addition most of the publicity, particularly what is published online, tends to be highly visual. The lack of critique together with the visual nature of online messages makes a great base for viral marketing communications. As long as the state remains the same, viral marketing is almost in all cases a beneficial possibility to get brand awareness and buzz.

The survey indicates that the virtual networks and collaborations created by (mutual) linking and service exchanges are suitable for smaller businesses in the fashion area. The win-win situations are set since the viral marketing effects has less to do with marketing budgets but more with the imagination and flexibility of the brand. Collaboration, imagination and flexibility are basically what needs for the creation of campaigns beyond the frames of traditional marketing. The collaboration in different forms seems to be beneficial especially in creative *indie spheres* – not only for spreading the word to like-minded people but also because of the economical aspects. Additionally, the selection of marketing tools and channels available for the creation of viral marketing campaigns, ending up in positive word

\(^{48}\) Interview with Kajsa Leanderson, 2010-05-10.
of mouth/word of mouse, are almost immense. Therefore the possibilities to combining those different tools and channels are infinite, depending only on the knowledge of how to use them and why to use them.

Without any doubts, the collaboration with bloggers (and ambassadors) are tailor-made for creating viral campaigns resulting in word of mouse for a fashion brand. Though it is of importance to be a bit strategic and have a certain feel for who is suitable for the brand image - for enhancing the brand image - since the collaborator becomes an extension of the brand. The word spread by others is uncontrollable and so is the effect. Good to remember is that some efforts causing publicity was not what was calculated from the beginning. This concerns both positive and negative viral effects. Therefore a suggestion is to occasionally evaluate what have been spread online. The evaluation could then lead direction into future marketing decisions. It may also be usable for the prevention of negative word of mouse distribution.

Even though there are a huge variety of tools and possibilities for viral marketing, as stated in the paper, there are also restrictions. The capricious character of the Medias, as well as that of the fashion world with trends that changes from day to day, are not to rely on. In addition, due to the enormous information-flow on the Internet as well as the uncontrollable nature of the viral communications (especially the effects they cause), it is probably for the brands best to limit the marketing efforts to channels and campaigns that are manageable. Thus the brand image will remain consistent and the customer’s expectations of brand will not be ruined. Another problem with the viral marketing is the measuring of effects. Since the effects are often hard to measure it could not be stated if the effects were really worth the efforts made. For example status – to be cool or not - is of significant importance in the fashion business. Therefore it is evident and nice to have status but it does not necessary means that the sales are affected. The status is dependent on trends, trend-setters (as bloggers opinions on brand) but also on brand heritage and frequency in editorials. The sales depend on those factors but could also be dependent on geographical location and price-level, which could be delimitations for sales although a brand has status and the status is communicated in blogs and forums. For summarizing, viral marketing is a great, inexpensive possibility for a fashion brand to be seen and published online, but its character makes it hard to control and the effects are difficult to measure.

7. Reflections

In the last chapter of the thesis my own reflections regarding the study are discussed along with its potential contribution to viral marketing research. Moreover the credibility and reliability of thesis is discussed and there are also suggestions for future research.

7.1 My reflections regarding the survey

As discussed in the thesis, there are no specific methods for virtual research. The non-standardized structure of how to do the survey sets the guidelines for the writing and research process. For me, it was not really a problem to not have a framework for how to conduct the research. It was rather an advantage since it allowed me to have a curious outlook on the subject. I felt really free to make interpretations with no predicted results in mind. In addition
I have learned a lot about virtual ethnography and viral marketing for fashion brands. My ability to organize and reduce information collected has been improved. The subject of the "new Medias", including (among others) Social Medias and the viral marketing, is as dozen times stated in the paper, a reflection of today and also frequently used by the fashion world. Therefore I feel content with my choice of subject for the thesis. Furthermore I was lucky to get a tutor that is really into the subject and who also has a fashion interest as well as a capability of giving fast feedback.

Many times it is better to be two persons when conducting surveys and writing analyses but the nature of virtual ethnography is different to that of studies in reality. Therefore I am not considering it as a problem to conduct a survey by oneself. Least but not last, the nature of Burfitt as a company with no physical store but with a website as “home”, was suitable for the subject. The website was also a good starting point for making the online survey.

7.2 Credibility and reliability evaluation

Since viral marketing is a relatively recent concept there are not so much written on the subject. As mentioned above there are no rigid rules to follow when conducting a survey online. On the contrary the researcher has to set up a personal framework for enabling the study of the empirical material. Those reasons together create a wider basis for analysis than what is normally the case in the academic world. I think it somehow makes the results more reliable, compared to a more traditional marketing approach, because they are not predictable. On the other hand, since there are no specific tools for the method and how to conduct the survey, the results could be valid and reliable but still difficult to compare with other results made. For this thesis, I have collected, organized and saved the materials in different maps and as notes. It is therefore possible to follow in my footprints, if needed.

