SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something green
Abstract

Title: Special Collections – Something old, something new, something borrowed, something green

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Key words: Special collections, designer collaborations, occasional collections, limited edition, overconsumption, brand extension.

Purpose: The purpose of our thesis is to make an analysis and create an understanding for how the development for special collections, within the fashion retail segment, will look in the future and to see if/how special collections are connected to overconsumption.

Methodology: In this thesis, we have relied on a qualitative research strategy for collecting and analyzing data. The research design applied resembles of case studies but is correctly defined as cross-sectional design. We have done semi-structured interviews with three practitioners and one expert. We have also done content analysis of the campaigns for the three current special collections we have investigated.

Conclusions: We have come up with the conclusion that there is a future for special collections, but it needs to be a development from how they are worked out today. Some factors are more relevant than others for a possible success for the special collections. These factors are that the collection offers a high rate of trend awareness, that it enables to offer the consumer something extraordinary and that the collection is anchored within environmental issues.
Preface

We would like to thank each and everyone who has helped us during this master thesis and by whose help this thesis was made possible. A warm thank you to the practitioners and the expert who kindly took time from their schedules to answer our questions.

Thank you very much!

*Pia Ekholm, Lindex*

*Ulrica Ivares, Cubus*

*Lena Kinberg-Södergren, Indiska*

*Helena Mellström, the Swedish Fashion Council*

Borås May 23, 2011

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1. Introduction

In this introduction chapter of our thesis we will present our subject of choice – the development of special collections within the retail segment. We will give an insight to the background, discuss the problems and subsequently declare our purpose and research questions. Furthermore, delimitations, current research and our contribution will be announced.

1.1 Background and problem discussion

The site on the web page for H&M where all press releases are published is full of news for spring 2011. Only by giving the press releases a short overview, five either designer collaborations or occasional collections can be found for the first couple of months this year (H&M 1). Not shown in the list is another small collection consisting of a few pieces made out of fabric left over from the production from the latest design collaboration H&M made with Lanvin autumn/winter 2010. This collection is called Waste and was available in a few selected stores (Lam 2011). Another more sustainable collection is WaterAid, a collection of beachwear where ten percent of the sales is donated to the international aid organisation WaterAid. Thanks to donations like this, the organisation can help poor people around the world to get access to clean water and better sanitation conditions (H&M 3).

Around 1999 when, Internet made a breakthrough, fashion shows and catwalks began to be spread all over in a rapid pace. Thanks to the fast information flow over Internet, low priced fashion retail companies were more able to interpret the latest designs shown by high fashion designers. The production was accelerated and speeded up, which resulted in shorter time until the end consumer could buy the latest trends in store. The fact that consumers in a larger sense than before could partake in the latest actions within the fashion industry also made them more powerful against the retailers regarding what trends they demanded. Except the fact that retailers notice a large need to offer their consumers the latest trends seen on the catwalk, there is in general a shorter time between each collection even among high fashion designers. Before, the collections were usually launched as Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter but due to changes both concerning consumers’ lifestyles and demand there are nowadays more common with several mid-season collections (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010).

Even though H&M is the largest fashion chain on the Scandinavian market, it is not the only company offering special collections this spring, or later on this year. Cubus, the Norwegian fashion retail company did for the second time release a limited edition collection with a higher trend rate than the regular assortment, called Trend edition (SalongK.se). Strong competitors to H&M and Cubus on the Swedish market are Lindex and Indiska. Lindex has, like Cubus, launched a special collection this spring. The collection is called Affordable Luxury and was designed by Ewa Larsson for the fourth time. The collection consists of 14 pieces and is available online and in selected stores.
Except the special collection Affordable Luxury, Lindex has come up with a few design collaborations with, for instance, the American designer Narciso Rodriguez. Rodriguez designed a small collection called Pink Collection, from which ten percent of the sales were donated to the Swedish Cancer Society’s Pink Ribbon campaign in order to help fight breast cancer (Lindex 1). Another collaboration that Lindex did this spring was with the American stylist and designer Rachel Zoe. This collaboration was though a bit different, since Rachel Zoe did not design any garments, but rather chose her favourites from the spring assortment of flowery and colourful clothes and styled them (Lindex 6). Indiska, the Swedish fashion chain with strong influences from India, has for the second time this spring launched a collection, designed by famous designer and artist Jade Jagger, which includes both clothing and interior decorating (Jade Jagger for Indiska). Almost seven years after H&M presented their first guest design collaboration with the almost mythical designer Karl Lagerfeld (H&M 2) there is no visible saturation noted since it seems to be an ongoing hype, at least in the media landscape, almost every time a company releases a new special collection. Via blogs, forum and twitter information is spread fast. For consumers who keep themselves updated pictures and information from releases are also available now in another sense than it used to be.

The fashion industry moves faster as does the information flow. According to Dobers and Strannegård (2005), production and consumption are becoming progressively more fashion sensitive, dependent on aesthetics and well designed products and services. When more and more markets become saturated it is of importance for companies to search for creative ways of selling their products and services. Companies become more sophisticated in their marketing and sales activities and benefit financially from an ever-increasing consumption pattern (Dobers & Strannegård 2005).

Often discussed in the context of special collections and designer collaborations is the power of limited edition. Merriam-Webster, owned by Encyclopaedia Britannica, defines limited edition as follows: “An issue of something collectible, as books, prints, or medals, that is advertised to be limited to a relatively small number of copies” (Merriam-Webster).

The value of limited edition in this case is certain but there are however signs that the trend with limited edition is not as large today as it was years ago, when the movement had its glory days. Within marketing, like in all other business, trends come and pass and limited edition is an illustration of this. When there was an option to purchase all kinds of items in limited edition, such as shoes, jewellery, soft drinks, and even soap, tooth paste and chocolate bars, the glory faded (Hedlund 2011).

As well as there is a visible trend with special collections, and from the companies’ point of view to create a hype around these occasional collections by offering them in limited edition, there is a progressive debate around how to combine sustainability and the, in many cases, superficial fashion industry. The issue of how to reduce the environmental
effects that the fashion industry has had, most due to the resource demanding production, has been raised frequently during recent years. The textile production is global and most textiles and garments are being transported all over the world before reaching the end consumer. Knowledge of this power is a necessity in order to create sustainable design in both textiles and fashion. Thereby, there is nowadays an increasing movement researching what actions can be taken towards more sustainable textile technology. This is motivated by economic factors, such as water resources are becoming scarce and more expensive to use. Among design students it is now more of a commodity than an unusualness to study how to apply to design responsibility and thereby learn how to make a difference (Leerberg, Riisberg & Boutrup 2010).

Another contrary to the effects of the fast moving fashion industry, where more and more collections are distributed every year, there is also a strong movement of about creating a more sustainable attitude towards fashion and the stuff we buy. Voices are heard about how to be fashionable without shopping and what alternatives there are to constantly update your wardrobe with new clothes. At the same time as special collections are launched from several fashion retailers this year, a recent research shows that a large part of our clothing consumption ends up being garbage. The consumption of clothes and home textiles has increased with almost 40 percent between the years 2000 and 2009. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has come up with a study about the textile waste in Sweden and the results are alarming. The average Swede shops almost 15 kilos of clothes each year, from which around three kilos of clothes are donated to charity but as much as eight kilos of clothes end up in the garbage can (Naturvårdsverket).

Figure 1 – Flow chart of textile waste in Sweden (Naturvårdsverket).
Figure 1 shows the flowchart of the textile waste within Sweden. The numbers show the amount of kilos of textile per person and year. The question mark concerns the amount of storage of clothes and home textiles in people’s homes. The extent of that flow has not yet been investigated. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is analyzing how the part of the textile waste being sorted into household waste could be taken care of as recycling (Naturvårdsverket).

Jessica Andreason at The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency says that the 40 percent increase is remarkable in the sense that old people do not shop as much as young people do. The consumption among young people is almost certainly larger than 15 kilos per year. The study also only reflects the domestic shopping and not shoes, why we have to keep in mind that the fashion shopping in general is probably even larger. At the same time the clothing prices have decreased and therefore the monetary difference is not that large. According to Jessica Andreason, this is however a problem and she states that: “Clothes have become too cheap. We buy a lot more garments and we do not see the negative effects when we are shopping” (Håkansson 2011). So why are we purchasing that much more clothes today? Andreason has plenty of explanations. One is that we have more money to spend on clothes at the same time as the pace within the fashion industry has gone up. Fashion bloggers have increased both in number and in influence. The latest trends can be seen everywhere and the fashion chains are quick in adapting (Håkansson 2011).

Actions are however being made towards a more sustainable attitude. One of the actors aiming for this is Naturskyddsföreningen, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, SSNC. It is an environmental organisation that aims for a change in how to act in a more environmental friendly way. Climate, the oceans, forests, environmental toxins, and agriculture are their main areas of involvement. By spreading knowledge, mapping environmental threats and creating solutions SSNC has an influence both national and international to achieve important improvements (Naturskyddsföreningen 2). One of the recent initiatives from SSNC is to organise the largest day for swopping clothes within Sweden. Saturday the 9th of April people from all over Sweden could visit different locations in 46 cities around the country, where they could renew their wardrobe by swopping clothes instead of buying new ones (Naturskyddsföreningen 1).

Attendant at this cloth swopping day were also fashion journalist Sofia Hedström and photographer Anna Schori who this spring released their book Modemanifestet, the Fashion manifesto (Naturskyddsföreningen 1). The book describes how Sofia Hedström made a revolt towards our fast fashion society and decided not to buy a single garment during one year. Instead of shopping she wrote about her experience in this mentioned book. The idea arose from when talking to colleagues and realising they were mostly discussing what was new instead of what was good. The hunting for the latest had become more important than the one for good design. When Hedström interviewed fashion designers she could also notice a tiredness of the dominating fast fashion. These
designers rather wanted to create clothes that people appreciate and would like to wear for a longer period than during just one season (Posti Sjöman 2011). Hedström states that: “When clothes are as cheap as a hamburger menu, there is a manifesto needed. We need to see clothes as raw material instead of fast food” (Naturskyddsföreningen 1). Hedström and Schori thought it was obvious to attend the clothes swapping day and they liked the idea of having it that large, which made it possible for people from all over to enjoy the activity. Clothes swapping is an activity they recommend in their book instead of buying for renewing. According to Hedström, clothes swapping is a source of joy. To her, finding new clothes at the same time as generating new life for your own stuff at a new owner is fantastic (Naturskyddsföreningen 1).

Another way of thinking in a sustainable way and to be new thinking when it comes to clothes can be found in the United States where a group of fashion students took the initiative to together try to find a solution for the overconsumption of clothes. The initiative meant that the students were to produce garments that could be used in more than one way. In order to increase the possible use, the garments should consist of adjustable and detachable parts to function as several different garments with different styles. This initiative gave the students a scholarship from the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA (CSRguiden). But at the same time as initiatives like this one is encouraged, prices of clothes are decreasing and have done so for several years and low-priced retailers offer their consumers copies of the latest catwalk trends sooner than ever before (Make, do & mend). By offering low-priced copies the fashion companies target people’s emotional desire to buy and own more, instead of focusing on the value of the aesthetics of the products. These approaches of fast fashion result in consumers wanting to keep up with every change of trends, resulting in overconsumption (Trash to Trend).

1.2 Problem definition

So, at the same time as people are constantly reminded that they need to take action towards the consumption society, they keep on shopping. The theoretical problem, that we as researchers want to illuminate and investigate, is how these strong trends; the one with companies offering special collections in limited edition to attract customers to consume more, and the trend with an increasing awareness and interest for environmental issues, can exist simultaneously? The fashion retailers are continuously tempting us with news and the latest trends. The special collections normally come in limited edition and with exclusive designs why we, as consumers, feel almost obliged to buy in order to experience a feeling of being unique, special and trendy. It does not take long to consider the fact that the pace, in which fashion retailers are distributing clothes and new trends today, is not sustainable and results in overconsumption. Will these insights further on be adapted by the consumers, and thereby cause a downward trend at the fashion chains, or will the pace even accelerate in order to develop even more special collections, which eventually could outrival the regular assortment?
1.3 Purpose
The purpose of our thesis is to make an analysis and create an understanding for how special collections, within the fashion retail segment, have created such a huge customer interest in recent years and to see if/how special collections are connected to overconsumption. The purpose is also to investigate how special collections will be developed within the future. We aim to make a prediction for how the contemporary interest for fashion in relation to sustainability and ethical consumption will affect the demand for special collections in the coming years.

1.4 Research questions
What role do special collections have concerning overconsumption?

- How will the development concerning special collections look in the future?

- If the development will continue in the same pace as today, how can the interest for these special collections maintain by increasing awareness?

1.5 Delimitations
We have chosen to delimit our thesis to only focusing on fashion retailers in the low-price segment, and consequently we exclude the mid- and high-price segment. Our concentration will be on special collections and by special collections we include designer collaborations and occasional collections which are available during a limited period of time. Furthermore, we will have a focus on the Swedish market.

