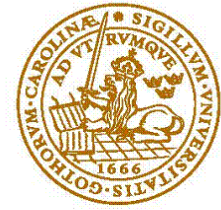


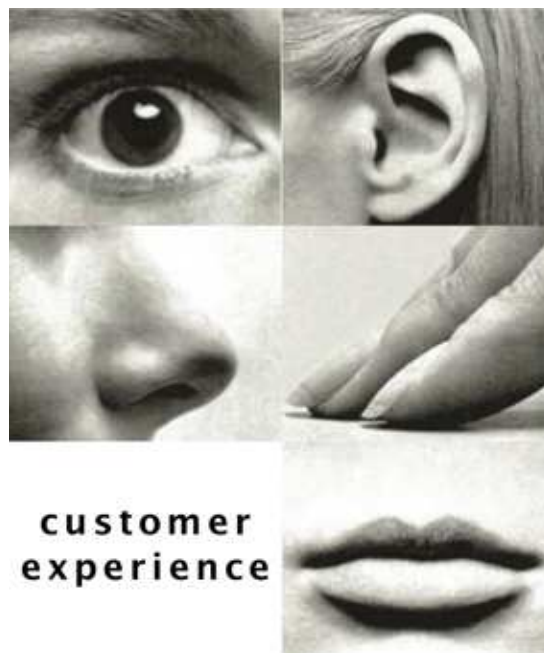
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“Stimulation of our five senses through experiences”

- The role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand



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Abstract

- Title:** *“Stimulation of our five senses through experiences”*
– The role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand.
- Authors:** Emelie Lindblad, Anna Olbers
- Supervisor:** Veronika Tarnovskaya
- Research Question:** What is the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand?
- Research purpose:** The purpose of the research question is to enhance knowledge about the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies to build their brands in a strong experience economy and media buzz.
- Methodology:** Our thesis has been conducted using a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, to strengthen, contradict or add information to the statements from our interview respondents secondary sources were used.
- Conclusions:** Event marketing can be seen as an effective tool building a brand in a retail context since it can enhance brand awareness, brand identity and brand image. This, since it provides experiences stimulating consumers’ five senses adjusted to today’s experience demands of consumers. Event marketing is effective catching consumers’ attention in today’s media noise compared to traditional advertising and it is a forum for relationship building which is of great importance to retail companies in order to maintain their customers and create new ones. Thus, we argue that event marketing should be seen as an integrated marketing tool in retail companies’ retail marketing mix and gain greater focus in the literature as an effective tool for retail companies when building their brand.
- Keywords:** Brand management, retail brands, retail marketing mix, integrated marketing, relationship building, event marketing, experience economy

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Sincerely,

Emelie Lindblad & Anna Olbers, Lund University

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1

Introduction

In this introductory part we will begin to present background facts about event marketing and then proceed by referring to the importance of building a brand for retail companies in today's media noise. Also the importance of integrating experiences in the marketing mix for retail companies is highlighted since we today live in an experience economy. This will lead us to our research problem, gap and further to our purpose and research question of this master thesis. Furthermore, a brief disposition will be outlined as well as the limitations of our thesis.

1.1 Introduction

Today consumers are looking for escaping every-day routines and want to discover something new and different to raise their curiosity. Extraordinary experiences embrace a feeling of such curiosity and it also intensifies actions and emotions (Mossberg 2003:22-23). Individuals seek “high touch” experiences to balance the “high tech” influences that are present in their lives. Events are used as the single most effective marketing tool of providing a “high touch” experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999) mean that organizations thus use events to intensify the experience and gain more attractive and memorable experiences (Goldblatt 2000:3 found in: Allen et al. *Events beyond 2000* & Pine & Gilmore 1999). The authors further mean that “staging experiences is not about entertaining consumers; it's about *engaging* them” (Pine & Gilmore 1999:30). By engaging the five senses such as through an event, companies can create more memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999:59). Thus, planned events have been an established and well-known marketing tool within the sport industry, entertainment industry and tourism industry since the 1990s (Getz 2000:21, Carlsen 2000:76, Derrett 2000:127, Gittelsohn & Kersletter 2000:184 all to be found in Allen et al. *Events beyond 2000*, Morgan et al. 2009:201, Mossberg 2003:35 Lee et al. 1997:159,164, Abbott et al. 2000:106, Close et al. 2006:422).

The event sector has gone through significant developments in terms of increased scope, size and visibility. Today the numbers of events are increasing where planned events have faced a rapid growth as a marketing tool and represent important hallmarks for companies within different industries (Goldblatt 2000:2, Getz 2000:10, 21, Abbott et al. 2000:105 all to be found in: Allen et al. *Events beyond 2000*). The important and interesting question to investigate is

why the demand of event marketing has increased. What has fueled this rapid growth for events as a marketing tool? In the literature this growth is explained by four different sector changes explained below.

The first sector change is brought up by Goldblatt (2000) concerning the aging of the earth's population and therefore there is significantly more to celebrate. An effect of this is that events provide an important forum and host for these celebrations, for example, last decade over seventy million people turned fifty years of age in the United States alone (Goldblatt 2000:3 found in: Allen et al. *Events beyond 2000*). The second noticeable change is the shift towards technology where individuals in developed countries live in a highly virtual world, why they wish to preserve personal interaction through live events. Internet thus may have forged the creation and demand of live face-to-face events. The third shift that may have fuelled and increased the demand for events is the growth in economy and income, more specifically in the leisure sector where live events function as value-added experiences for consumers. The fourth change identified is the fact that individuals in today's stressed society have less time and will therefore make financial and time investments based upon the need for accessibility and convenience. For example vacations are today shorter and includes learning activities such as diving lessons rather than just a pure relaxing vacation. (Goldblatt 2000:3 found in: Allen et. al. *Events beyond 2000* & Mossberg 2003:42, 45).

These four changes: aging, technology, income and time are the major reasons for the dramatically increased trend and demand for events worldwide (Goldblatt 2000:3 to be found in: Allen et al. *Events beyond 2000*). Marketers in general respond to these trends by updating their marketing communication strategies in order to adjust to changing demands (McGoldrick 2002:411,416).