7.3 Future research suggestions

The subject of viral marketing and the use of Social Medias are in the hotspot and definitely of interest for research. For me it was natural to study and analyze the concepts in relation to fashion. But I think marketing concepts – especially those that are frequently used by the Medias – are of interest in many contexts. When it comes to the blogging phenomena there are still a lot more to discover. Those studies could be fruitful both for fashion companies and for research on consumer behavior. I would also like to add that all research on the subject is important and needed since the marketing mediums and the Medias are changing with an increasingly speed and it would therefore be devastating to not capture as many of the movements of the digital age, as possible. They are not only movements but reflections of our time and what is significant for the moment, easily forgotten in the future.
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Appendix I.

Intervjufrågor till Kajsa Leanderson, Burfitt

Burfitt, målgruppen, marknadsföring, internets roll, hur man arbetar med internet i marknadsföringssyfte, eventuellt arbete med affiliateprogram

- Berätta lite om företaget och varumärket Burfitt, hur och när ni startade?
- Hur har utvecklingen sett ut sedan dess?
- Hur ser Burftits målgrupp ut?
- Anpassas marknadsföringen efter målgruppen?
- Rent allmänt, hur ser arbetet med marknadsföring av Burfitt ut?
- Vilka delar (kanaler, verktyg etc) innehåller det?
- Mer specifikt, hur arbetar ni med marknadsföring på Internet? Ni har en hemsida hur ser arbetet med den ut?
- Facebooksida, Twitterkonto etc? Någon mer onlinekanal som används i marknadsföringssyfte? Myspace, YouTube…
- Noomi Rapace som ”ambassadör” för Burfitts plagg. Hur inleddes samarbetet? Har det genererat fler Burftittkonsumenter?
- Nyligen visade ni på modeveckan i Stockholm, som vinnare av Max Factor Award och i dagarna vann en klänning signerad Lovisa Burfitt SVDs tävling som gick ut på att skapa en klänning till kronprinsessan Victorias stundande brudroll; har dessa händelser och den mediala uppmärksamhet det väckt genererat mer intresse och fler besökare till än tidigare?
- Hur ser ni på modebloggar och vad de skriver om Burfitt?
- Samarbetar ni med några bloggare på något vis? Ida Pyk
- Finns det någon speciell bloggare/onlineforum som det kan anses mer betydelsefullt att samarbeta med/att bli omskriven av?
- Har ni varit med om att det bloggats om något specifikt plagg som sedan sålt slut väldigt snabbt?
- Mäter ni på något sätt om bloggar, Facebooksida (annat alternativ) bidrar till ökad försäljning alternativt andra uppsatta mål?
- Görs något annat för att påverka spridningen, online, av information om Burfitts produkter? Personer i databasen…
- Ser ni (i princip) all publicitet (wom/wow) oavsett karaktär som god publicitet?
- Har ni upptäckt om något mindre bra rykte spridits om Burfitts produkter på internet vid något tillfälle?
- Har Sociala medier bidragit till att förstärka (alt försvaga) varumärket Burfitt? Om ja; är det främst hos befintliga konsumenter eller har de Sociala medierna bidragit till att nå ut till nya konsumenter?
- Har du märkt av en påtaglig förändring av marknadsföringsmöjligheterna på internet de sista åren eller har övergången skett successivt?
• Tror du att det dyker upp ännu fler nya, annorlunda marknadssföringsmöjligheter framöver eller står vi inför en avmattning?
• Fortsätter modebloggarna att påverka modekonsumenten?
• Tror du att det finns en skillnad mellan hur mycket Burfitt blir omskrivet jämfört med andra svenska märken på grund av att verksamheten bedrivs i utlandet? Om ja; positivt eller negativt för Burfitts del?

• Arbetar ni med affiliateprogram?

Om ja;

• Hur skulle du beskriva arbetet med programmen?
• Har ni någon särskild strategi för hur ni arbetar med affiliates?
• Finns det en matchning mellan Burfitts målgrupp och arbetet med affiliates?
• Hur ser kontraktet ut, vad krävs av er?
• Söker ni upp ”affiliates” eller söker de upp er?
• Kontrollerar ni innehållet som era affiliates förmedlar?
• Kan ni påverka innehållet?
• Har det hänt att affiliates har gett er negativa alternativt felaktiga omdömen om era produkter?
• Tror du att konsumenten påverkas av affiliate marketing?
• Vilka fördelar ser du med affiliates?
• Vilka nackdelar ser du med affiliates?
• Hur stor del av Burfitts marknadssföring utgörs av så kallad affiliate marketing?