1.6 Current research
In this section we will present research that has been done prior to our thesis within the subject. We have chosen to review research concerning fast fashion as special collections today are a part of that, with several collections being launched every season. Investigations have also been performed within the field of sustainability and design as a concept. Furthermore, we have looked into overconsumption and brand extension. As our subject is a fairly new phenomena there are few books published yet that raises this issue, and therefore the former research we have studied mostly include journal articles.
We have found one bachelor thesis that deals with special collections, but then only designer collaborations and not occasional collections. Moreover, this thesis is written from a marketing point of view which will not be our focus (Karlsson & Pettersson 2010). Dell’Era and Verganti (2010), who have written an article that discusses industrial design, mean that designers are significant in studying what customers demand and need and that designer collaborations is of great importance. The authors also opine that collaborations help companies within the design-industry to evaluate socio-cultural and latent needs on the market as, according to Gemser and Leenders (2001), consumers increasingly pay attention to brands concerning product aesthetics (Dell’Era & Verganti 2010). Our approach, regarding special collections, will thus differ from research that we have seen so far and therefore we are of the conviction that our thesis will contribute with new and interesting information.
Fast fashion is a subject that has been written a lot about. Today retailers within the fashion segment want flexibility concerning design, quality and delivery. In addition, high pace of entering the market is of great importance. Consumers of today are becoming more and more fashion conscious and the desire for low-priced fashion is increasing. On that account, fashion retailers need to update their products frequently in order to meet customers’ demand and the product lifecycle becomes shorter and shorter (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). As several connections can be seen between fast fashion and special collections, we have chosen to raise this subject as a substratum for our thesis. Important to emphasize is, though, that the connection between fast fashion and fashion retailers’ special collections has not been documented before.

Just like fast fashion, there are a lot of articles to be found about sustainability which is another subject we will raise. According to Dobers and Strannegård (2005), the choice of consuming in a sustainable way is generally explained as decisions that are made in the moment and not something thought of as long-term. Dobers and Strannegård (2005) mean that design is a major reason for why we consume today and further, Ahlklo (2004) argues that style and appearance is of much greater matter than ethics (Dobers & Strannegård 2005). Consequently, design is becoming a competitive advantage for the fashion companies (Dobers & Strannegård 2005). Our focus for sustainability and design will though be in terms of the increasing speed and amount of special collections as well as overconsumption.

Brand extension is a topic very well researched and rewritten. Aaker and Keller were two of the first to illuminate the situation when an established company stretches its brand into another product category in the article Brand extensions: the good, the bad and the ugly from 1990. The academic literature on brand extension is also characterised by a large focus on the relation between the parent brand and the extension brand and how well the images of the two are coherent (Reast 2005). Park et al. (1991) found out in their survey that evaluations of brand extension depend on the perceived fit of the new product in relation to the existing brand. This fit is a function of two factors, namely product feature similarity and brand concept consistency (Park et al. 1991). Thorbjørnsen (2005) also emphasizes the importance of investigating parent brand feedback effects when launching category extensions. Positive as well as negative feedback effects of brand congruent versus incongruent concept extensions were in this investigation noticed (Thorbjørnsen 2005). Our focus has however not been that much on how brands extend sub-brands into other product ranges, but how special collections can be a strategy for companies to try out ideas and collaborations with designers normally not seen in the regular assortment for fashion retail companies.

1.7 The contribution
The subject of special collections in terms of both designer collaborations and occasional collections, launched during a limited period of time, is a passably unexplored research
area. We believe that our approach will give an insight for special collections as well as create an understanding for how the development will look in the future regarding these collections. Our intention is also to emphasize the connection between special collections and overconsumption. Furthermore, we aim to give an answer to whether or not the interest will stagnate when an increasingly number of fashion retailers offer more and more collections, which may be a source of information to fashion retailers considering the idea of launching a special collection. Of importance is also the increasing awareness among consumers, asking for more sustainable products. Today, there are a few special collections being launched that are either sustainable in terms of material, or in terms of donations to different organisation, such as the special collection of beachwear from H&M where ten percent are donated to the international aid organisation WaterAid.

Our thesis will hopefully be of credit for fashion companies acting in the low-priced segment when it comes to predicting what factors that will be of importance in the future concerning special collections. Our thesis has combined research on fast fashion with quick response and sustainability issues such as ethical consumption with status consumption. Brand extension, brand identity, brand image and brand loyalty have also been connected to special collections. We hope that our thesis will make it easier when considering the connection between the mentioned topics and special collections. Finally, our research questions will emphasize the connection between special collections and overconsumption and how the development of special collections will look in the future.
2. Methodology

In the methodology chapter we will describe the existing approaches of research and then present which one we have determined as most appropriate in this context. Furthermore, we will declare what research design and methods of research we have defined as most suitable for our research. These are cross-sectional design and semi-structured interviews. Further on in the chapter we will present how we have managed the gathering of data and information.

2.1 Research strategy

A research strategy, according to Bryman and Bell, means a general orientation to the conduct of business research. Regarding areas such as connections between theory and research, there is a distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. There is no univocal opinion how obvious this distinction is, but the distinction is however a useful tool for classifying different methods of business research. Shortly, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods derives from the way the data is collected and analysed (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 28).

Quantitative research involves a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. Deductive theory represents the most common view of the relationship between theory and research, where the researcher deduces a hypothesis that must be transmittable to empirical examination. The hypothesis must be well constructed and then translated into operational terms. Further on, quantitative research has contained the elements and norms of the natural scientific model in general and positivism in particular. From a quantitative perspective the view of social reality is an external objective reality (Bryman & Bell 2007 pp 11, 28).

On the contrary, qualitative research normally emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Qualitative research also includes an inductive approach rather than a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research, commonly used among quantitative research. Induction is a process where the researcher makes conclusions out of empirical experiences. The results made are reconnected into the base of theory, and the research findings are associated with a certain domain of study. Qualitative research represents a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation and prefers to focus on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world (Bryman & Bell 2007, pp 12, 28).

An epistemological issue concerns the question of what knowledge is. Quantitative research has been categorised as a research strategy more common in natural science where a positivistic view of knowledge and the environment is generally used. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is characterised by the use of interpretivism as a contrasting epistemology to positivism. Proponents of interpretivism as an approach are
of the opinion that studying the subject of social sciences - people and their institutions - requires a completely different methodology in comparison to studying natural sciences. Interpretivism has been influenced by hermeneutics, which is a theory arguing that the analyst of a text must seek to bring out the meanings of a text from the perspective of its author. There have been many discussions about an epistemological clash between positivism and hermeneutics and the differences in their individual approach towards human behaviour. While positivism is said to explain human behaviour, hermeneutics is said to understand human behaviour and is thereby more commonly used among social science. The sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) described social science as a field, which includes both explanation and understanding but the main point is the interpretive understanding of social action (Bryman & Bell 2007, pp 16, 17, 574).

To distinguish, qualitative research is a collection of methods normally used for social studies. These approaches all share a similar vision for how data is collected and analysed. Text and pictures, instead of numbers, are used as a base of information. The approach is interpretive and knowledge is something that is socially constructed. Within qualitative research, there is also many times a large interest for social behaviour and cultural norms (Denscombe 2009, p. 423).

When considering these two research strategies, qualitative research seems to be better suited for the research we will present in this thesis. This insight can be motivated by the fact that we will implement interviews with respondents not randomly chosen but selected according to their profession, which in this case has been classified as relevant. The selection of respondents has been done with a foundation to reach width in the information base. The selection of the use of qualitative research means that we cannot fully reflect upon the result objectively since we make use of interviews alone and with a limited number of respondents. This is however, according to us, an advantage since we have given the interviews sufficient time to be able to get a better and broader picture of our field of research. During the interviews we have had time to ask several detailed questions as well as attendant questions when necessary. This is an advantage compared to quantitative research, since we hereby can reach a deeper insight towards how to investigate the subject. We can also easier determine what approaches we find more interesting to look into and what parts we find less relevant for this purpose.

2.2 Research design

A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data. The selection of research design reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process. Research methods on the other hand, are the techniques for collecting data (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 40) and will be described more closely further on in this chapter. The research we are about to make will have the attributes of a case study in which we have selected three different cases representative for our research field. When we define these cases as representative we argue that they
are well suited, since these cases consist of three companies which all have experience from different kinds of special collections.

So how can a case study be defined? The most common use of the term associates the case study with a location, for instance a workplace or an organisation (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 62). A case study can be viewed as an investigation that only affects one single or a few cases, which are examined in detail and in numerous dimensions. The research question itself, mostly determines what can be defined as a relative case and by that also a source for analyse and interpretation (Lundahl & Skärvad 1999, p. 187). Multiple-case study designs have become increasingly common in business and management research (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 65).

There is however a research design which better describes our type of case studies. A cross-sectional design involves the collection of data on more than one case and the emphasis is on producing general findings between the cases (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 55). The purpose behind cross-sectional design and the studying of more than one case is to get a variation. In cross-sectional design research, data on the variables of interest are collected almost simultaneously (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 55). In conclusion, cross-sectional research design is regarded as universal in that sense that it is concerned with generating statements that apply regardless of time and place (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 63).

The main advantage with case studies, as a research design, is that the focus on one or several few units, which gives the researcher the opportunity to engage in subtleties and difficulties in complex social situations. The analysis is rather holistic than based on isolated factors (Denscombe 2009, p. 71). It can also be considered as positive that the cases are already existing and do not need to be constructed. This contributes to the conclusion that the research appears to be more natural (Denscombe 2000, p. 53).

The disadvantages brought up when discussing the use of case studies are the risk of lacking credibility when making generalisations out of the results from just a handful cases. The researcher needs to be open about the results and what methods that have been used in order to reach those results (Denscombe 2009, p. 72). However, we do not intend to make any unequivocal conclusions out of the cases we have selected and therefore we do not consider this potential risk as any prohibitive problem.

2.2.1 The cases
As stated in the previous section, the research design we have used in this study is called cross-sectional design. This design incorporates the usage of several cases, with the ambition to make general conclusions between these. For this research we have used information from three companies operating within the fashion retail sector, which we have identified as the foundation for our cases. When first analysing the topic for this research, special collections, we began by listing fashion companies active on the
Swedish market, which have had or will have at least one kind of special collection the last part of years. This list contained around ten different companies. We began by contacting people in charge at these companies and some were more willing than others to contribute with information for our research. Due to both temporal and logistical limitations we let potential respondents know that we were agreeable to have a possible interview over the phone or, if they were short of time, per e-mail. We constructed an interview template, which we sent to the ones who answered affirmative to our request. We had an intention to create as large spread as possible among the companies we were to investigate. We were very pleased to have a company representing the phenomenon with designer collaborations, which Indiska has, and another company which has quite recently tried out the strategy of launching an occasional collection with the ambition to stand out from the ordinary assortment, which is the case for Cubus. Last but not least we were able to get information from Lindex, which has experience from both designer collaborations and occasional collections with no specific designer behind. Just as brought up by Denscombe (2000), we considered it very positive to study cases taken from reality and not methodological constructed. We were also excited to make a detailed study of current examples – all of our chosen companies have launched the investigated special collection during the last couple of months – why we were able to follow the buzz going on about these releases. The current special collections we have investigated are Trend Edition for Cubus, Jade Jagger for Indiska and Affordable Luxury for Lindex.

Indiska was established already in 1901 under the name Indian Exhibition in Stockholm by a woman named Mathilda Hamilton who, after spending several years in Northern India, wanted to introduce this part of the world to her home country Sweden. After Hamilton died, the store was up for sale and another entrepreneur decided to buy it and take on the concept. The name of the store was changed to Indiska Magasinet AB as well as the assortment, which by now also included ornaments and gifts. After travelling to India the new owner Åke Thambert realized the potential of natural materials and began restructuring the range (Indiska 1). The business idea of Indiska for today is to sell a unique mix of fashion and interior, with inspiration from India appealing to many people in different target groups. The company itself identifies the style as Bohemian Modern – a bohemian style always up to date. Today there are a total of 87 Indiska stores, based in Sweden, Norway and Finland (Indiska 2).

The history of Cubus goes back until 1966, when a clothing factory called Jonas Øglænd in Sandnes, Norway, established the idea of the fashion retail chain. In 1996 the headquarters of Cubus were moved from Sandnes to Billigstad outside Oslo. During the same year Cubus opened up its first stores in Poland and Latvia. During the last decade Cubus has been established in Germany, Sweden and Finland. Cubus offers clothes and accessories for women, men and children. The design and purchasing departments are responsible for creating the collections of Cubus (Cubus 1). The leading model of Cubus
is the Swedish supermodel Mini Andén, who has given the company a strong and selling face (Cubus 2).

Lindex was founded in 1954 when the two men Ingemar Boman and Bengt Rosell opened up the lingerie store “Fynd” in Alingsås. Approximately one decade later the store assortment was expanded to also include women’s wear. The same decade, the 60’s, were also the starting point for the expansion of Lindex and the first store opened in Norway. During the 80’s, the assortment was further widened and children’s wear was included, which turned out to be a big hit. The 21st century meant a change for Lindex as the company tried to develop their concept by introducing Fashion Report by Emma Wiklund. An expansion towards Eastern Europe started and in 2007 the Finnish listed company Stockmann became the new owner of Lindex. Today, Lindex has around 430 stores (Lindex 4) and the model fronting their collections is the 31-year-old Estonian super model Carmen Kass (Lindex 5).

2.3 Research method
We have chosen to gather information for our research via qualified interviews (Bryman & Bell 2007, pp 473-474). We chose this research method mostly since it gives us the ability to go deeper into the different cases and also the chance to reach useful information and valuable opinions from persons with experience from the kind of industry we are investigating. Besides doing qualified interviews, we have implemented content analysis in order to reach larger width in our empirical section and analysis. We decided upon these research methods for the possibility of making conclusions out of two separate methods. We had an expectation to distinguish some common features for the special collections among the three cases we selected, from which we could be able to tell what key factors could be defined as essential for a special collection to succeed.