Another important "trend" for marketers to consider is that individuals are not as recipient and influenced of traditional media promotion any longer due to today's media noise; consumers are according to former research exposed to approximately 2000 advertising impressions per day (Pitta 2006:157, Melin 2006:104). Society is connected to communication and people is incorporated in the communication process both willingly and unwillingly (Janonis et. al 2007:70). Organizations therefore need to surprise their customers and at the same time create a buzz around their commercial message to stand out from competitors and to be noticed in the overwhelming "advertising jungle" in our media intense society (Pitta 2006:158). To stand

out in the competition and to increase market share, companies need to show uniqueness and add value to their products and services (Janonis et. al 2007:69, Kapferer 2008:109). The product and services of companies are the core of perceived value, but today products can be relatively easy imitated (Janonis et. al 2007:69, Kapferer 2008:10). Thus companies have to strive for developing other, more complex competitive advantages such as the company's brand. Products are the embodiment of a company's brand and the brand adds emotional value to the product (Melin 2006:126). Therefore the brand has been a crucial resource since the products itself do not longer serve as means of competitive advantage (Janonis et. al 2007:69, Kapferer 2008:10). This has led to that the brand today can be seen as an independent competitive weapon in itself since it is built upon immaterial elements (Melin 2006:70, 10). Consumers' commercial avoidance behavior has thus forced organizations to be more creative in their advertising approach and in planning how to build their brand effectively in the competitive market (Pitta 2006:157, Grönkvist 2000, Melin 2006:104).

To build the brand in today's society companies also have to adjust to recent market trends to reach the consumer. The upcoming and recent trends of today's experience economy influence all industries with some form of customer contact, not only just mentioned industries such as sport, entertainment and tourism industry, which have dominated the academic research to the detriment of other industries (Getz 2000:21). A highly competitive industry, where experiences have become an important marketing tool when building brands, is the retail industry where consumers demand a shopping experience that is built upon theatrical experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 2000). Therefore it is important to integrate innovation and creativity in various marketing activities and creating exciting open-ended experiences (Sköld 2010:11, 20). Pine and Gilmore (1999) define experiences as "events that engages the consumer in a personal way" (Pine and Gilmore 1999:12). That is why event marketing can be considered an effective tool to create experiences and adjust to consumer demand within retailing.

1.2 Problem formulation

Even though event marketing and experiences are used in practice by retail companies in order to build their brand, the retail industry has received modest emphasis in the **academic research** regarding this topic. However, the authors Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Mossberg (2003) acknowledge and emphasize the importance of experience marketing within the retail industry and mean that retail companies find themselves in an experience economy. Focus has

therefore changed from traditional marketing methods to focus on experiences.

In recent years this retail approach has continued (Bäckström & Johansson 2006:417) but event marketing is not, in the academic literature, an obvious integrated component within the promotion part in the retail marketing mix to build a brand (McGoldrick 2002). A retail brand most often is build up in the same way as a manufacturer brand and has an emotional appeal creating value for the consumers. Therefore it is important for retail companies to integrate value-added experiences in their promotional marketing mix, through event marketing, that affect the consumer's five senses and creates an emotional bonding between the retail brand and the consumer (Interviews). The American Marketing association's defines a retail brand as: "A retail brand identifies the goods and services of a retailer and differentiates them from those of competitors" (Keller 2003 see Ailawadi & Keller 2004:332, Aaker 1991:7 see Close et. al 2006:423). There are according to Zentes (2007) and Burt (2010) several typologies of a retail brand. A retail brand can be referred to corporate brands and product brands (Zentes 2007:167 & Burt & Davies 2010:870-871). A corporate brand is a company's intention to carry out what makes their brand meaningful and differentiated (Kapferer 2008:28 and Burt and Davies 2010:871). It incorporates the organizations values, culture, personality and relationships (Burt & Davies 2010:870). Product brands are on the other hand constructions with intangible values to fulfill the needs of clients (Kapferer 2008:28, Burt & Davies 2010:871). In this thesis we will focus on both corporate brands and product brands since there is no distinction between the two when conducting an event and promoting the brand (Interviews). Therefore, we will use the term "brand"/"retail brand" as an umbrella term referring to both corporate brands and product brands. Retail companies are in an ideal position to create experiences, which may involve their own private labels (product brands) or not be tied to a specific product but the store (corporate brand) as a whole (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:338).

In the academic research, as mentioned above, event marketing is not an integrated component in the promotion part of the retail marketing mix (McGoldrick 2002: 235-416). The reason for this might be grounded in the complexity of getting quick measurable results, but also the difficulty of seeing the immediate effect of soft values that can be created around the brand trough an event. Pine and Gilmore (2000) argue that an experiential marketing approach results in retail companies having to offer tailor made solutions to create positive reactions from consumers, add value through experiences and satisfying consumer demands

in order to stand out from competitors. Retail companies play an important role of acting as a source of “experience stage” and a source of creating memories rather than simply providing goods to attract their consumers (Pine & Gilmore 2000:18, 21). Focus has shifted from standardized products and mass production to increased concentration on experiential offerings aimed to appeal individuals on a personal level. Retail brands such as MQ, Ben & Jerry’s and Nestlé Nespresso are examples using these experiential offerings through event marketing in practice and have thus adapted to retail trends and demands (rider.se, Hansen.se). The apparel brand MQ for example conducts events and in-store activities for their club members in order to build loyalty to the brand. For example the last event was arranged 5th of May 2011 in an MQ store in Karlstad, Sweden where MQ provided giveaways and make up artists from Body Shop came to the store and gave customers various make up recommendations (mq.se, mq.se/blog). Another example of a retail event is the ice cream brand Ben & Jerry’s “Summer tour”, conducted at a selection of Swedish summer festivals promoting the Ben & Jerry’s brand as a social responsible brand by selling cheap scoops of ice cream through their ice cream vehicle. This is an activity aiming to create outcomes such as brand loyalty (benjerry.se). Nestlé Nespresso offers sensational experiences using pop-up boutiques within department stores, where at first the boutique could be mistaken for a cosmetics counter, until the aroma of Nestlé Nespresso teases the senses, giving the consumers a chance to experience the brand (eventmarketer.com). This shows that retail marketers, in practice, use a marketing strategy adjusted to the experience economy to build their brand.

Despite well-applied cases of event marketing used by retail companies in practice there is a noticeable absence of academic research specific to the role of event marketing as an integrated marketing tool within the retail marketing mix. Moreover, event marketing and its effect when building brands in a retail context is a quite new and immature research topic. Therefore, by identifying and acting upon mentioned research gap this thesis will help advance and contribute with valuable insights to the yet undeveloped academic research field of event marketing’s role on building retail brands.

1.3 Research Question

- What is the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand?

1.4 Purpose and explanation of concept

The purpose of the above research question is to enhance knowledge about the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies to build their brands in a strong experience economy and media buzz. To study the role of event marketing in this perspective we will concentrate on brand strategic intentions and practical implementations of building a brand. This, in order to emphasise the importance of event marketing as an integrated component within the retail marketing mix for retail companies when building their brand in today's experience economy.