2.3.1 Interviews
Since we have chosen to use qualified research methods we therefore intend to make qualified analysis in the interviews. These kinds of interviews aim to illuminate the interest of the respondent more than the interest of the researcher (Bryman & Bell 2005, p. 361). Qualified interviews are divided into unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The characteristics of unstructured interviews are the fact that they tend to be more vague and resemble more of a dialogue than an interview. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, are prepared in that sense that the researcher has worked out a reasonably clear template for how the interview will be formed and what themes which will be brought up. However, the respondent has a large range of independence for how to outline the answers. The researcher does not have to focus too strictly on the template but is allowed to add and develop the questions during the interview. Primarily though, the questions are asked in their original order (Bryman & Bell 2005, p. 365).
We made the choice to have semi-structured interviews for many reasons. First and foremost we have several specific questions we would like to reach an answer to in order to complete our research and respond our research questions. Furthermore we have not been able to set up a personal meeting for the interviews, due to limited logistical possibilities. This is why we have had two interviews over the phone and two interviews per e-mail. According to Bryman and Bell (2005) having interviews over the phone is a cost efficient as well as timesaving alternative, compared to having a personal meeting. Thus, it can be mentioned that having a personal meeting for an interview may be easier to handle, since the atmosphere is more relaxed and the researcher can add follow-up issues easier when needed. To avoid possible question marks during our interviews we have made sure to prepare the respondents by giving them the individual questions in advance. During the interviews held over the phone we have made sure to be active regarding taking notes, as well as quoting the respondent when something, according to us, remarkably interesting and insightful was being said. This is why we have been able to reproduce these quotes in the empirical section and analysis. As always during qualitative research, there is an issue to claim total reliability and validity, which we will present further on in this chapter. There are advantages and disadvantages with all kinds of interviews and the research methods we have selected have mostly been a question about availability from case to case and the individual respondent.

2.3.2 Selection of respondents

To clarify the selection of the respondents, we have divided the people being interviewed as either practitioners or experts. An expert can be described as a kind of respondent who can share particularly valuable input for a certain industry or organisation. There are experts in most areas and they can be identified through regularly contribution within, for instance, mass media, industry associations through contacts with trade press and above all via other experts. Another kind of respondent, which we have used in our research, is the practitioner. The characteristics of a practitioner in this case are that they have unique knowledge within the area, which is the topic for the research. The practitioners can be employees at a certain company or department, which is of interest for the researcher. Consequently there is more risk involved when interviewing a practitioner than an expert. The information must be carefully valued and controlled, both for the sake of the researcher and the respondent. It is often a necessity to have several practitioners as respondents in a research in order to reach a broader perspective and not only base the results of one person's minds (Lundahl & Skärvad 1999, pp 117-118).

The respondents we have categorised as practitioners are all on a certain position within a company where they have the ability to share certain knowledge, unique for that individual company. The position these respondents have all differ, but what they all have in common is a certain extent of responsibility within their company. At Cubus we have interviewed Ulricha Ivares, Marketing Coordinator Sweden. This interview was
per e-mail. At Indiska we interviewed Sales Manager Lena Kinberg-Södergren over the phone and at Lindex we interviewed the Design and Buying Manager at the ladies department, Pia Ekholm. The interview with Ekholm was per e-mail. A respondent we have classified as an expert within this subject is Helena Mellström, who is Marketing Manager at the Swedish Fashion Council. The reason behind the interview with her was to get a broader input to this field from a person who can speak objectively without any company’s interests in mind. The interview with Mellström was held over the phone.

Helena Mellström is working as Marketing Manager at the Swedish Fashion Council, located in Stockholm. The Swedish Fashion Council works with trend analysis and as an industry forum for the fashion and textile industry. In terms of trend analysis their work deals with fashion, lifestyle, garden, interior design and sport (Mellström 2011). As an industry forum the Swedish Fashion Council handles different projects, works as a PR-agency (Mellström 2011) and puts together a general program for the Swedish Fashion Week in Stockholm. Since 2005 the Swedish Fashion Council also directs Rookies, a forum with the intention to support small fashion companies through different projects and activities (Moderådet). Mellström emphasizes that no research has been performed on the subject of special collections, and that her input is based on her personal thoughts.

Pia Ekholm is working as Design and Buying Manager for ladies department at Lindex and has done so for six months. Ekholm has though been active within the textile and retail industry since 1988 (Ekholm 2011). Lindex is a fashion company that sells clothes for women and children, lingerie and cosmetics. The assortment at Lindex includes basic garments as well as garments with a more fashionable sense (Lindex 3). During the interview with Ekholm we discussed the latest special collection Lindex has launched, Affordable Luxury, but also recent collaborations with stylist Rachel Zoe and designer Narciso Rodriguez.

Lena Kinberg-Södergren is working as Sales Manager at Indiska, a company selling fashion and interior with strong influences from the Indian culture. Lena Kinberg-Södergren has been Sales Manager at Indiska for two and a half years but she has a long history within the company and has earlier on been involved in both marketing and buying (Kinberg-Södergren 2011). Kinberg-Södergren has large insight into the designer collaboration Indiska has done with Jade Jagger.

Ulricha Ivares is working as Marketing Coordinator Sweden at the Norwegian fashion retail chain Cubus, which have an ambition to give their customers clothes with a high fashion rate with high quality to a reasonable price (Cubus 1). Ivares was well informed of the latest occasional collection Cubus has released, Trend Edition.
2.3.3 Content analysis
As mentioned above, we also decided to use content analysis as a research method for gathering information responding to our theoretical viewpoint. As stated earlier, research strategy is divided into qualitative and quantitative strategy and thereby differs in character. This is also the case for content analysis. The purpose with quantitative content analysis is to measure the substance for what is investigated, while qualitative content analysis in a larger sense lets the researcher study language and symbols within the context (Lundahl & Skärvad 1999, p. 135). However, there is still an opportunity for the researcher to quantify the content into categories formulated in advance. Content analysis is in general defined as a research method, but is better described as an approach (Bryman & Bell 2005, p. 213). The content analysis allows the researcher to go deeper into what is being investigated and perhaps even reveal hidden parts of what is communicated (Denscombe 2000, p. 200).

We used qualitative content analysis as a method in our research as a tool for answering our research questions. The source for our content analysis has been the campaigns for the chosen special collections, the cases. In order to examine how Cubus, Indiska and Lindex present their different collections, we studied their homepages and especially the special site made for the unique collection. We studied the site in text and image and in one case even visually in a specific short movie. We aimed to make conclusions out of how we experienced the campaigns as well as how we believed the company wanted to express their visual ideas for the collection. Extra attention was put on the availability, that is, to be able to find information about the collection and also for the items included. We also analysed the feeling achieved when watching the collection and the supporting functions.

2.4 Literature review
For our literature review we have chosen to focus on literature regarding fast fashion, brand extension, brand identity, brand image, brand loyalty, designer collaborations, limited edition, sustainability, different ways of consumption and overconsumption as this literature will help us answer our research questions. The reason behind this choice of literature was that little or none information was to be found on the subject of special collections but also to get a wide overview on the subject. We have searched for information in journal articles and other printed material on the internet as well as in databases connected to Lund University, Gothenburg University and Borås University. The homepages of the fashion companies have also been of great importance when searching for information as well as recommendations from our expert interview.

2.5 Credibility, transferability and dependability
Reliability is regarded with the question whether the results of a study are repeatable. Reliability is particularly at issue in connection to quantitative research, since the quantitative researcher is likely to be concerned with the question of whether a measure
is stable or not. Another, and in many ways the most relevant criterion of research is validity. Within the concept of validity there is a distinction between different kinds of validity, namely internal and external validity. Internal validity is regarded as whether a conclusion that includes a causal relationship between two or more variables holds (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 41). External validity, on the other hand, means whether the results of a study can be generalised beyond the specific research context (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 42).

However, there are ways to incorporate the concept of reliability and validity into qualitative research. For qualitative research, which is the research strategy we will incorporate in this thesis, there are several researchers who propose two primary criteria for assessing a study of this kind of research strategy. These are trustworthiness and authenticity. The theory of trustworthiness is made up of some criteria, whereof we will present three of them below. These concepts are credibility, transferability and dependability (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 411).

### 2.5.1 Credibility

Credibility parallels to internal validity. In qualitative research, with several possible accounts of an aspect, the researcher must consider how acceptable the findings are determined among others. Incorporated within credibility is also the need for ensuring that the research is carried out according to the standards of good practice and also the technique of presenting the findings for the respondents who have contributed with information during the research process (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 411).

We are of the opinion that we can claim credibility, since we have all along the research process kept in mind the standards and norms for thesis work regarded by the Higher Education Administration. The thesis will be published at the national database for essays. Moreover, we will let the respondents we have interviewed inspect the thesis and the findings we have presented in order for them to verify that we have interpreted the information they have shared with us correctly.

### 2.5.2 Transferability

Transferability parallels to external validity. Qualitative studies mostly contain intensive studies of a small group, or of individuals sharing certain characteristics, and the findings being made are therefore naturally harder to replicate in further studies. Qualitative results tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the feature of the topic being studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) mean that whether or not the findings hold in another context or even the same context is an empirical issue. An alternative to claiming replicability is for the researcher to construct a so-called thick description, which is to give detailed information of the culture and the relations being studied (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 413).

However, even if we have implemented a qualitative research we argue that the findings are transferable to another context. In our study we have used three cases, which all
have a somewhat different approach towards the implication of special collections. We have also interviewed an expert for the specific subject, in order to get a more holistic perspective. Culture is though temporary in its nature and trends come and go. The special collections we have studied and the conclusions we have made, out of the content analysis and interviews we have done, are based on current socio-cultural trends we have observed. This being said, we are not completely convinced that the findings we present in this thesis will hold for future special collections within a future around twenty years from now. This insight should however, according to us, not be regarded as an obstacle for the quality within the findings.

2.5.3 Dependability
Dependability parallels to reliability. This implies that in order to ensure that all facts in relation to the research are being correctly declared, the researchers themselves have to be aware of the importance in clarifying all parts of the research process such as problem formulation, selection of research participants, data analysis decisions and so on (Bryman & Bell 2007, p. 414).

We, as researchers, are to an extent also consumers with a large interest in this topic. As consumers, which we will describe more detailed further on in following chapters, it is hard to claim total objectivity since we most of the times have some kind of relation to the brands we are consuming. This may especially refers to the use of content analysis as a research method. The analyses we will make from the content analysis are based on how we experience the campaigns, why complete objectivity is hard to claim. However, even though we, as researchers, have some preconceived opinions about the companies, which are the foundation for the case study, we have not consciously let ourselves be influenced by these opinions. We would like to stress that we have indeed acted in good faith and by stating this we argue that the methodology and the conclusions made in this study have not been influenced by personal beliefs. It is thereby possible to claim that the findings are valid.
3. Theory

In this chapter the theoretical background that will form the substratum for our thesis concerning special collections will be presented. The theory and former research that we will use include subjects concerning companies’ and consumers’ perspectives and the topic of sustainability. The subjects have been structured and organised in a way that we find clear and easy to follow, which mean that the topics concerning companies’ perspectives will come first, starting off with fast fashion and quick response that we believe to be the basis of special collections. Subsequently follows brand extension, brand identity and brand image and brand loyalty. Thereafter, the consumers’ perspectives concerning different ways of consumption; status consumption versus ethical consumption will follow. The theoretical framework will be completed with the topic of sustainability.

3.1 Fast fashion and quick response

The introductorily topic is fast fashion and according to Fernie et al. (2004), fast fashion can be defined as the strategies that are adopted among fashion retailers in order to reflect current and emerging trends quickly and thereby reach customers (Sheridan, Moore, Nobbs 2006). In today’s society, there is a large want and need to constantly update products and frequently launch new products on the market. By acting in this way, the life-cycle for the products is shortened, which is positive for low-priced fashion companies regarding profit. The shortened life-cycle is though, not only seen as positive for the fashion companies but for the customers as well as they are becoming more and more fashion conscious and demanding the latest trends, in other words fast fashion. In addition, customers also have a great desire for low-priced fashion today and fashion retailers therefore have to be flexible and quickly react to market demands (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). According to Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), the fashion clothing life-cycle in the 1980’s consisted of four stages: “introduction and adoption by fashion leaders; growth and increase in public acceptance; mass conformity (maturation); and finally the decline and obsolescence of fashion” (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010 pp 167).

In terms of numbers of fashion seasons there were only two at that time; Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter. Only one decade later though, a shift occurred that, according to Tyler, Heeley and Bhamra (2006), meant a widening of fashion seasons into adding three to five mid-seasons (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). One reason for this shift was due to the changing consumer lifestyle and changing consumer demand (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). Barnes and LeaGreenwood (2006), Hines (2001) and Hoffman (2007) highlights that the fashion companies also began to put a lot more focus on wider product ranges and more updated and trend aware products during this decade (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010).

Hoffman (2007), in Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, indicate that at the same time as the lifecycle is shortened, information about trends is spread a lot faster today leading to more choices for customers and they can continuously shop (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst
Christopher, Lawson and Peck (2004) emphasize that as customer demand changes, a shift can be seen concerning the forecasting process and the planning of products. Christopher, Lawson and Peck go on saying that this shift has resulted in fashion retailers designing replicates of prominent designs seen for example in fashion shows (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010).

Fernie and Azuma (2004) mean that the former extended processes within the fashion industry have necessitated retailers to reduce delivery times, which mean that supply chains have been made more flexible through for example quick response (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). According to Fernie et al. (2004) there is a relation between fast fashion and quick response as they are both depending on one another (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). Quick response, or QR, is another way of looking at shortened delivery times and Birtwistle et al. (2003) argue that QR was first developed in order for fashion retailers and their suppliers to meet rivalry manufacturers entering from abroad (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). According to Christopher (1998), QR systems were developed thanks to information technology and McMichael et al. (2000) define QR as: “[. . .] a consumer driven business strategy of cooperative planning by supply chain partners, to ensure the right goods are in the right place, at the right time, using IT and flexible manufacturing to eliminate inefficiencies from the entire supply chain” (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006 pp 302).

Figure 3 – Quick Response (Adapted from Blackburn and cited in McMichael et al. in Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006).