Within the phenomenon of event marketing in our research problem certain important factors has to be pointed out. The term "event marketing" represents both "marketing with events" and "marketing of events" where the former, marketing with events, is connected to sponsorship. Events are frequently connected to various kinds of sponsorships that involve payment for the association with an event's public promotion activity (Sneath et. al 2005:374 & Close et. al 2006: 421). However, this thesis does not comprehend emphasis on sponsored events since these types of events represent elements and levels of non-personal communications through e.g. television advertising and brands sponsoring another entity's event. This one-way communication approach neglects personal face-to-face communications, quick consumer responses and an open dialogue between the promoting company and their consumers (Hartley & Pickton 1999:101).

There are different ways to study the role of event marketing as communication tool for retail companies when building their brands in a strong experience economy and media noise. We will, as mentioned above, investigate this role through two major building blocks; *brand strategy* and *brand implementation*, where the brand strategy will constitute of different brand-building elements and where brand implementation will constitute how these brand-building elements are implemented in the communication process towards consumers.

1.5 Focus and limitations of research purpose

This thesis will not focus on any other brand strategic elements other than; *brand awareness*, *brand identity* and *brand image*; this since these are mentioned as some of the most important major elements when building a brand according to the literature (Melin 2006, Aaker 1996, Kapferer 2008 etc). Furthermore, due to time restriction we will not investigate other brand building activities.

The study holds a proprietor of a brand perspective when discussing brand building and how the brand is communicated in order to affect the consumers and create *brand awareness*, *brand identity* and *brand image*. We will study brand building by looking at established brands only, at some phases of their development within the product lifecycle. This, due to the fact that even established brands have to build their brand continuously in order to affect consumers and be competitive in the current media noise (Melin 2006).

1.6 Thesis outline

In the introduction part (1) we will present our subject to the reader and lead the reader to the communication issues and the adjustments that retail companies are facing in today's experience economy, which further direct the reader to our purpose and research question. The introduction part is followed by a methodology chapter (2) where we present our chosen research subject and how we have proceeded collecting our theoretical and material. The theoretical framework (3) is divided into two different building blocks with different concepts, which also serve as a basis for our analysis, where we will describe strategic brand building in a retail context and the brand implementation through communication. These theoretical blocks will be further analysed on the basis of our empirical material in relation to the purpose and research questions posted in the introduction of the thesis (4). The concluding part of the thesis is initiated by a discussion of our learning outcomes of this paper to finally summarize contributions and reflections as well as suggestions for further research (5).

2

Methodology and research methods

In the following part we will illustrate how we have collected our theoretical and empirical data. Our choice of method is of important impact for the thesis layout and for our research question that we are aiming to answer. In this part we will describe and motivate our choices of method and our fundamental view of how these methods are functioning and finally discuss the reliability, validity and the degree of generalization.

2.1 Choice of literature

To be able to conduct a thoroughly research of event marketing in a retail context we incrementally used the databases LibHub, Google scholar and Ebscohost. Our primary choice was to search for data in the database LibHub to be able to take part of relevant scientific articles about our topic. We used search keywords such as brand management, retail marketing mix, integrated marketing, relationship marketing, experience economy, event marketing etcetera to gain insight and to find accurate trustworthy facts about current academic research applicable to our thesis. The keywords were combined in many different ways in order to assure ourselves that we did not miss out on appropriate scientific articles within our area of interest. In the first stage we studied articles in more general terms to distinguish what the different authors were analysing and what conclusions had been presented, this in order to determine if these articles were of interest to our research topic. In a second stage we made a more thorough review of our collected articles to distinguish that a number of authors repeatedly were mentioned as references in different articles. Thereby it caught our interest to share their original works to get a better insight into their research and also to secure the reliability of the sources (compare Hart, 1998). Again, to do this we used the library catalogues LibHub, Ebscohost and Libris.

In the starting phase of this thesis we were familiar with retail marketing researchers such as Peter McGoldrick (2002) and Steve Burt (2010) as well as brand researchers such as Jean-Noël Kapferer (2008). These researchers each represent specific areas within retail marketing and branding. We were therefore inspired, after we had reviewed their work, to search for other notable researchers with greater insight of marketing within a retail context since this to a large extent represents an important area of interest in our thesis in order to enrich our

research material. Thereby, we observed Lena Mossberg (2003), an eminent professor/researcher at the School of economics at Gothenburg University within the area of marketing and experiences in today's experience economy (Mossberg 2003, hgu.gu.se). Her viewpoint has been influential in this thesis since we found her research interesting and relevant to link to the retail marketing mix and the impact events have as a marketing communication tool in today's society with demands of experiences. The economic researchers Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2000) further emphasize the shopping experience to be based upon "theatre". Additional literature about event marketing, integrated marketing, retail marketing, retail marketing mix, branding and experience economy were searched for through printed sources in order to gain broader insight about these topics. After this additional review of literature we noticed that event marketing could be used as an integrated component and complement to retail companies' marketing mix in order to build their brand in today's experience economy.

2.2 A qualitative research approach

To be able to answer our research question we started off by choosing an appropriate research strategy functioning as a general orientation to conduct and organize the research activity and collection of data (Bryman & Bell 2007:28). A qualitative research approach will represent our major data sources with the support of secondary sources confirming or denying our primary sources.

We chose to conduct a qualitative research since this approach relates to our chosen research question, purpose and the subject of study. Furthermore, we also aimed to collect data in the form of words and social features rather than quantitative numbers and quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell 2007:402 & Easterby-Smith et al 2008:82). Qualitative methods can be argued to be appropriate when aiming to study research questions about how, what and in what ways as in this thesis (Lecture 11-01-14 Marketing research methods, Lund University). Bryman (2002) defines a qualitative research approach to be interpretive where "the primary focus is based upon an understanding of the social reality on the basis of how the participants in a certain environment interpret this reality" (Bryman 2002:249-250). With this definition as point of reference we argued that a qualitative approach best suits our research purpose since we would get the chance, through qualitative interviews, to experience the investigated reality through the eyes of the event agencies and thereby we have an opportunity to gain larger insight of their reality and how they interpret

and approach the phenomenon of event marketing and its role building a retail brand. We also aimed for building a narrative in depth understanding for the strategic and implementing processes, something that we believed could not be perceived through for example quantitative questionnaires with predetermined answers. We thus chose not to use a quantitative research approach since this research strategy tends to be rather artificial and inflexible, not effective in building an understanding process (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:71, 82).

Although, it is important to remember that in the mapping and understanding of the social reality the researcher himself/herself is the most important device in the research (Bryman 2007:412), thereof we understand that a part of subjectivity is inevitable in the interpretation of the social constructed reality.

2.3 Research design

We have chosen to study event marketing in a business to consumer perspective in a retail context through the eyes of different event agencies, which serve retail companies as one of their major clients. We argue that these event agencies can provide us with the expertise regarding event marketing and how it is used serving retail companies for building the brand. This since retail companies today often do not have an employed event manager, event marketing is often something that is outsourced due to lack of knowledge, limited resources, lack of time and contacts (Interviews). Retail companies therefore turn to event agencies for help of conducting events due to expertise within these mentioned areas. The event agencies therefore have a very close connection to their retail clients, cooperating when conducting brand strategies and brand implementation of events. Our chosen event agencies could thus provide us with the necessary information, within both retail and event marketing. Event marketing is a “knowledge gap” for many retail companies, why we did not turn to retail companies directly. In other words, it is not the agencies as such that are in focus of our research. Rather, we consider them experts of strategy- and implementation processes of event marketing, why retail companies turn to these agencies when aiming to build their brand through event marketing.

2.4 Collection of empirical data: a deductive approach

Collection of empirical data is a central key element to consider when conducting a scientific research. According to Jacobsen (2002) the first methodological problem that occurs is how the researcher chooses to collect data in order to secure a strategy that will provide clear

picture of the reality (Jacobsen 2002:43-45). When collecting data it is important to consider the relationship between theory and empirics, in other words how the researcher relates theory and reality to each other. It can take form in different approaches such as inductive, deductive and iterative approach (Patel & Davidson 2003:23 & Bryman & Bell 2007:4, 11, 14).

Our data collection has a deductive research approach where theory guides the research and where we drew conclusions based upon already existing theories, which decide what information to be collected, how we interpret information and finally it also decides how to relate our empirical results to our existing framework of theories (Patel & Davidson 2003:23). Therefore, data was collected through research and reviews of relevant academic literature and scientific articles, mentioned further above. Through these reviews we could visualize and apply relevant theoretical concepts that we thought could be useful to explain why event marketing can be used as an integrated component and complement to retail companies' marketing mix in order to build their brand. That is to say, we could not identify any direct link connecting event marketing with the retail marketing mix in the literature, why we had to find relevant theories to demonstrate the connection. When creating our theoretical framework out of existing literature we built expectations and assumptions about how the reality according to existing theories look like, to then confirm or deny whether those expectations and assumptions are correct or not; this in comparison to the respondents practical constructed reality (Jacobsen 2000:35, 43-44).

When using a deductive design we are aware of some of the issues of this approach; for example the risk of letting already existing theory affect us in a way where theory could inhibit us to explore new discoveries (Patel & Davidson 2003:23-24). We also have to be aware of not jumping to conclusions or let our expectations affect the result.

We did not choose an inductive approach, where theory is an outcome of research, since we did not aim to implicate collected empirical material and findings as new theory. This is often called grounded theory, where the researcher is to discover something that can be shaped and drawn into generalizable inferences out of collected empirics (Patel & Davidson 2003:24 & Bryman & Bell 2007:4, 13-14). Another reason for not choosing an inductive approach is that we consider ourselves to be biased due to the fact that we used theory as point of reference, this would have made it hard to embrace our research phenomenon with an open mind without letting our assumptions influence the conclusions and results. Moreover, nor did an

iterative research approach suit our research purpose since this approach represents a mixture of an inductive and deductive approach weaving back and forth between theory and empirics. We as researchers could by using this approach expose our selves to the risk of unconsciously choose theory based upon previous experiences and formulating a hypothetical theory that excluding other alternative interpretations of collected data important for the research study (Patel & Davidson 2003:24, Bryman & Bell 2007:14).

2.4.1 Philosophical assumptions

When conducting management research, philosophical assumptions help identifying what kind of empirical data that is to be required for the specific research problem and how it can be attained. We are presenting two opposite philosophical positions; social constructionism and epistemological positivism (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:16-17, 22-23). Social constructionism focuses on the way people make sense of the world by sharing their experiences via language and dialogues (Easterby-Smith et al 2008:57-59, Bryman & Bell 2007:22-23), which is what we in this thesis were searching for by using qualitative interviews where we let the respondents speak freely about their experiences and knowledge about event marketing in a retail context. Our purpose of applying this social constructionism approach was to gain an understanding of the respondents' perceptions, views and notions of our research phenomenon event marketing. Our research is not about epistemological positivistic quantifiable and objective data, where the social world already exists externally (Bryman & Bell 2007:16-17). The reason why we did not choose a positivist position in this thesis was because it involves measuring through objective methods such as surveys. This since the aim of this thesis was not to gather facts and then measure how frequently certain patterns occur, which would have been the case using a positive position. Our aim was rather to appreciate different meanings of our respondents' experiences (Easteryby-Smith et. al 2008:57). Easterby-Smith et. al (2008) means that finding this information is best done through conversations between people to create meaning and understanding a reason to choose qualitative interviews as a research method (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:63). Questionnaires and surveys could not provide us with a vivid and thorough picture of the respondent's perceptions of the role of event marketing and its strategic and implementing processes in a retail context, findings that are necessary in order to be able to answer our research question.

2.5 Method of data collection

There are two different ways of collecting qualitative data, either through primary or secondary data collection (Patel & Davidson 2003:64-65, Jacobsen 2002:56-57). This in order to separate between facts and experiences regarding a field of interest (Patel. & Davidson 2003:64-65). In this thesis we will use both primary and secondary data, which will be explained and discussed below.

2.5.1 Primary data

Our collected interview data are our primary data, which refers to information that is collected by us alone through our conducted interviews and that has not been published before (Patel & Davidson 2003:64-65, Jacobsen 2002:57).

2.5.1.1 Presentation of primary sources with event marketing expertise within a retail context

All of our chosen event agencies have clients with established retail brands such as; Ben & Jerry's, Nestlé Nespresso, IKEA, ICA, Gevalia, Carrera, MQ and Ardbeg why we found these agencies to be relevant representatives within our field of study. Additionally, when scanning the event agencies homepages and by talking to our personal contacts at the agencies it became clear that they had long established partnerships to above mentioned retail companies.

Our three different event agencies were chosen with one respondent from each agency, except in one case where two of the respondents represents the same agency but holds different positions, one within strategic planning and one holding a more operative role. This, in order to be able to fulfill our purpose of looking at both the strategic planning process of the brand and the brand implementation practices through event marketing. "Rider Eventmarketing AB", "Hansen Event & Conference AB" and the music event agency "Stenhammar Music Group" were used as essential information sources of the phenomenon of event marketing. We did not focus on the amount of respondents to enrich our material or the size of the agencies, rather we wanted to gain an insight about our event agencies' different expertise and ways of using events within a retail context. This since they all hold different knowledge and experiences within our area of interest and we believe that they can contribute with knowledge of importance to extend the research literature. We argue that it is important to collect different perspectives but also studying the role of event marketing and how it can function in practice as an integrated communication tool within the retail marketing mix to build a retail brand.