Figure 3 shows the fundamental factors behind quick response. Christopher (1998) explains that the QR system works by gathering data about customer demand as quickly as possible which then, according to Varley and Rafiq (2004), result in real time information for the orders (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). McMichael et al. (2000)
continues by emphasizing that the right technology can facilitate for fashion companies to acquire immediate information about inventory and therefore, Birtwistle et al. (2003) and Fiorito et al. (1995) add, stepping away from the traditional ways when forecasts and purchase orders constituted the norm (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). Perry and Sohal (2000) point out that at the same time as distribution times are shortened and costs are reduced, deliveries are enhanced leading to greater precision of stock (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). As distribution times are shortened, Birtwistle et al. (2003) mean that consumers will have a greater availability to the clothes and at the same time the fashion companies get a competitive advantage (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). Further, Forza and Vinelli (2000) emphasize that consumers are also effected concerning costs, as reduced distribution costs lead to consumers paying less for the clothes they buy (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006).

3.2 Brand extension

The fashion industry, like most industries, have during the last part of years been characterised by an increasing competition. Due to this, brand managers are constantly searching for new ways to expand their portfolios and at the same time lower the potential risks of new product failure. Brand extension is a common strategy, adapted by many firms, to reach this purpose of introducing products into a completely new category or product class by using the knowledge and concept of an already established brand. However, to make this strategy work, there must be coherence between the parent brand and the extension brand. Consumers must have enough faith in the parent brand in order to accept the extension brand. When a cognitive link is established between the extension brand and the category of the parent brand, the consumers’ attitudes and philosophies that are associated with the product category will then be transferred to the extension brand. At the same time, Martinez and de Chernatony (2004) and Martinez and Pina (2003) argue that low coherence between the parent brand and the extension brand will lead to the dilution of the parent brand (Lau & Phau 2007). Ultimately, the success of a brand extension is determined by the use of brand positioning to achieve perceived fit with the parent brand (Phau & Cheong 2009).

Within the fashion industry there has been a common phenomena the last decade to incorporate the design of a famous designer into a mass brand. These partnerships have been mostly defined as fashion collaboration, which Cooke and Ryan (2000) describe as the range of cooperative activities from short-term reputation support to long-term collaborations on core competencies. The numerous constellations of collaborations may either open up a lucrative new market or create a brand collision between partners. There is however an important distinction between brand extension and the strategy most commonly used within the recent observed fashion collaboration. Brand extension, according to Keller and Aaker (1992), takes place when a brand uses an established brand to enter new markets while, on the other hand, the fashion collaboration between several famous designers such as Karl Lagerfeld and H&M is an example of co-branding (Ahn, Kim & Forney 2010).
According to Ahn, Kim and Forney (2010), there is an immediate comparison between the fashion brand and the non-fashion brand when information is sent out about a co-marketing alliance. There has to be a lot of effort put in the selection of a possible partner in collaboration like this. When searching a partner brand from different product sectors, marketers should consider that usage situation, user identity, and perceived brand equity are very relevant factors in determining the perception of alliance match-up (Ahn, Kim & Forney 2010).

Brand equity can be identified as a measure for brands in order to increase their competitive advantage. A definition of brand equity, according to Aaker (1991), is: “A set of assets such as name awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, and associations that are linked to the brand, its name or symbol, and add, or subtract, value to the product or service being offered” (Aaker 1991). This brand equity can further on be defined as the reason why one brand is chosen instead of another one (Aaker 1991). Thus, teaming up with a partner offering these factors may be the reason for success of the alliance instead of a potential failure. Choosing a strong brand with great equity is essential to securing a successful match-up perception in co-marketing alliance (Ahn, Kim & Forney 2010).

3.3 Brand identity and brand image

Within the concept of brand equity, relies the concept of brand identity. The idea of brand identity includes everything that makes the brand meaningful and unique (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). According to de Chernatony (2002), brand identity is a relevant tool while differentiating the brand and should therefore include moral image, aim and values that together constitute the essence of individuality (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). The identity of the most successful brands covers emotional benefit, which provides the strength to the brand. Identity should help in the development of the relationship between a brand and a consumer, providing a particular benefit. The prism of identity symbolizes the composition of identity (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007).
Figure 4 – The prism of brand identity (J.N. Kapferer, 2003:107 in Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007, p. 72).

The physical appearance of the brand is the core of the brand and its value added. The first step building up a brand is to identify what it is, what it does and how it looks like. The second element of the identity prism is brand personality, which can be described by the way any brand talks about its goods and services. The feature of personality is from an inner source perspective, from the point of view of the company itself, and should not be confused with the image of the consumers’ minds. Foremost, culture is of true importance for brands. Brands are representative of their culture, including communication. The aspect of culture enables to discover differences between other competing brands. The possible success of a brand arises from how the company possess not only personality, but culture. The concept of relationship within brand identity becomes clear when reflecting upon the sphere of services and retail companies. Lots of actions such as the fact how brands influence and provide services in connection to their consumers determine this feature and potential achievement (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). According to Kapferer (2003), customer reflection is often confused with the target market (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). Consumers can easily define what goods of a certain brand are produced for what type of consumers. Consumers use goods of certain brands seeking to create their own identity and brands should control their consumer reflection. The last element of the identity prism is consumer self-image. Consumer self-image is of importance when analysing and understanding the shopping behaviour when consumers purchase goods, which are corresponding to their self-image. All these six elements emphasize brand identity (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007).

As mentioned, brand identity is often confused with brand image. Brand image is well represented in marketing research and studied from two perspectives; companies’ and consumers’. The approach of the perspective of the company is directed towards the improvement of marketing activity while the approach of the perspective of the consumer is based on the consumer’s attitude towards the brand. The conception of brand image is, according to Aaker (2002), how a consumer conceives the brand. To
achieve a strong brand image among the consumers a company needs to have a rich and clear identity, which matches the target market. When there is a large gap between the reputation of a brand and the way the brand identifies itself, the company may very well fail in business (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007).

The figure above is a theoretical model of the relationship between brand identity and brand image. It is based on the notion that brand identity can be managed. When brand identity is conveyed to consumers and efficient strategies of positioning are being made, positive brand image can be reached. This positive brand image can further on be a source for competitive advantage. The process of managing brand identity is, for companies, a recurring process (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007).

### 3.4 Brand loyalty

Kayaman and Arasli (2007) describe brand loyalty as consumers’ preference to buy a particular brand name in a product class, to make more frequent purchases than comparable non-loyal customers, and to be more unlikely to switch to a competitor solely because of price (Phau & Cheong 2009). For brand loyalty to exist, a pattern of repeat purchase must be accompanied by an underlying positive attitude towards the brand. When a brand has existed for a long time it can create an emotional attachment, either by being incorporated into the consumer’s self-image or because it is associated with previous experiences. Characteristics for a brand-loyal consumer are that he or she is actively and sometimes even passionately involved with his or her favourite brand. After a downward trend for brands in general, during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, consumers regained trust for large companies at the end of 1990’s and during the last decade brand names have been very much alive again (Solomon et al. 1999).

### 3.5 Status consumption versus ethical consumption

Status consumption is often connected to the consumption of luxury products. Mason (1981, 1992) opines that individuals often consume luxury products to demonstrate personal status (Phau & Cheong 2009). Status consumption is demonstrated through the act of eye-catching consumption. Companies with sub brands most of the times have an ambition to transfer the perceived status consumers have experienced of the parent
brand to the extended brand. The study of Phau and Cheong (2009) demonstrates that this is the case. According to their investigation of several large brands with extended versions, the product quality and brand image of the sub brand is similar to the parent brand. These insights of the fit between the parent brand and the sub brand allow young status brand loyal consumers to use a sub brand as a substitute for the parent brand.

The importance of status consumption is undisputed (Phau & Cheong 2009). According to Phau and Cheong (2009), the importance of status display even overrides the product involvement in a purchase situation.

Three types of eye-catching consumption goods are described in the figure as follows. These categories of products all aim on offering the opportunity to satisfy social needs. Products, which are used as status symbols are most of the times defined as material items, which may signal a high social status among its possessor. Products with a purpose to express uniqueness are often used in order to be respected and admired and to gain a social identity. Conformity products are normally used as an attempt to fit into an exclusive social group (Gierl & Huettl 2010).

![Figure 6 – A means-end model of conspicuous consumption (Gierl & Huettl 2010, p. 226).](image)

There is also a connection between gaining potential social status and the use of scarcity products. Suppliers obviously presume that scarcity makes a product to appear as more attractive and by then gain status among the user. Scarcity may be a result of limited supply or high demand. Scarcity due to limited supply can be seen in the case of limited edition products, while scarcity due to high demand can be communicated through phrases like ‘sold out’. To possess or consume an expensive product, which only a limited number of people have the capacity to possess, gains a superior level of social status. On the other hand, if an exclusive product is scarce due to high demand, the potential consumer will, if he/she purchases the product, equate himself/herself to a
large number of owners, which naturally does not cause the same superior level of social status. In order to signal uniqueness with scarce products there is also a higher level of uniqueness reached when consuming scarce products due to limited supply than due to high demand. If, for instance, a large retail chain distributes a collection designed by a famous fashion designer, the consumer will gain a higher level of social status if the scarce depends on limited supply than high demand. Therefore, people aiming at higher uniqueness are expected not to purchase items many consumers demand. Being a part of an exclusive social group consuming scarcity products can be a winning concept, if it is the right product for the occasion. The group must approve and appreciate the product it concerns. If people purchase products that are scarce due to high demand, they may have difficulties in signalling conformity to small exclusive groups they aim to join. This is because they would equate themselves with many other groups they do not want to conform to (Gierl & Huettl 2010).

In contrast to status consumption, there is ethical consumption. Today, the fashion industry is focusing more and more on ethical issues and one reason for this is the changing consumer demand, where products made under better working conditions are requested (Goworek 2011). Jobber (2006) has formulated a definition for ethical consumption as follows: “The taking of purchase decisions not only on the basis of personal interests but also on the basis of the interests of society and the environment” (Goworek 2011 p. 75).

Consumers are however confused when it comes to differences among various types of consumption, such as ethical consumption and green consumption. Nevertheless, the interest for ethical consumption has increased and one reason for this can be found due to the negative publicity that some well-known international brands have received, such as Gap and Nike (Goworek 2011). Today, ethics seem to be integrated as part of companies’ marketing strategies and the increasing ethical consumerism can be seen as a cause for ethical clothing’s increasing market share. Thanks to consumers becoming more and more aware of clothing ethics, a shift from the former disposable fashion will probably be seen (Goworek 2011). The definition for ethical fashion by Joergens (2006) is: “Fashionable clothes that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions while not harming the environment or workers, by using biodegradable and organic cotton” (Goworek 2011, p. 75). Nevertheless, not all fashion companies obey to this definition completely but they do still consider themselves as ethical. Many customers make their decisions due to sustainability but at the same time, several customers are not aware of sustainability and its effects on clothes and they keep making decisions caused by economic and personal factors (Goworek 2011).

3.6 Sustainability
Increased consumption is well debated and well known, but even though how much we are aware of the environmental effects consumption has, very little has been done in terms of sustainability for consumption and corporate practice. According to reports
from Worldwatch Institute from 2001-2004, environmental issues such as global warming, greenhouse gas and toxic waste are becoming more serious as well as social problems such as bribery, child labour are increasing. At the same time definitions of sustainability are becoming increasingly sophisticated. The term sustainability has recently become overused (Dobers & Strannegård 2005). Dobers and Strannegård (2005) describe the subject sustainability as an increasingly utopian, yet sophisticated concept.

When discussing the subject of sustainability and ethics on the clothing market it is inevitable to not raise organic cotton as it is a large part of the market. Cotton is a very common raw material when producing organically but the organic cotton production process is the source for environmental problems and stands for eleven percent of the total herbicide consumed. When it comes to sales, organic cotton is increasing but the reason behind is uncertain since it could be just a trend (Goworek 2011). Of course, purchases made can be by reason of sustainability and a survey made by Hustvedt and Dickson’s (2009) showed that many customers were of the opinion that organic cotton gained the wearer health benefits, although this is not proven (Goworek 2011). According to the Swedish government (2005), products should be sustainably designed and the style should attract the consumer to use it for longer periods of time. Further, the Swedish government (2005) suggest that consumers need to forgo buying more and more if they want to think sustainable (Dobers & Strannegård 2005).

3.7 Key points
From the theoretical framework a few key points, important for upcoming chapters, have been highlighted. These key points are fast fashion and quick response, brand extension, brand identity and brand image, brand loyalty, status consumption versus ethical consumption and sustainability. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, each key point can be categorized under one of the three different perspectives; companies’ perspectives, consumer perspectives and sustainability.
4. Empirical section and analysis

In this chapter we will read up on our empirical material and make an analysis upon it from our theoretical framework presented in the former chapter, the content analysis and a few topics that have been selected. These topics are trend awareness and fast fashion, something extraordinary and environmental issues. The answers from our interviews, both practitioners and the expert, have then been categorized from our topics, which have resulted in analysis around special collections.

4.1 Sources for content analysis

We have chosen to analyse the web pages of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex concerning their campaigns of special collections and designer collaborations for our content analysis. Research has been done on both pictures and text and in the case of Indiska, the campaign movie. The pictures that have been analysed can be found as attachments in chapter 8.5-8.7. Below follows a description of the content from the web pages of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex in order for the reader to subsequently be able to easier follow our analysis.