A brief introduction of our chosen agencies are presented below; this in order for the reader to gain a larger insight of the background of these chosen agencies. We believe that this information is important knowledge in order to achieve a larger understanding for our empirical foundation.

“Rider Eventmarketing AB” was founded 2001; it is a full-service agency within the area of event marketing with an overall purpose to find and incarnate concepts that creates business advantages through social events. Their clients are most often found within the retail industry. As a full-service agency the company helps their clients with effective communication towards their entire target groups such as own personnel, consumers, resellers and media. The company conducts strategic business plans through flexible thinking and solid experiences within the industry for their consumers in order to reach targeted business goals. Rider Eventmarketing AB works hard with customer satisfaction since the company is well aware of the fact that satisfied consumers are the key to long lasting relationships. The company is divided into four business areas; Rider consumer, Rider corporate, Rider PR and Rider riks. They serve retail clients such as Unilever with the brand Ben & Jerry’s; K-rauta and Beiersdorf’s Nivea (rider.se).

“Hansen Event & Conference AB” is an event marketing agency founded in 1989 under the name “Företagsresor”. The company is owned by 2EGroup AB and the corporate group also includes 2Entertain and Wallmans Nöjen AB. Today the company has 40 employees divided over four offices in Stockholm, Malmö, Göteborg and Växjö. Furthermore, Hansen has three different areas of focus: travel & conference, event marketing and sports & event. The company is one of the leading companies on the Swedish market within events and conference trips (hansen.se). Hansen believes that the key to success is founded in business advantage, competency and inspiration that also represent the guiding principles in Hansen’s work routines (hansen.se). Retail clients that Hansen serves are for example Jysk, MQ and Svensk Handel (hansen.se).

“Stenhammar Music Group” was founded in 2008. The company possesses competent personnel with long time experience from the event- and music industry and claim to have the knowledge and expertise necessary to break through today’s media noise (stenhammarmusicgroup.se). Moreover, the company is divided into four different business

areas; music, promotion, concerts and publishing with partners from e.g. Sony BMG Music Entertainment, Tivoli Gröna Lund and Statoil (stenhammarmusicgroup.se). Partnership between companies is an important area of interest and the company has the knowledge of linking together artists with different companies making it beneficial for both partners. The company state that it is ever more common that retail companies use artists to attract a new target group and examples of cooperation's are retail companies such as ICA working with the music group E.M.D and McDonald's with singer Justin Timberlake (stenhammarmusicgroup.se).

2.6 Qualitative interviews

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk to them?” (Kvale 1997:9). We have chosen to use qualitative semi-structured interviews as our primary investigation tool. This can be motivated by the fact that semi-structured interviews in contrast to quantitative methods such as surveys provide us with the opportunity to enter in to the depths by having the chance to ask follow-up questions by encouraging the interview respondents to elaborate their answers and tell us about the phenomenon more clear and distinct of our chosen research phenomenon event marketing. This is done with respect of ethical correct guidelines and informed approval. The goal with our interviews was to develop the conversations into long, free-spoken/open-hearted and intimate conversations.

Also by collecting natural language data through dialogues we could discover views and perceptions of our respondents since questions could change as new areas could be uncovered which is vital when creating new understandings. This in turn is almost impossible in quantitative methods (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:142-144, Bryman & Bell 2007:421). Through a semi-structured interview we could also observe verbal clues such as facial expressions that could be useful in our interpretations (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:144). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews are the fullest condition of taking part in the mind of human beings and that is essential to attain social knowledge (Bryman & Bell 2007:416-417).

A qualitative interview is a complex method, it can give results of shifting quality and character. The flexibility and openness in qualitative interviews demand high requirements on the interviewer's preparations and competence (Kvale 1997:82).

2.6.1 Thematization

Kvale (1997) means that it is critical to formulate the purpose of a research and describe the subject of the research before focusing on how it is going to be investigated (Kvale 1997: 117). Our empirical material from our semi-structured interviews and secondary sources have been put in relation to existing literature within the research field to clarify already written down knowledge. To embrace our research field we further collected information about our chosen agencies as a complement to learn about their history, strategy and purpose of being, which as a source of information helped us to demonstrate our direction of the research. Further, we created a theoretical framework that systematized useful theories from older and some more recent studies and publications. The theoretical framework came to include two major building blocks which divide our theoretical framework into; brand strategy and brand implementation. These two building blocks each include various theoretical concepts. The brand strategic block represents one concept, *Brand building in a retail context*, consisting of four brand building elements in a retail context; *Brand awareness*, *Brand identity* and *Brand image*. The brand implementation block represents five concepts; *Integrated marketing within a retail context*; *The retail marketing mix*; *Relationship building: creating a brand relationship to the consumer*; *Retail marketing communication in the experience economy* and *Event marketing communication*.

2.6.2 Planning – preparations of the methodological process

After we had come to terms with the subject of our research and our purpose we moved further investigating what kind of methods would be most relevant to use and what analysis techniques that had most bearing in the situation.

2.6.3 The interview guide

The planning stage includes the creation of the interview structure and planning an interview guide (Kvale 1997:85, 122). We put a lot of effort in giving our interview guides the right design and conformation. Our semi-structured interview questions in our interview guides were based upon our theoretical concepts within the two mentioned building blocks and included different parts; *Introductory questions*, *Questions about event marketing and building of brands*, *Event marketing in a retail context* and finally *Wrap up questions* (Kvale 1997:117). Our interview guide questions were formulated using our chosen theories and information from our secondary sources and with our research problem, research purpose and research question in mind. The interview questions were created to find out how event

marketing organically grows into the retail marketing mix and how this implementation would affect the brand strategic elements within the brand strategy building block. This, in order to make sure that we would be able to ask relevant questions and get answers that could be used in our analysis when combining our theory and empirics. We constructed fairly structured questions although with carefulness not making the questions too specific. Moreover, the design of our interview guides consisted of open-ended questions, which allowed a more discussion based dialogue.

Additionally, we used a relatively easy language in our interview guide without too many factual terms (Kvale 1997:123). However, we found it favorable to use some theoretical terms such as brand awareness, brand identity and brand image to let the language of the literature and the language of the respondents correlate. This, since the respondents answers would be put in relation to the theory in the analysis and the usage of the “same language” would ease this process as well as prevent misinterpretations. The interview guide was standardised to a certain degree but somewhat adjusted in accordance to the position of the respondent (see Appendix 1 and 2).

2.6.4 The interviews

Our interview respondents consisted of four experts within the area of event marketing and its role as a communication tool to build a retail brand. Their expertise in brand strategy and brand implementation of event marketing, working with established retail brands were essential when choosing our respondents. This expertise was vital in order for us to get hold of accurate and relevant information helping us answer our research question. We chose our respondents due to personal contacts at two of the three agencies where we were familiar with the agencies philosophy and concept. The third agency was contacted through email since we thought that the agency’s profile would suit our research purpose. Our respondents were:

Johan Theolin, Chief Executive at Rider Eventmarketing AB, Stockholm:

Theolin is the Chief Executive and Sales Manager at the event agency Rider Eventmarketing AB. He has been working with event marketing for thirteen years since 1998 and he founded the agency together with Richard Otto in 2001. Theolin is as the Chief Executive and Sales Manager primarily involved in the strategic phase of their client’s events.

Richard Otto, Selling Project Manager at Rider Eventmarketing AB, Stockholm:

Otto is the co-founder of Rider Eventmarketing AB together with Teholin and he is also the Selling Project Manager at the agency. He has been working with event marketing for twelve years since 1999. Otto has a more operational role at the agency compared to Theolin where he to a larger extent is involved in the implementation phase of their client's events.

Peter Lingmerth Head of B2B at Hansen Event & Conference AB, Stockholm:

Lingmerth is Head of Business-to-Business (B2B) at the agency and has been working with event marketing for approximately eleven years. He has the overall responsibility for the agency's larger event projects and for the business development for their key clients. Lingmerth has been involved in different positions while working at Hansen Event & Conference AB, he has been the Bureau Manager, Strategic Account Manager and Commercial Director.

Marie Andersson Event Manager at Stenhammar Music Group, email interview:

Andersson is the Event Manager at Stenhammar Music Group and has been working with event marketing for two years since 2009. Her main responsibility is to manage the agency's various event projects. She has been working at the agency for two years and has been involved in different event marketing projects in different projects both with music artists and retailers.

Our interviews were conducted at the offices of "Rider Eventmarketing AB" and "Hansen Event & Conference AB". The interview with Andersson was conducted by e-mail since she was not able to meet us direct in person. Therefore, the majority of our respondents where interviewed in their vocational context. A research interview is, according to Kvale (1997), an interpersonal situation where the researcher has to create an atmosphere and impression that makes the respondents comfortable enough to talk freely about their experiences and feelings, which was the aim of our qualitative interview (Kvale 1997:119-120). Moreover, it is important that the researcher has certain qualifications in order to get hold of as much relevant information as possible (Kvale, 1997:138-139). Therefore, we focused on keeping control over the interview situation, openness and having a critical approach to received information during the interviews. In line with Kvale (1997) we provided the respondents with a brief introduction about our research topic both via email and in the interview situation before conducting the actual interview (Kvale 1997:119-120). Intentions of explaining factual terms

used in the interview guide were made but it became clear that our respondents already were familiar with these terms. We finished the interviews by asking our respondents about additional information of relevance that we might have missed, if they had any further questions and if we could contact them regarding complimentary questions. Furthermore, in line with Kvale's (1997) ethical recommendations we informed our respondents about the fact that it is a public report that is going to be publicized. Thus, we made sure to get approval from the respondents' to publish their personal name and company name in the report. The respondents also had to approve of us recording the interviews (Kvale 1997:124-125).

During the interviews with our respondents eight retail companies; Ben & Jerry's, Gevalia, Nestlé Nespresso, IKEA, ICA, Abercrombie & Fitch, Carrera and Ardbeg were discussed and used as examples of established retail companies that utilize event marketing as a communication tool in today's experience economy. Those retail companies, except from Abercrombie & Fitch, are also established clients of our chosen event agencies and constitute the supportive foundation of our secondary sources through for example their official home pages. Abercrombie & Fitch were exemplified due to their strong brand identity and use of experiences to portray this identity in store.

2.6.5 Analysis of transcripts

The reason for recording our interviews was that we had the availability of a word for word source and were interested in hearing how the respondents expressed themselves. The recording was done using a computer. One of us performed the interview and the other one made hand written notes of the respondent's answers, body language, facial expression and gestures in case the technology would fail. Benefits of recording an interview, according to Bryman (2006), are to make the analysis of what has been said easier (Bryman 2006:310). Since we recorded our interviews, we also had to transcribe the recordings of the respondents' answers and the notes of their body language, which we did immediately afterwards since we did not want to lose any important information due to lack of memory. Transcription means to change information from speech to written language and the design varies depending on what it is used for (Kvale 1997:152, 156). Since we deviated somewhat from our interview guide using semi-structured interviews, we chose to transcribe our interviews word for word. This resulted in a greater overview of the questions posed and the answers given. We split the transcription part between us as it is a time consuming task, but afterwards we went through it together to make sure no errors were made. We did not transcribe the e-mail interview with

Andersson since it was already written down and this way we did not affect this interview in any way.

2.6.6 The analysis method

To analyze and interpret our interview material when conducting our analysis we used the "ad-hoc" method where different techniques of analysis are used (Kvale 1997:184). Our interpretations of our empirical material are grounded in our personal understanding based on our social context (Aspers 2007:33-36). Since we were two interpreters of the interview material, one-sided subjectivity could to some degree be avoided but still not fully (Kvale 1997:184). In the initiating phase we sat down and read through our transcriptions to get a general overview of our empirical material. We identified and structured the answers following our different theoretical concepts by colour-highlighting statements in the same colour that we could distinguish to be connected to each other between the different interviews. To get a better overview of the material and to make the continuing analysis easier, we applied concentration of sentences, where long statements were comprehended to more short and concise formulations. However, this was done with caution not to fragment the information and lose the flow in the respondent's stories (Bryman, 2002:387). Our material was then further examined, but this time with continuously notices about important and interesting observations. Some quantification were also done in order to be able to see patterns, such as counting expressions that gave the same or different attitudes towards a phenomenon (Kvale 1997:184-185).

To get a deeper understanding from the interview material we continued the analysis with interpretation of sentences and meanings where we put the answers from the respondents in different contexts. We used the hermeneutic philosophy as point of reference, which means that the researcher has a certain perspective on what is being investigated and interpret the interviews from this perspective. Thus, we tried to read between the lines and go beyond the directly stated to find underlying structure and relations which did not immediately appear in the text (Kvale 1997, ch. 11). After the analysis we made sure we had not misunderstood the respondents answers or analyzed them in the wrong context by going through the transcriptions again and by letting the respondents read through the analysis.

Regarding the use of theory in the analysis we structured the empirical material under our different major theoretical concepts. Furthermore, we used our theory to guide us in our

analysis of the empirical material where we put our theory in relation to our empirical findings to see what empirical findings could be supported by theory or if there were any major differences between theory and empirical statements. We found that most of our empirical findings could be supported by our theoretical concepts.