4.1.1 Cubus

Since Cubus only have done two special collections, and both under the name Trend Edition, the latest Trend Edition is what will be our source of information for the content analysis. As a visitor of the homepage of Cubus it can be a bit hard to find information about the special collection as there is no information on the front page. After some searching we are directed to the site of Trend Edition, with a white background, where some of the garments are shown, as well as short information about the collection such as release date and what the characteristics of the collection are. The site has an airy feel to it and the first impression of the colour scheme of the collection is that light red and beige are in focus. The visitor who wants to have a closer look at the garments can click on the headline the collection to be redirected to images of all garments that are included in Trend Edition. On this site every garment is shown individually with prices and size information. Notably is that the clothes are shown with no extra effort to make them look more exclusive and special. For example, there are no special campaign pictures to be seen and the clothes are not shown on a model, but simply shown on the white background, which feels somewhat uninspiring.

4.1.2 Indiska

For the content analysis of Indiska, and its collaboration with Jade Jagger, we have used material available on the homepage of Indiska. When entering the web page the visitor cannot miss the current campaign since there is an immediate question popping up whether or not the visitor wishes to enter the specific campaign site. When clicking yes, the visitor is redirected to the campaign site where the background consists of a blurry picture of Jade Jagger wearing a bright coloured and patterned dress, standing on a terrace in the sun in front of a palm tree. Four headlines are formed as a square around
the main headline in the centre – Jade Jagger for Indiska. The headlines are as followed: Check out the collection, View the lookbook, Get in the mood and Behind the scenes.

The first headline leads us to a part where we can watch pictures of all the items and also see Jade Jagger herself wearing some of the clothes. There are 51 pictures of the clothes and interior decorating taken both outdoors and in a photo studio. The outdoor photos are called Inspiration and the studio photos are called Products. When clicking the next headline, View the lookbook, there is a part of the page with photos of the fashion only, the clothes and some accessories. On these photos there is another model than Jade Jagger showing the pieces and the pictures are more minimalistic and resemble more of photos in a portfolio. Get in the mood is simply a playlist, consisting of ten songs with the ambition to get the listener into the right relaxed mood fitting for the occasion, which can be listened to in Spotify. The last headline, Behind the scenes, leads us to a short movie presenting the collection and Jade Jagger wearing her own designed pieces in a suitable location.

The campaign movie of this designer collaboration is full of energy and vibration. The setting is an exotic location with closeness to the sea and the beach. The observer will follow the action from dawn to dusk and Jade Jagger is the central figure, present in most of the scenes. When the sun rises, Jade Jagger turns up as a breath of freshness in a flowy, full-length flowered dress with her hair loose and a confident look on her face. As the fictitious day moves on, Jade Jagger appears in several looks walking around in the beautiful surroundings, lying on a sun lounger and in the sand. When dusk comes, the moon is shining bright and fireworks can be seen in the sky. As the night gets darker, the relaxed mood from earlier on changes for a second into a more vivacious party mood after which the feeling is back as it was from the start, quiet and more composed.

The impression of the movie is that it certainly gets the attention from the viewer. The music gives the movie the right feeling and all in all the result feels ecstatic and catchy. The movie consists of fast changing cuts and the environment is in focus as much as the clothes. Jade Jagger is in the spotlight but does not take over since she is not visible in all sequences. The emotion brought to the watcher is a lust for travel and experience and while doing that, there is a chance to wear nice looking clothes suitable for both day and night!

4.1.3 Lindex

We have chosen to look at latest collaboration of Lindex with Ewa Larson, called Affordable Luxury, in order to write our content analysis. When entering the web page of Lindex, there is a large picture centred on the page with the American model Melissa Rayder wearing light coloured clothes from the latest collection Affordable Luxury. The headline reads: Affordable Luxury by Ewa Larsson and visitors who wish to see more from the collection are only one click away from getting redirected to the site of Affordable Luxury. By clicking on the campaign image we enter the special site for
Affordable Luxury and four pictures with Melissa Rayder wearing different outfits are shown. The consistent theme of the collection is fashionable, stylish and sober colours such as ink blue and silver grey. All four pictures can be clicked on in order to see a larger image of the outfits.

In the left corner of the site there are two headlines that the visitor can click on, to either See the whole collection or to Read more about Affordable Luxury. When choosing to click on See the whole collection we get redirected to Lindex Shop Online where all garments of the collection are shown, one by one, with prices underneath. The curious visitor who wants to get even more information, concerning for example materials, sizes and washing instructions, can click on the specific garment of interest to find out more. All garments can also be bought online. If we instead choose to enter Read more about Affordable Luxury we get redirected to Fashion Report News on the homepage of Lindex, where we get information about how and where Ewa Larsson got her inspiration for this year's collection. There is also information about some of the outfits, which all should be easy to mix and match.

4.2 Interviews
We have performed interviews with three practitioners; Ulricha Ivares at Cubus, Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska and Pia Ekholm at Lindex, as well as with the expert Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council. After the interviews and our content analysis a few special topics came to mind that seemed of extra importance in order for special collections to succeed in the future, and these are: trend awareness, fast fashion, environmental issues and whether or not the concerned special collections offer something extraordinary for the consumers. All four interviews together with the theoretical framework, content analysis and our chosen topics build up our analysis. As the three special collections investigated were launched this spring and consequently all based on the same underlying trends, comparisons between the companies’ special collections were easier to make.

4.2.1 Trend awareness and fast fashion
In this section we will raise the importance of trend awareness for special collections as well as the topic of fast fashion, as those two subjects were emphasized in our interviews with both practitioners and the expert. Trend awareness and fast fashion are also discussed in our theory. We have looked into trend awareness concerning all of our three cases: Cubus, Indiska and Lindex, and how these companies apply that onto their special collections and what magnitude trend awareness has for the success. Is trend awareness of extra importance for special collections? And what role does fast fashion has in this context?

The expert, Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council, believes that being up to date is of great importance when talking about the driving forces behind special
collections. She is also of the opinion that special collections are here to stay. This spring Lindex launched a special collection together with the designer Ewa Larsson called Affordable Luxury, which Pia Ekholm at Lindex says was a way for Lindex to reach their fashion-conscious female customers. She goes on by stating that by doing a designer collaboration fashion-conscious people can shop affordable and exclusive designs to lower prices. The fact that special collections need to appear exclusive is something that Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska agrees with. Furthermore, Kinberg-Södergren states that:

Hype is easily constructed around products when there is a limited access to them, and people of our time are drawn to the latest. This results in a greater disappointment concerning the products we already have, since we know that something new always will come that is even trendier (Kinberg-Södergren).

Kinberg-Södergren emphasizes though, that to be among the fastest to adapt fashion trends is not as important at Indiska, since they do not try to adapt all trends. Obviously, it is of relevance to keep up with the latest fashion, but Kinberg-Södergren does not consider a high pace as their most significant competitive advantage. Their goal is to follow their vision and to adapt trends that fit into the concept of Indiska; Bohemian Modern. Ulricha Ivares at Cubus share the opinion that people always want the latest trends and that Cubus, as a company, tries to meet their customers’ demand by offering catwalk trends at affordable prices. When it comes to offering what the customers want, Ekholm mentions Lindex and their collaboration with the stylist Rachel Zoe, who often can be seen wearing bohemian clothes, which also was reflected in her choice of styling at Lindex. Ekholm means that the idea behind this collaboration was to compile the best style for each woman to wear at different occasions. Ekholm goes on:

Rachel Zoe is internationally known for her feeling for style and we are happy to be able to offer the same inspiring styling for our customers (Ekholm).

As brought up in the theory chapter, Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) argue that customers of today demand new and updated products designed accordingly to the latest trends, in other words fast fashion. As stated by Fernie et al. (2004), there is a relation between fast fashion and quick response and Birtwistle et al. (2003) mean that by using quick response delivery times are shortened resulting in a greater availability of clothes for the consumers (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). Furthermore, pursuant to Forza and Vinelli (2000), quick response reduces distribution costs, which then lower retail prices for consumers (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006). Thereeto, according to Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), customers have an enormous desire for low-priced fashion. This verifies the statement of Kinberg-Södergren that people tend to always want the latest products, which Ivares also stand by. Ekholm’s announcement, that special collections give customers an opportunity to shop exclusive designs to low prices
can also be connected to the described theory. The fact that fast fashion seems to be a huge part of our time can be connected to that people have become more demanding and trend aware, putting a larger pressure on retailers to always offer the latest trends as fast as possible. Quick response then eases this process and enables for retailers to quickly fill up their stores with all the latest trends.

Tyler, Heeley and Bhamra (2006) discuss fast fashion as they pay attention to the increased number of fashion seasons that exist today (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). According to Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010), the reason behind this increase has its origin in changes concerning consumer lifestyle and consumer demand and Barnes and Lea Greenwood (2006), Hines (2001) and Hoffman (2007) emphasize the ordinariness of trend aware products nowadays (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). Helena Mellström, at the Swedish Fashion Council, verifies the importance of continuous updating and highlights that this especially passes for special collections. As retailers have extended the fashion seasons they can now offer more and more special collections, both occasional collections and designer collaborations, always having the latest trends in store. Fashion-conscious consumers can then find almost every new trend as well as exclusive designs and perpetually update their wardrobes.

Also brought up in the theory chapter is the development for fashion companies to widen the assortment with more product categories. Many fashion retailers today offer a whole lot more kinds of products than a couple of years ago (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). As noticed when doing the content analysis for the campaigns of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex, all three companies have invested in a large range of products for the individual special collection. The collection of Cubus, Trend Edition, includes accessories like a leather bag, which is designed with a higher trend rate than the bags within the regular assortment. Since it is made of leather it is also more expensive than the bags of Cubus normally are. The collaboration Indiska has done with Jade Jagger has resulted in a collection full of different kinds of product categories. When looking through the campaign on the special site the visitor gets to know every little piece of the collection, including accessories like bags, jewellery and scarves but also interior decorating such as porcelain and cushions. Affordable Luxury, the special collection of Lindex, also includes accessories such as jewellery, which are perceived as more exclusive and trendy than the accessories included within the normal assortment.

As people become more and more trend aware, it seems to not only be a need for the right and the latest clothes, but for the right styling as well. The collaboration Lindex did with Rachel Zoe was made possible due to this need, which can be connected to increasing trend awareness. In compliance with what Phau and Cheong (2009) discuss about eye-catching consumption, the collaboration with Rachel Zoe can also be seen as a sort of status consumption. As Rachel Zoe’s own personal style, as well as her styling at Lindex, expresses a bohemian feeling, the customers that look up to Zoe may very well feel as part of a special social group, like the kind of group Gierl and Huettli (2010) are
referring to, if they buy these special selected and styled clothes. Ekholm’s statement, that the reason behind the collaboration had its origin in Lindex wanting to offer what the customers wanted, confirms this theory. To be one step ahead, listening to customers’ wants and needs and fast adapt to customer demand could very well be a winning concept.

During our interviews, it was also brought up that to meet customers’ demand the fashion companies have to be present at the right places and forums, which means to be present where the companies’ customers are. Ekholm assigns, that Lindex as a company, considers social media as positive and that Lindex, as a company works a lot with their own channels, such as their Facebook page. She goes on saying that Lindex wants to be where their customers are (Ekholm).

Like Ekholm, both Ivares at Cubus and Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska, define the development with social media as positive. Kinberg-Södergren argues that social media is a marketing channel as they use in a larger sense than traditional marketing and she says:

Social media is easy and information is spread fast. The fact that it is current is both positive and negative. Information easily disappears as there is always something else coming along (Kinberg-Södergren).

The enthusiasm is further backed up by Helena Mellström, who argues that social media is positive as it strengthens the companies’ position and is also fast moving.

In the theory chapter, Fernie et al. (2004) characterize fast fashion as strategies adopted by fashion retailers to reach customers as fast as possible (Sheridan, Moore, Nobbs 2006). This reflects well on the strategies adopted by the fashion companies, Cubus, Indiska and Lindex, according to our practitioner interviews as well as our expert interview, regarding social media as a marketing channel and a way of reaching their customers. Adopting social media as means of reaching customers can be looked upon as truly living the life of fast fashion and to be cutting edge.

Reviewing the three special collections of our chosen fashion companies, Cubus, Indiska and Lindex, in our content analysis, the feeling is that all three companies have well managed to incorporate a trendy feeling for the clothes and the styling. Christopher (1998) defined quick response as developed from the information society. McMichael et al. (2000) are of the opinion that, due to a consumer driven business companies need to be much more aware of the importance of being cutting edge and thereby offer the customers the right products at the right time (Sheridan, Moore & Nobbs 2006, pp 302). This is most likely the case for all three companies whose campaigns we have investigated. All three respondents during our practitioner interviews seem to pay a lot of attention to the design during these special collections. The idiom is regarded more
seriously and the companies seem conscious to offer products, which are up to date with the latest design shown on the catwalk.

Even though the collection of Indiska is not as trendy as the two other companies’, the clothes are still styled with higher trend awareness than normal. The two special collections by Cubus and Lindex, Trend Edition and Affordable Luxury, are however more trend aware when studying the garments in detail themselves, and not only the styling. In Trend Edition, a lot of colour blocking can be seen and some of the products, notably their leather bag, have similarities to the high fashion brand Céline, which can be a factor for increased popularity. As block colours have had a strong position this spring, which also is a consistently theme in Trend Edition, the collection was right on time and very trend aware. The name itself of the special collection of Cubus, Trend Edition, also signals that this collection truly emphasizes the current trends including design, colours and patterns. For the customers of Cubus it is easy to distinguish this collection from the regular assortment, only by the name, which may very well results in good sales.

As stated by Christopher, Lawson and Peck (2004), when customer demand changes, companies also make changes in their forecasting process of planning products. The same researchers are of the opinion that a faster information flow results in consumers aiming for the design of high-end luxury brands (Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010). Replicating the items of popular designers has therefore turned into a common sight within the fashion industry. Affordable Luxury, on the other hand, went for a more stylish and clean coloured collection, but still with a high sense of trend awareness. As
all three collections were launched at the right time, concerning current trends and customer demand, all three companies seem to be well aware of the importance of timing and speed of acting. With that being said, the special collections of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex are all part of the fast fashion industry.

4.2.2 Something extraordinary

During our interviews with respondents from Cubus, Indiska and Lindex as well as through our dialogue with Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council, we frequently came to discussion about the fact that one of the driving forces for special collections is to offer the customers something out of the ordinary. When doing the content analysis of the campaigns for the current special collections of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex, we have also been able to tell of a desire from the companies’ point of view to let the individual special collection stand out from the regular assortment. Is this how the companies want their consumers to perceive the collection, or are we moving towards a situation where special collections tend to overtake the regular assortment when there are nowadays more and more special collections launched?

All of our three practitioners interviewed are more or less secure that the special collections distributed will not succeed the standard assortment. Pia Ekholm at Lindex answers the question how the development for special collections will appear and whether or not special collections eventually will take over the regular assortment:

No, special collections are meant to be defined as a compliment to our remaining broad assortment (Ekholm).

Even Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska does not for the future see any further development where special collections outrival the normal assortment. However, she predicts a future where customers will demand news in an even higher pace than today.

Special collections will most likely not overtake the permanent assortment. What I believe will be requested, and what will be the reason for companies to win customers, are shorter lead-times (Kinberg-Södergren).

At Cubus, Ulricha Ivares does not at all believe that special collections will in the long run outshine the standard collections.

No, special collections will never take over the ordinary collections. We make our living from the ordinary collections. This special collection\(^1\) is only a spearhead collection (Ivares).

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\(^1\) Trend Edition 2011
Helena Mellström, at the Swedish Fashion Council, does not differ in opinion in the topic. Even though she presumes an evolvement for special collections in general, she still thinks that even in the future there will be a distinction between regular collections and special collections such as designer collaborations and occasional collections. As mentioned in the theory chapter, brand extension is a common way for companies in several industries to stretch their brand into other businesses. But as Phau and Cheong (2009) state, there has to be coherence between the parent brand and the extension brand in order to keep loyal customers as well as to reach a positive reputation. On the other hand, as brought up by Martinez and de Chernatony (2004) and Martinez and Pina (2003), low coherence between the parent brand and the extension brand may damage the parent brand (Phau & Cheong 2009). When considering a designer collaboration, the choice of the designer is of true relevance for the company. As declared by Ahn, Kim and Forney (2010), effort has to be made in the selection of a potential cooperation partner. According to Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska, the selection of designer is very important since a wrong selection may result in very negative marketing for the company.

The concept of having a famous designer collaborating with a fashion retail chain is by Ahn, Kim and Forney (2010) called co-branding and is something that can be very profitable both for the company and for the designer. However, a lack of coherence between the brand and the designer, who the company is collaborating with, may cause a collision and damage the reputation for both parts. The numerous collaborations and brand extensions being made show that there are definitely opportunities for the special collection to exist without overtaking the ordinary assortment. Extending the brand can be very profitable for companies, if they manage to keep the loyal customers even when entering a new industry and thereby tighten that relationship further.

As brought up during our interviews, both with Pia Ekholm at Lindex and Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska, the selection of a potential designer partner is something they consider carefully within the company. Ekholm argues that the selection of a designer for certain collaboration is affected by the aim for the campaign. Spring 2011 is the second time Indiska has launched a designer collaboration with Jade Jagger and Kinberg-Södergren says that they are very happy with the decision of her as a cooperation partner.

Jade Jagger was our first choice and we are very pleased with her. She clearly represented the style of Indiska and from the company’s perspective it was regarded as a bonus that she has a house in India and embodies the bohemian lifestyle (Kinberg-Södergren).

Earlier on, Indiska had made designer collaborations with several Indian designers who were not very known in Sweden. These collaborations did not get that much attention, which was the reason for Indiska to consider having collaboration with a major designer, more familiar among the large mass. The ambition was to reach awareness and
to make it more visible. Indiska watched their competitors and could tell of numerous successful collaborations with famous designers. On the other hand, according to Kinberg-Södergren, it is of importance not to rely too much on a designer only because it is a famous designer and it should not be all about fashion. In this context, the selection of having Jade Jagger must be considered successful for Indiska as well for Jade Jagger herself. Even though she was a familiar face among the Swedes, which represent the majority of the customers of Indiska, she was most famous due to her name and more precisely because of her father, Mick Jagger. Maybe this is still the case but since she has now accomplished a breakthrough as a talented designer, the celebrity of hers has most likely reached new higher levels. According to the interview with Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska, the co-branding has for sure gained even Indiska good publicity. Indiska has, as mentioned in the previous section in this analysis, probably a lower trend rate than Cubus and Indiska. By teaming up with Jade Jagger who is well-know and considered an it-girl, the hype around the products she has designed and perhaps even Indiska as a company in general, will probably increase further on.

Brought up by several researchers and mentioned in the theory chapter, it is the significance of brand identity that applies to the image of the brand among the consumers. As Janonis, Dovalienė and Virvilaitė (2007) emphasizes, the brand must first and foremost be clear of what kind of brand it is, namely the core of the brand. In order to stand out among its competitors, a brand must also be confident about its personality and culture, which they represent through communication. As stated, transparency within the brand identity, and coherence between how the company perceives the brand and how the consumers define it, results in competitive advantages (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). This being said, a special collection designed by a famous designer is not by definition a guarantee for success. If the vision of the designer does not correspond to the vision of the brand, the collection may probably fail, in terms of how consumers experience the relation, and may result in negative publicity for both parts. The importance of brand identity may very well be applied to at the special collections with no famous designer behind, such as the case with Cubus and to some extent even Affordable Luxury at Lindex. Ewa Larsson, who has designed the collection for Lindex, is not that publically known and Lindex does not display her name as clear as Indiska does with designer Jade Jagger. When launching a special collection such as Trend Edition at Cubus, the key values of the ordinary assortment must be transferred to the occasional collection in order to create confidence among the customers for the collection. The same goes for Lindex, whose collection Affordable Luxury aims to offer a higher rate of trend awareness and exclusivity than the regular assortment. Even if the companies want to declare that the individual collections should offer something extraordinary to the customer, this additional extra cannot diverge too much from the normal if they want their customers to understand and embrace the collection.

In relation to this, brand loyalty can be brought up. As stated by Solomon et al. (1999), brand loyalty occurs when there is a pattern of repeat purchase, which is accompanied
by an underlying positive attitude towards the brand. Cubus, Indiska and Lindex probably all have their individual customer base of loyal customers and if these customers shop regularly at one of these companies’ stores, they may most likely shop even the individual special collections. Among the cases we have chosen, Indiska is the retail fashion company, which has existed for the longest period of time and may therefore have more customers with a relation to the brand than for instance Cubus. On the other hand, Cubus, with a shorter history than Indiska and Lindex has perhaps more opportunities to change the minds of some customer, who normally do not shop at Cubus but then get attracted by their special collection Trend Edition.

Brand extension, or in the case of Indiska – co-branding – is seen upon as very positive among our respondents. Pia Ekholm at Lindex says that the underlying reasons behind occasional collections and designer collaborations, such as the Pink Collection designed by famous designer Narciso Rodriguez, are to be able to offer their customers the opportunity to shop an affordable exclusive designer collection. Another driving force Ekholm illuminates for collaborations is the capacity to attract new customers. Ekholm says:

We want to surprise our customers by adding something new beyond our generally broad assortment. Lindex makes fashion for conscious women and by designer collaborations, fashion interested women are able to shop an affordable and exclusive designer collection (Ekholm).

Ulrica Ivares at Cubus mentions the same motives for their special collection Trend Edition. Ivares answers the question what factors were behind the decision to distribute a special collection and says that the purpose was to create a spearhead collection in order to strengthen the brand, to attract another target group and to create publicity. Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska also stresses that the massive news-value a special collection may generate is regarded as positive in terms of brand establishment. On the question whether or not special collections are launched to attract new customers, Kinberg-Södergren answers affirmative and motivates this by saying that a typical design that earlier on has been inaccessible for most people turns into available for the large mass. She believes that the reason behind why so many companies have decided to distribute special collections is simply the fact that it has been noticed that customers enjoy the feeling of being able to purchase something not everyone is capable to purchase. However, she admits that this defined access may cause problems. Kinberg-Södergren clarifies:

The limited edition-function may implicate a problem. The pieces have short longevity. The products within the collections are fun for only a couple of days. From the company’s point of view it is though regarded as positive that we can design and sell products with a certain cut in a certain material and to a higher price than normal. I believe it seems exciting both ways, for
designers to design for a lower price and for fashion retail chains to sell for a higher price (Kinberg-Södergen).

The expert in the context, Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council, shares the opinion why more and more companies nowadays try out the concept with special collections. The main driving forces she identifies are:

To update and to strengthen the brand, to increase the sales and to strengthen the connections with designers (Mellström).

The fact that special collections in most cases seem to aim to stand out from the regular assortment, with the mission to bring an exclusive feeling to the customers, a connection to status consumption can be made. Phau and Cheong (2009) claim, that status consumption is demonstrated through the act of eye-catching consumption. Their study showed that the status of a parent brand could be transferred to a sub-brand, which enables consumers with a lower budget to still achieve status by shopping a cheaper alternative. It can therefore be declared, that a designer collaboration with a designer with a high amount of status is a clever way for consumers to experience a feeling of exclusiveness when shopping clothes designed by someone they normally would not have the opportunity to shop. As Gierl and Huettle (2010) state, shopping scarcity products are closely connected to the accomplishment of status, in those cases when the scarcity depends on limited supply and not on high demand. Many special collections are distributed in a smaller edition than the regular collections, and most of the times the special collections are not spread to all stores, which results in a situation where not everyone is able to buy the items and therefore brings more status to the lucky few who manage to make off with clothes from the collection.

So, as special collections seem to be considered a winning strategy for today, how will the future appear for these phenomena? When asking the respondents at the companies, which our cases contain, how they think special collections will develop, the presumptions differ. Ulricha Ivares at Cubus does not believe we have reached the highest point for special collections yet. When asking if she thinks the number of special collections will increase or decrease in the future, she answers that she thinks that there will be even more special collections and the ones being made will also include a higher rate of creative design. This is in line with the beliefs Pia Ekholm at Lindex has for special collections in the future. Whether or not the number of special collections will increase she answers:

Collaborations with famous people or brands have been going on for a long time and it will most likely continue this way, but perhaps the formation will be renewed (Ekholm).
At Indiska, the opinions differ to some extent. Lena Kinberg-Södergren answers the same question as above, by saying:

The number of special collections may probably decrease. I think we have seen the culmination for special collections. At the same time, it needs to be a replacement to what there is now. The fashion industry is facing several challenges why it is important to not relax and rely on old record. E-commerce is such a kind of challenge. How can we attract customers to the stores when they have the opportunity to shop whatever they might need comfortably sitting at home? Special collections in limited edition are a way for companies to attract customers to the physical stores. Until companies know how to attract customers to the physical stores, there will be special collections (Kinberg-Södergren).

However, according to Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council, the end for special collections is not at all near. She believes that the trend will continue. She mentions the collaboration the fashion retail chain H&M did with the fashion blogger Elin Kling earlier on this year, and illuminates this kind of partnership as a new turn, which also resulted in a lot of publicity even internationally. For the future she sees a possibility with having more collaborations with Swedish designers. The designer Ewa Larsson, who is the designer for the collection Affordable Luxury at Lindex, is not that known in general but within the fashion industry Mellström considers Larsson as a well-known designer.

After a few years of special collections, companies within the fashion sector are now facing the issue of how to come up with innovative ideas for different kinds of collaborations in order to keep the interest from its customers. In a business characterised by its sensitivity for societal trends and economic vulnerability, it is of true relevance to distinguish from the competitors. So how do the companies we have studied in this research handle this dilemma? The strategy for Lindex is, according to Pia Ekholm, to constantly surprise the customers and to challenge and renew the collaboration concept. Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska states that the situation is harder now compared to a couple of years ago. She exemplifies:

It takes more to get through the noise. But as long as the products being made are interesting for the customer and as long as the company can represent the collection, there are good opportunities to succeed (Kinberg-Södergren).

When considering the content analysis of the campaigns for the three special collections we are investigating, the impression from an observer is that the companies truly aim to raise the unique special collection above the regular collections. All three companies have a special site for the individual special collection and Indiska has been
extraordinary ambitious by creating a site where there are several different kinds of photos of the pieces within the collection designed by Jade Jagger. A campaign movie and a specific playlist with suitable songs have also been made just for the occasion. Lindex has chosen to front their campaign for Affordable Luxury with another model than the one they normally use for campaign pictures, which can also be considered as a strategy to let this special collection stand out compared to the ordinary assortment. At the homepage for Cubus it is a little harder to find the special site for their occasional collection Trend Edition but when doing so, the visitor can still tell of a difference in the way that collection is presented compared to the normal collections. The clothes from Trend Edition are perceived as more stylish and more exclusive than the remaining clothes.

4.2.3 Environmental issues

A well-discussed topic within most industries today, is sustainability. The fashion sector is one out of many businesses dealing with issues how to take actions towards a more sustainable environment. Companies within the clothing industry are facing several challenges in order to improve the situation people have created by an overuse of the resources. A common subject for discussion is the giant consumption of water when producing the clothes. Due to the increasing emissions we have also been confronted with a deterioration of the natural world. Dobers and Strannegård (2005) state that, even though reports such as the ones from Worldwatch Institute are truly alarming, a relatively small number of actions are actually being made. This was however declared in 2005 and through our research we have investigated if there have been improvements during the last past seven years.