2.7 Secondary sources

Our secondary data is based upon already documented data that has been gathered, interpreted, put together and published by others. Secondary data is used to either contradict or confirm the primary data (Jacobsen 2002:153, Patel & Davidson 2003:64-65). In this thesis our secondary sources and practical examples consists of conducted events from eight established retail companies, that are collaborating with our chosen event agencies, except from the apparel retailer Abercrombie & Fitch. That is to say, these retail companies work with brand strategy and brand implementation of event marketing in today's experience economy, they are presented as follow; the Swedish coffee maker Gevalia, the ice cream company Ben & Jerry's, the Swedish furniture company IKEA, the coffee maker Nestlé Nespresso, the whiskey company Ardbeg, retail stores of ICA and the sunglasses brand Carrera. We have analyzed these retail companies homepages, press releases, blogs, YouTube.se, Facebook.com and other web pages connected to mentioned retail companies from the interviews.

Our secondary data functions as a crucial source providing us with additional facts utilized to provide the reader with enriched information about how retail companies can use event marketing to build the brand, supporting or denying our primary data. The secondary sources have also been used to confirm, contradict or add information to the statements from our primary sources. Furthermore, secondary data are used with the intention to enhance the reliability of the interview respondents' statements.

2.8 Verification- the quality, ethics and criticism of our method

Throughout our method we have had a critical perspective since qualitative methods, as any other method for that matter, have received some criticism regarding its quality. This is partly explained by the view that qualitative methods include subjective understandings of the participants' external world not aiming to symbolize an objective reality (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:97,167).

Within the quantitative and positivist tradition the terms validity, reliability and generalizations are used to assess the quality of the research. The qualitative researchers have however discussed how relevant these “metrics” of quality are within the qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln 1994 see Bryman 2002:258). The reason for this is that these measures carry associations of measurement, which is a characteristic of a quantitative research and assume that there are absolute truths about the social world. In a qualitative research us as researchers should rather consider the result of a research as one of several interpretations of reality and instead discuss whether the actual interpretations are trustworthy and genuine (Guba & Lincoln 1994 see Bryman 2002:258). The reliability and validity in a qualitative research provides an alternative to quantitative reliability and validity, which are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness can according to, Bryman (2007), be provided through credibility, dependability and conformability (Bryman 2007:410).

Credibility means that the research is carried out using good practise and also by submitting the research to the respondents in order to confirm that their social world has been interpreted correctly (Bryman & Bell 2007:411). Moreover, the social world in which the research has been taking place should be truly reflected in the research (Bryman 2002:258). We put a lot of effort in giving the interview method a methodological well-controlled design and conducted it according to the general rules that can be found in the literature. We tried to learn as much as possible about the companies in beforehand as part of our pre-study by studying our chosen event agencies homepages to obtain trust in the interview situation. Besides we presented the research in a beneficial way because if the interview respondents see no relevance or value in the research the information generated can be distorted or exaggerated (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:147-148, Bryman & Bell 2007:30). Our credibility in this thesis is further strengthened by the fact that our respondents will read the thesis before publication in order to see if we have interpreted their reality correctly. This is called respondent validation (Bryman 2002:258).

Dependability has to do with ensuring that complete records are kept of all different phases of the thesis (Bryman & Bell 2007:414) We have further strived for this transparency by making our interview guides and transcriptions available and easy accessible to get the reader the possibility to understand the conversations and impressions that have formed our interpretations. We have also tried to create dependability in our results trying to reproduce as

much of the information as possible in how the research has been planned and conducted in the different phases of the process.

Conformability entails the assurance of complete objectivity, something that is almost impossible in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell 2007:414). Factors such as our presence in the interview situation, as well as leading questions may have affected the answers given by our chosen respondents, especially when talking about such broad phenomenon as event marketing. Therefore, we needed to consider reflexivity and our role and affect on the research process and project from our own beliefs, feelings, values and opinions (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:147-148, Bryman & Bell 2007:30). As already mentioned a certain control can be discerned in a qualitative research by having two or more people interpreting the interview, which affects the subjectivity in an analysis. This has been done throughout the process, especially regarding interpretation of the deeper meaning of our respondents' answers. In certain difficult situations when interpreting the answers we have discussed our interpretations in order to reach agreement and unity, in other words, to avoid distorted interpretations (Kvale 1997:257).

A critique aimed at qualitative interviews is furthermore that they cannot be generalized from the results of interviews, especially when the selection of respondents is limited (Bryman 2002:270). Positivist researchers also criticize qualitative methods since the amount of data collected makes the researcher able to interpret too freely (Easterby-Smith et. al 2008:97, Bryman & Bell 2007:63). We want to state that our findings cannot be replicated as such to all retail companies due to limited amount of interview respondents and secondary sources. Our chosen event agencies can only provide us with certain insights of expertise, their strategic and practical work and different signals of general trends within our research topic. We keep in mind that the provided information through our interviews and secondary sources are limited and that the parties are only highlighting positive cases of how event marketing has been conducted with help of their expertise. However, we did not aim to generalize or to find absolute truths about the phenomenon of event marketing's role as a communication tool to build a retail brand. However, we aim to generate insights about this topic that could be relevant for present discourses and research within the field of the topic in an academic perspective. We also aim to point at perspectives and issues that may be important to take into account as a retail company when considering event marketing as a marketing tool.

3

Theoretical framework

In this part we aim to present our two major theoretical building blocks. In the first building block we will look at brand strategy, in this case how retail companies build their brand through brand awareness, brand identity and brand image. In the second building block implementation, we will look at how these strategic brand-building elements are implemented in retail companies through communication in today's experience economy. We will consider the importance of integrated marketing, which in retailing is reflected through the retail marketing mix. We will continue presenting the retail marketing mix to show how the mentioned strategic building block can be promoted within retail where relationship building is an important component in today's media noise. Further, we will emphasise experiences in a retail context to adjust to current consumer experience demands and trends. Finally we intend to lead the reader into event marketing as a marketing tool fulfilling mentioned demands and trends.

1st Building block: Brand strategy

A brand can be described as: "A brand is a name and/or symbol (a design, a trademark, a logo) used to unequally identify the goods or services of a seller from those of its competitors" (Tollington 1998:180). With this definition as point of reference Melin (2006) argues that products within the same category can fill the basic needs of consumers, but for the product to be unique it has to be represented by the added value of a brand (Melin 2006:78), which will be discussed further below. In today's society, a brand is said to be a company's most important asset as it is the basis for competitive advantage, generating profitability (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:331, Calderón et. al 1997:294).