When asking the respondents at Cubus, Indiska and Lindex we could at least tell of a large awareness for the topic and all three companies seem willing to tell about the work being done within the individual company. The viewpoint, we as researchers, had in advance was that there is a dilemma launching several special collections at the same time as there is an ongoing debate about how hard the nature is damaged by the toxic waste caused by the production of the clothes. Due to this, consumers need to begin consider their individual consumption and rethink how to update the wardrobe with other methods than constant shopping. So the question we raised during our interviews was, whether or not the individual company defined it as a dilemma being able to react fast to the demands of the customers at the same time as sustainability and environmental aspects within the fashion industry is a more common topic for discussion. Pia Ekholm at Lindex informs us thoroughly about the environmental commitment Lindex does and shares the environmental policy Lindex applies to. When being asked how Lindex is dealing with the issue how to combine the work of satisfying the demand of the customers as well making environmental efforts, Ekholm answers:

At Lindex we feel a large commitment for our environment and we have worked with environmental issues for many years. Creating fashion is an
extensive process and we have to assure that this process is taken care of in the sense that it does not compromise with our environment or the people’s health. We aim to offer our customers a world-class fashion experience at the same time as we are working for a more sustainable future (Ekholm).

On the same question, Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska quotes a colleague of hers, whose opinion is that to be able to create sustainable fashion it must be economically sustainable. It is about finding a balance. Through their production, Indiska can tell of positive effects for their suppliers. According to Kinberg-Södergren, there are lots of efforts being made in relation to the size of the company.

Although many customers claim that they demand organic products, very few end up actually purchasing organic goods. From the company’s point of view it is about creating long-lasting relations. From the beginning, no one talked about any Code of Conduct. It was more about doing what the company believed in, but nowadays it is of importance declaring transparency (Kinberg-Södergren).

Ulricha Ivares at Cubus also emphasizes the relevance of working actively with issues like this and states that at Cubus, there is a CSR-manager who works a lot with environmental issues in order to be cutting edge. During our interview with Helena Mellström we discussed several socio-cultural trends people have become more and more familiar with today, due to a broader awareness about the environmental effects. Mellström considers it very positive and important for the retail segment, since broader demand for transparency and organic products forces the clothing companies within the fashion retail sector to slow down and display publically what actions are taken. Examples of actions like these, Mellström mentions first and foremost an overall change in mentality of what companies can contribute with. Code of Conduct is not a new phenomenon but many companies still come back to this document as some kind of verification of what is being done. Mellström has also noticed that several companies seem to be more aware of the origin of the material in order to be more transparent towards the customers. She has also noticed a larger sense of responsibility taken from several companies, which are nowadays paying attention to the whole life-cycle of a garment.

However, Helena Mellström argues, that the companies can stress the topic much more. She mentions examples of possible actions with the purpose to inform the customers of a further sustainable approach towards consumption. This can be to communicate a long-term attitude towards the clothes. Consumers need to be aware of how to take care of the clothes in order to make them more long-lived. If the garment is worn out, the consumer may not need to throw it away immediately. There are for instance several recycling centres as well as charity organisations, which gladly accept clothes from people who no longer have a need for them. According to Mellström, companies must
realise that they have a possibility to change at least some people's minds, only if they enlighten customers of care and washing instructions. Advices Mellström brings up are; to use less laundry detergent and to wash the clothes in lower temperatures.

When reflecting upon the future, Helena Mellström is positive about the development for alternatives to traditional shopping. She truly enjoys the idea with clothes swapping and, according to her, this phenomenon will turn even more common and popular. She believes it may very well be commonly occurring to have Tupperware parties, but for clothes. As a further example she also discusses and encourages the more frequent seen clothing libraries and defines this phenomenon as an exciting movement for the retail industry.

As observed through the report directed by the Swedish government (2005), efforts should be made towards a sustainable design in order to attract consumers to use and keep the purchased products for a longer period of time. There is however an obvious problem convincing the customers to apply a sustainable way of thinking when shopping clothes. Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska brought up this issue when saying that many people seem to consider organic products as essential when shopping, but in the end some other elements, such as price and availability, are identified as more relevant in the purchasing decision process and therefore most consumers still do not shop organically, even though they claim themselves willing to. A potential solution for this, which is presented by the report directed by the Swedish government, is to further raise the argument that purchasing products is not the only solution for a consumer to update the wardrobe (Dobers & Strannegård 2005). Helena Mellström emphasizes the same issues and defines the development as positive when further attention has been created for events like clothes swapping days etc. Probably it needs to be a clarifying around the concept of sustainability. Dobers and Strannegård (2005) state that there is an uncertainty around the conception and people seem to be unaware that the sacrifices needed are in fact not that large, in order to, at least to some extent, contribute to a further sustainable environment. To resign shopping from time to time and purchase more well thought are some quite easily adapted techniques in order for consumers to think more sustainable (Dobers & Strannegård 2005).

Ethical consumption is becoming increasingly popular as a topic for discussion. Goworek (2011) demonstrates that there is today a larger consumer demand for products, which have been made under better conditions. However, if the companies still do not observe any remarkable change in consumers’ minds when purchasing, which Kinberg-Södergren at Indiska discussed during the interview, what can then be done in order to meet this noticed demand in the way that the consumers actually purchase more sustainable goods? Goworek (2011) states that there is an uncertainty around the concept of ethical consumption, which results in a situation where some consumers do not reflect upon the potential negative effects their consumption may cause. For those consumers, a wider awareness of actions towards a sustainable environment may not
come naturally why, for instance companies within the fashion retail industry can play a very important role as informers of how to behave more sustainable when shopping. The examples Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council brought up, such as information about washing and care instructions for a more persistent duration, are easily adapted and may very well change at least some people’s minds towards sustainability.

An example of ethical consumption in the cases we have studied is the special collection Pink Collection, Lindex has launched several times in collaboration with different kinds of designers. The purpose with this designer collaboration is to raise the issue with breast cancer research, why ten percent of the total sales are donated to the Swedish Cancer Society and specifically their recurrent campaign Pink Ribbon, which aims to increase awareness of breast cancer. In October 2010 Lindex launched their yearly Pink Collection in collaboration with the well-known designer Narciso Rodriguez. Pia Ekholm at Lindex is very happy with the results of the collaboration since SEK 7.2 million was donated to the campaign initiated by the Swedish Cancer Society.

This example surely appears very successful for all parts. The Swedish Cancer Society receives a large sum of money, which will be useful within their fight against breast cancer, and Lindex gets a broad positive publicity, since it perceives as a friendly and responsible company. However, this would probably not be the case if it appeared to be a collision between the company initiating the fundraising and the organisation receiving the contribution. As for the case of considering a potential collaboration partner, it is as important or even more important to cooperate with an organisation, whose values the current company can identify with. Janonis, Dovalienė and Virvilaitė (2007) state that a strong brand identity may result in emotional benefit and provide a further strength for the brand. To position the brand with its identity should help in the development of the relationship between a brand and a consumer and provide a benefit (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė 2007). If there would occur a situation when the cooperation organisation acts in some way, which will damage the reputation, it will most likely also damage the reputation of the company, which the organisation is collaborating with.
5. Discussion and conclusions

After presenting the results from the interviews we have made with people with a certain insight into this topic, as well as the opinions of our own from the content analysis, we have analysed the findings out of the theoretical framework in the third chapter. In this chapter we will discuss and highlight particularly relevant conclusions, which have come to our minds along the research process. Finally, we are to answer the research questions, which we formulated in the first chapter.

5.1 Discussion

As declared in the previous chapter, we have by discussing the empirical section analysed it from the perspectives of some specific topics, which we identified as more relevant than others, in order for companies to come up with special collections with a capacity to succeed within the future. These topics are, as mentioned, trend awareness, fast fashion, to offer the customer something extraordinary and to link it with environmental issues. The respondents were all clear about the relevance to enlighten the special collection, as it will be defined as more trend aware than the normal assortment and thereby stand out and offer the customers a shopping experience beyond the standards. All respondents also declared the importance of being cutting edge when it comes to sustainability and ethical consumption and Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion Council, who we have defined as the expert in our research, came up with several advices for companies to bear in mind when transferring the environmental issues the company holds to the consumer.

![Diagram showing key points of discussion.]

Figure 9 – (Own figure).
As we have exemplified all through this research, the technological innovations made, has speeded up the fashion industry in the sense that customers nowadays tend to demand trends as soon as they have spotted them on the Internet. The large amount of interchange over the Internet results in more power for the customers against the fashion companies. Fashion shows from the large fashion designers are streamed online and the latest trends can now be seen everywhere. Due to this, fashion retailers are keen on adapting the latest trends, since they are aware of the importance to be able to offer their customers the latest and hottest looks in order to beat competitors. The customers know what they want and if the brand they normally shop at cannot offer this, the customer will most likely turn to another brand. This being said, the so much wanted brand loyalty may probably erode more and more. When the competition is constantly increasing, the design of the clothes becomes further important. If companies find it hard to keep their customers, it is eagerly important to offer the customers the latest design, which results in increasing consumption and desirable increased revenues for the companies.

This development was responded by all of our respondents and displayed clearly in the campaigns for the individual special collections of Cubus, Indiska and Lindex. Lena Kinberg-Södergren at Lindex pointed out that the fashion industry is facing challenges and the issue to attract the customers to the physical stores is one of these when e-commerce shopping is increasing further more. Kinberg-Södergren described special collections as one way of offering the customers a more exclusive experience when visiting the physical stores, which may not be achieved when shopping online. When doing the content analysis for our chosen cases we can also tell of a large investment the companies have done for their individual special collections. As mentioned, all three companies have come up with a special site for the collection and the items are designed and styled in a way that make them stand out from the regular assortment. The composition of the three collections we have looked into resemble almost more of the ones from high-end luxury designers and not so-called normal collections from fashion retailers.

The fashion industry moves faster as does the information flow. The respondents of the chosen three companies are all aware of the power within social media and the many user options for the tool if it is handled an appropriate way. During the expert interview with Helena Mellström, the same opinion was enlightened. She argued that social media is positive, since it strengthens the position and the fast moving of the company. The practitioners also stressed the fact that social media is a smart alternative to traditional marketing, since it is cheaper and has a larger proliferation rate. By using social media, the information is also spread faster, which is regarded a necessity nowadays and a result of the development of the fashion industry, which aims to reach the customers and produce desirable pieces as soon as possible. Due to this evolution, the earlier traditional distinction between the seasons for Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter is almost gone. When the pace for production and distribution is accelerated, there are
many gaps to fill with more collections and, as a result, special collections have appeared. When retailers can tell of a consumer demand for clothes with a high rate of trend awareness, as well as many fashion designers of today tend to gain status as celebrities, many customers are happy to be able to purchase clothes from a collection with an expressed trendiness or from a designer whose collection they normally cannot afford to purchase.

This is also reflected by the topic illuminated during our interviews, that special collections aim to offer the customers something extraordinary. No one of our respondents, including the expert, believed that special collections were to take over the normal assortment. The special collections should therefore be defined as a complement to the standard collections. These kinds of collections can thereby give the wearer a feeling of uniqueness, which is a feeling many consumers enjoy, as exemplified several times in this research. This purpose from the companies’ point of view, to illuminate the special collections from the rest of the offered assortment, becomes clear when studying the campaigns for Trend Edition, Jade Jagger for Indiska and Affordable Luxury.

As stated, brand extension is a popular strategy nowadays within many industries to stretch and strengthen the brand. Since we during the last couple of years have seen an almost endlessly number of different types of occasional collections and designer collaborations, the conclusion must be that this kind of brand extension has turned out as successful both for the company and for the designer, with whom the company is collaborating with. It is however declared that the selection of a potential cooperation partner should be taken seriously in order to avoid any negative publicity and rumour mill. All three companies seem to truly enjoy the possibilities a special collection can bring, both regarding working closely with a talented and well-regarded designer and to be able to design items in certain material and to prices these kinds of companies normally do not sell their garments for. We have emphasized the importance to have a well-established brand identity within the company, which can be communicated to the customers, who thereby are creating an image of the company. For the future we would like to raise the issue of a potential threat for fashion retailers when more and more high-end luxury brands launch own sub-brands. It has been shown that these kinds of sub-brands generate status the same way as the parent brand does, why sub-brands most of the times attract younger consumers aiming for status but who cannot afford the parent brand.

As presented in the theory chapter, style and appearance is today of much greater matter than ethics. Even if this may still be the case, we have noted during the research process that the matter of sustainability is however very well established within the fashion industry, and a subject such as ethical consumption is gaining in publicity. As we stated in the introduction to this thesis, there are more and more voices heard about what actions can be made in order to suppress overconsumption, which has come to characterise the western society during the last decades. Regarding the fashion industry,
there are now movements to be seen of how to avoid the wear and tear culture, and also alternatives to traditional shopping. We mentioned a newly released book on the Swedish market, which is focusing on these issues and which aims to inspire the readers to take action against overconsumption on individual level. The wardrobe can be refreshed with other means than to shop newly produced clothes!

Earlier on, these issues may have been more reflected upon by people with an already strong interest for the environment and for organic products, but these days, there seems to be more people listening to what can be done for the improvement of our environment. Sustainable issues in connection to the fashion industry have become a trend with many followers. The book by Sofia Hedström, which we have discussed several times, is also a good example of this. Hedström is a respected fashion journalist and is not the character that is typically regarded as a proponent for environmental issues. We believe that if she can show that it is possible to avoid fashion shopping during one year, it may be possible for most of us. When reports like the one from the Swedish Environmental Agency, which shows how much the consumption has increased in Sweden during the last decade, gains large attention and publicity, some people who have not reflected upon these issues before may probably react. A consequence we have seen is the increasing interest for second hand shopping and clothes swapping activities. Helena Mellström, at the Swedish Fashion Council, considered this development as very exciting and presumes that we will see more of this within the future. Mellström also argued that companies in the fashion industry could furthermore act as information sources for their customers, who can receive information of what can be done in order to make an effort towards a more sustainable environment as well as for their clothes to last longer. A result of fast fashion is that clothes have become too cheap in relation to the production costs. The fashion retailers are aware of the influence price has on customers’ purchasing decisions, why they keep their prices low instead of give priority to improve the conditions for a sustainable production. Changes have however been made. Fashion companies seem to be much more aware of the relevance of enlighten CSR-issues and all companies we have come across in this research have been open and very willing to discuss the work which is done for environmental improvements.

Due to an increasing interest for environmental issues within the fashion industry, a concept like ethical consumption has been reflected upon more frequently recently. Further on, the concept can be narrowed down into ethical fashion, which is defined as fashionable clothes made under acceptable labour conditions and often produced in organic materials. To be an ethical consumer can thereby be described as to take purchase decisions on the basis of interests and the environment as well as of personal interests. Due to this increased ethical consumerism, several companies have begun to find ways to take advantage of these movements, by offering their customers collections with an expressed environmental friendly connection. We have exemplified this by mentioning collections from the fashion retail chain H&M, which have come up with a swimwear collection from which ten percent of the sales are donated to the
international aid organisation WaterAid. Another example is the recurring collection Pink Collection, which Lindex has launched several times in collaboration with a designer and from which a tenth is donated to the Swedish Cancer Society’s breast cancer campaign.

With this thesis we have gained knowledge in many fields. As we mentioned in the introduction, there was almost no research to be found on this topic, special collections. Thereby, we built up our analysis on surrounding research areas. The findings we have presented therefore partly fill this observed gap and may generate further research within this area. This thesis can be seen as a theoretical contribution to the study of special collections and overconsumption.

5.1 Conclusions
Through the research we have gained insights about the topic of special collections, which we have presented in the discussion above. The purpose with this thesis was to gain knowledge about special collections and what the future will hold for them. We have in detail studied and discussed the effects of overconsumption and the ongoing trends with sustainability and ethical consumption. The reason for this was to see if there was a connection between the interest for special collections and the rising focus on the wear and tear society, where people in the western part of the world for a long time have lived way over our resources. The question we raised for ourselves was if it is possible from the companies’ point of view to defend the growing number of special collections at the same time as they argue the importance of being cutting edge regarding sustainability issues. Special collections are obviously launched as a way to attract customers to the stores, in these times when an increasing competition is noted, and has during the last years been a fortunate strategy for fashion retailers. However, to us it still appears slightly ambiguous for companies to express a will to improve the situation we are at now, when consumption is constantly increasing, and at the same time encourage customers to shop more, which are the underlying expectations with the special collections.

The translational research question we raised in the introduction was:

What role do special collections have concerning overconsumption?

The respondents who have participated within our research seem to be of the opinion that it is definitely possible to come up with a special collection with the main purpose to generate large sales and at the same time carry a prominent CSR-work. Most likely, the companies we have investigated are aware of the fact that the increased sales these collections result in are not at all a tool for strangling the growing consumption. However, the main purpose with at least the three current special collections we have studied seem to be able to offer their customers something beyond the standard assortment. The collections aim to bring the consumer a feeling of exclusiveness and
uniqueness at the same time as the clothes have a trendier look and design than normal. For the future, the respondents believe we will still have special collections in circulation, but the execution may differ from what we have today. A supposable continuation may, for instance, be to further connect specific parts of the sustainability work with those special collections, which are launched as ethical consumption goods.

As sub questions to the former, we raised the issue how the development concerning special collections will appear in the future, and how the interest for these collections can be maintained if the development will continue in the same pace. When Helena Mellström at the Swedish Fashion is speculating about future changes for special collections, she has a few ideas, which future coming special collections may apply to. First and foremost she guesses we will see more collaborations with Swedish designers ahead, at least on the Swedish market. As mentioned, it is seven years ago since the largest Swedish fashion retail chain H&M launched their first designer collaboration with the designer Karl Lagerfeld, and since then we have seen endlessly examples of similar designer collaborations. When the hype around guest designers has declined, customers become more demanding in their requests. Style and design have also been declared as almost equally important as the designer behind the collections. There are today many talented Swedish designers, who are more famous for their idiom than their personality. These brands are often coveted among many there are still just a few who are able to purchase since the price level is relatively high. Collaboration with a retail chain could therefore be a possible hit for some of these brands, since it would gain publicity for both parts. Cooperation with smaller designers are therefore likely to be a strategy, which we will see more of within the coming years. Another probable development for special collections is to extend the cooperation and the guest designer further, in order for the collection to better fit in with the rest of the assortment. The special collections will presumably still stand out in terms of design and selection of materials, but the connection between the guest designer and the company would appear as more natural.

An issue has also been raised of how the interest for special collections can be maintained when they have increased in frequency like an avalanche. A progress we argue as believable is that they will eventually decrease in number. As we mentioned in the introduction, H&M has launched six separate special collections already this year. It is not odd to wonder if the concept of limited edition, which for long has been closely connected to special collections, will be eroded. The companies themselves intend to enlighten the special collections from the regular assortment, but the question is how this can be done when there are that many special collections being launched? A suggestion is to adapt a limit of having around two special collections per year, one during the Autumn/Winter season and one during Spring/Summer. Another possible development we believe in, in order to increase the potential hype around the special collection, is to reduce the number of pieces each collection should include. Obviously, the customers are excited to be offered items in several product ranges, but the hype
around a product is more easily constructed if there are not that many different kinds to choose from. This being said, we believe that there is a future for special collections, but the scenario we argue as most credible is that there will be some development. It is of true relevance to be able to surprise the customers, and that can only be done if it is something new being launched - something the customers have not seen before and something they demand without knowing it.

To reconnect to the title of this thesis, we have come up with a few instruments, which have been identified as more relevant than others in order for a special collection to succeed. These instruments are almost corresponding to the tradition of what a bride should include into her wedding attire. The first tool, *something old*, can be connected to the importance to link the special collection to the history of the company, which is launching it. The special collection must correspond to what has been for the sake of what is coming. The second line in the saying, *something new*, has been proved truly important in this research. As there is now a time when special collections have existed for a while in many different forms, the companies aiming for creating attention with their collections, something new has to be examined. As shown in this research, special collections tend to adapt trends faster, why the importance of offering something new can be claimed. *Something borrowed*, on the other hand, has not been any of the recommendations we have presented in this thesis. It should however be said, that one of the reasons for the ideas of the collaborations Indiska has made with Jade Jagger came from benchmarking of competitors. The options of collaborating with famous designers can also be seen as a way of borrowing their skills within design. Last but not least, *something green* is our way of implementing the importance of the connection between special collections and sustainability and ethical consumption. For the future to come, this issue will most likely be even more significant. Therefore, we argue for special collections to come to truly emphasize this and launch exciting special collections, which let the customer feel unique and environmental friendly at the same time!
6. Implications for future research

We will now present recommendations for future research that could be performed within the research are of special collections.

Special collections could be researched even more thorough than what we have done in this thesis. For example it could be interesting to investigate more fashion companies than what this thesis allowed us to do concerning time and resources. Another example could be to perform research on fashion companies outside the Swedish market in order to get a more global perspective on the subject. The latter example could be of special interest when comparing if differences can be found in terms of underlying factors for special collections.

Furthermore, research could be done that investigates special collections from another approach than this thesis do, such as from a consumer perspective. For example focus groups could be held and polls could be performed. Approaches like these could create new perspectives on the subject of special collections and by that illustrate other trends and sources for future developments.
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**Figures**

Figure 1 – Flow chart of textile waste in Sweden. (remodeled and own translation)

Figure 2 – Field of research
Own figure.

Figure 3 – Quick Response

Figure 4 – The prism of brand identity

Figure 5 – Theoretical model of brand identity and image relationship

Figure 6 – A means-end model of conspicuous consumption

Figure 7 – Bag, Trend Edition
Figure 8 – Bag, Céline

Figure 9
Own figure.
8. Attachments

Attachment 1: Basis of interview with Pia Ekholm

Interview May 9, 2011. Pia Ekholm, Design and Buying Manager ladies department at Lindex.

1. General information about Lindex
   - What is your role at Lindex and for how long have you been working there?

2. Designer collaborations and special collections
   - What are the driving forces behind your choice of cooperating with famous designers/persons? (Narciso Rodriguez and Emma Wiklund - Pink Collection, Ewa Larsson - Affordable Luxury)

   - What was the reason behind your collaboration with the famous stylist Rachel Zoe where she styles clothes from Lindex assortment?

   - Do you at Lindex discuss the “phenomena” concerning the increasing number of collaborations? And what do you believe is the cause for this?

   - What are the driving forces behind these designer collaborations and special collections?
     o Brand building?
     o Attract new customers?
     o Marketing?

   - What do you think of today’s information society where information about designer collaborations and special collections are spread so fast through different social media?

   - How do you think that customer interest is kept for special collections and designer collaborations as they become more and more common?

   - How do you believe that the development for these special collections and designer collaborations will look in the future?
     o Will they increase/decrease in numbers?
     o Will they take over the ordinary collections?

3. Sustainability and special collections
   - Do you see a dilemma in quickly meeting customers’ demand and at the same time thinking about sustainability? How do you do to both satisfy your customers and work towards a more sustainable society?
1. **General information about Cubus**
   - What is your role at Cubus and for how long have you been working there?

2. **Special collections**
   - What are the driving forces behind your choice of special collections? (Trend Edition)
   - What are the driving forces behind launching special collections as a part of the ordinary assortment?
     - Brand building?
     - Attract new customers?
     - Marketing?
   - Have you at Cubus thought of collaborating with a famous designer?
     - Why/why not?
   - What do you think of today's information society where information about designer collaborations and special collections are spread so fast through different social media?
   - How do you think that customer interest is kept for special collections and designer collaborations as they become more and more common?
   - How do you believe that the development for these special collections will look in the future?
     - Will they increase/decrease in numbers?
     - Will they take over the ordinary collections?
   - Do you at Cubus discuss the “phenomena” concerning the increasing number of collaborations? And what do you believe is the cause for this?

3. **Sustainability and special collections**
   - Do you see a dilemma in quickly meeting customers’ demand and at the same time thinking about sustainability? How do you do to both satisfy your customers and work towards a more sustainable society?
1. General information about Indiska
   - What is your role at Indiska and for how long have you been working there?

2. Designer collaborations
   - What are the driving forces behind your choice of cooperating with a famous designer/person? (Jade Jagger)

   - Do you at Indiska discuss the “phenomena” concerning the increasing number of collaborations? And what do you believe is the cause for this?

   - What are the driving forces behind these designer collaborations?
     - Brand building?
     - Attract new customers?
     - Marketing?

   - What do you think of today’s information society where information about designer collaborations and special collections are spread so fast through different social media?

   - How do you think that customer interest is kept for designer collaborations as they become more and more common?

   - How do you believe that the development for these designer collaborations will look in the future?
     - Will they increase/decrease in numbers?
     - Will they take over the ordinary collections?

3. Sustainability and special collections
   - Do you see a dilemma in quickly meeting customers’ demand and at the same time thinking about sustainability? How do you do to both satisfy your customers and work towards a more sustainable society?
Attachment 4: Basis of interview with Helena Mellström

1. General information about The Swedish Fashion Council
- How does The Swedish Fashion Council work? What is your role?

2. Designer collaborations and special collections
- A lot has been discussed in media about overconsumption and that people tend to shop even more today than a few decades ago. Today many retailers offer fashion for less money and that together with designer collaborations and special collections they attract customers to shop more and more often. What is your opinion about these designer collaborations and special collections?

- What do you think is the driving forces behind these collections?

- What do you think of today’s information society where information about designer collaborations and special collections are spread so fast through different social media?

- Do you think that these special collections are just a hype? And if so, will we see saturation from the customers’ point of view? Or will the development continue in the same pace as it has until now, that is increase in number and pace?

3. Sustainability and special collections
- At the same time as retailers want us to shop more, a lot is spoken about sustainability and many retailers are today launching sustainable and environmentally friendly collections (H&M Waste Collection, H&M Conscious Collection) in order to still sell more. What is your opinion when it comes to meeting customers’ wants and needs at the same time as sustainability is discussed more and more?

- Do you think that clothes swapping will be more common in the future?
Attachment 5: Content analysis – Cubus, Trend Edition

First page of Trend Edition:

The collection of Trend Edition:

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Product pictures:\n\[4, 5, 6:\]

Attachment 6: Content analysis – Indiska, Jade Jagger for Indiska

First page of Indiska:

Check out the collection here:

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http://indiska.com/
http://www.jadejaggerindiska.com/kampanj/
Inspiration pictures^{9,10,11,12,13}: 

^{9} http://www.jadejaggerindiska.com/kampanj/
^{10} Ibid.
^{11} Ibid.
^{12} Ibid.
^{13} Ibid.
Product pictures 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19:

14 http://www.jadejaggerindiska.com/kampanj/
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
Lookbook pictures:

20 http://www.jadejaggerindiska.com/kampanj/
Attachment 7: Content analysis – Lindex, Affordable Luxury by Ewa Larsson

First page of Fashion Report on the web page of Lindex21:

First page of Affordable Luxury22:

Campaign pictures\textsuperscript{23,24,25}:

![Campaign pictures](image)

See the whole collection\textsuperscript{26}:

![See the whole collection](image)

Product pictures\textsuperscript{27,28,29,30,31}:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{23} \url{http://www.lindex.com/se/StartPage/StartPage.aspx?c=affordable_luxury_ewa_larsson}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} \url{http://www.lindex.com/eu/shop/affordable-luxury/}
\end{itemize}
Read more about Affordable Luxury:\n\n32 http://blog.lindex.com/en/cat/ladies/affordable-luxury-ladies/