3.1 Brand building in a retail context

For the highly competitive retail industry, with products that can easily be imitated, the brand has become an important independent competitive weapon, whereas before the 1990's it most often only served as a product attribute (Melin 2006). For decades the concept of branding has been used almost only within consumer goods, but it is now, with all its right, starting to be a subject of discussion for retail companies as well (Alexander and Colgate 2005, Burt and Sparks 2002, Davies 1992, Dennis et al. 2002, Wileman and Jary 1997 see Zentes et. al

2007:167). Building the brand is an essential strategic task for retail companies, since it can generate several different benefits such as deliver the brand name by having own private label brands and protect them from competitors (Pappu & Quester 2006:4).

Retail companies today find themselves within an experience economy with changing consumer demands and at the same time they are exposed to great competition when trying to break through the media noise (Mossberg 2003, Pappu & Quester 2006:4). Consequently, building the brand has become ever more important for retail companies in order to sustain and increase their profitability. According to Pappu and Quester (2006) retail companies have recognized the power of branding and are increasingly focusing on brand building (Feuer, 2005 see Pappu & Quester 2006:4). Retail companies can build and strengthen their brand by applying general brand building elements such as; *brand awareness*, *brand identity* and *brand image*, mentioned by Melin (2006) Burt & Davies (2010) as some of the most important brand building elements. Therefore Ailawadi & Keller (2004), Burt & Davies (2010) and Pappu & Quester (2006) emphasize that these general branding elements should be integrated and applied into the research of retail brands, in our thesis referred to as; own private labels (product brands) or the store (corporate brand), as a way for retail companies to stand out in the increasing competition (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:338, 340 and Burt & Davies 2010:870, Pappu & Quester 2006).

For the brand to be a competitive weapon it has to be able to add value to the consumers and the company behind the brand itself (Melin 2006:206). Building a brand can therefore be resembled with a value creating process in the mind of consumers. The products and services are the core of perceived value, but they are the embodiment of a brand (Kapferer 2008:10). The brand is therefore an element that gives the product added value, which is referred to as brand value. Brand value is defined as: “The value of the additional cash-flows generated by a product because it is identified with its brand” (Doyle 1995 see Calderón et. al 1997:294). Building the brand to create this value is a strategic process of different brand building elements with the overall goal of creating loyal customers as a final outcome (Melin 2006:206). As stated above researchers argue that these brand-building elements should be integrated when building a retail brand as well, why they are presented below.

Brand awareness

Brands create value for the company the same way they do for consumers, by reducing risk.

Brands entail financial value since they have created assets in the minds of consumers, competitors and distributors. These so called assets in the consumers mind are called *brand awareness*, which includes an emotional bonding to the brand (Kapferer 2008:23). Brand awareness is obvious when the consumers have noticed and recognizes the brand and what it stands for (Melin 2006:119). Brand awareness further aims to associate a certain brand with a certain type of product, which in retailing can be; own private labels (product brands), or the store (corporate brand) (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:331, Burt & Davies 2010:870). This creates a security for the consumer and eases the consumer choice of products, store or company (Aaker, 1996, Melin 2006:119). Building and increasing brand awareness in retailing is most often created through various media advertisements, exposure to the retail brand in a store or usage of the brand by the consumer (Park & Stoel 2005:150).

In retailing, if consumers are familiar with a retail brand it influences their intention to purchase that retail brand due to a stronger confidence in the brand (Laroche et. al 1996 see Park & Stoel 2005:151). Pappu et. al (2006) applies the general brand awareness concept to retail and mean that, in conformity with another brand, retail brand awareness is present when a consumer has the ability to recognize and remember a retail brand (Pappu et. al 2006:6). This remembrance and recognition of a retail brand is often based on the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the retailer. That is to say, both satisfied and dissatisfied consumers create strong associations in their mind towards the retail company or brand. Pappu et. al (2006) thus mean that there is a strong relation between customer satisfaction and brand awareness (Pappu et. al 2006:6).

Furthermore, brand awareness and familiarity is crucial, since it creates brand reputation, which adds to the impact of marketing and sales (Kapferer 2008:26). For retail companies, this reputation is build, as mentioned above, when consumers interact and engage with the retail company or the brand it self (Burt & Davies 2010:869). Brand awareness and a good reputation of the brand thus create attractiveness and long-term demand (Kapferer 2008:23-24). If retail brands have strong awareness and recognition it influences buyers' impressions of retail image, which will be discussed further down (Claycomb & Porter 1997:373).

Brand identity

When consumers recognize a brand the next step for the company is to create associations to the brand built on the *brand's identity*, strategically reflecting what the brand stands for and what makes it unique (Melin, 2006:126, Aaker 1996:70). These associations entail functional and symbolic brand identity associations or benefits (Kressmann et al. 2006, Mittal, Ratchford & Prabhakar 1990 see Zentes et. al 2007:168). Functional brand associations include the utilitarian value of the brand such as its problem-solving capacity and have direct links to consumers' decisions and usage experience (Helgeson and Supphellen 2004 see Zentes et. al 2007:168, Aaker 1996:96). Brands also have symbolic associations, which add meaning to the consumers' life through their consumption of the brand (Aaker, Benet-Martí'nez and Garolera 2001, see Zentes et. al 2007:168). The reason for the strong impact of brand identity is because of the fact that the differences between products in a given category tend to be smaller. This because of the mentioned relatively easy product attribute imitation, which means that companies have to develop other competitive advantages such as brand identity, which will persist over time (Melin 2006:126, Aaker 1996:70).

It is necessary to get the consumer to associate a specific but also a correct brand identity with the company since it connects the brand with the target group (Roy & Cornwell 2003). All brands irrespectively if they are product brands or corporate brands they have an identity that needs to be delivered to the customers and other stakeholders (Kapferer 2008:28). Brand identity is an important factor for retail companies in today's competitive market where retail companies must appeal to many different consumer segments. These consumers apply identity not only to other people, but also to companies and brands, where personification of the brand or company is used as a metaphor (Davies et al. 2001 see Wesley et. al 1998:168). Choosing a certain retail brand with a certain brand identity is thus often based on consumers' own identity. The personality of the consumer, reflect where they shop, where shopping a certain brand with a specific identity is used by consumers as self expression. Moreover, when consumers decide to purchase a certain retail brand or shop in a certain retail store instead of another, the decision-making process is based on how the consumers' identity matches the retail brand's identity (Wesley et. al 1998:68). A retail company thus tries to learn about their target group so they can hold an identity consistent with what it has promised and one that matches the personality of their target group (Wesley et. al 1998:169). Obviously, retail brand identity becomes a reflection of how a consumer wants to be perceived and thus the brand identity has to be in accordance with the consumers self image (Wesley et. al

1998:169). To build a strong brand identity, it is of crucial importance to accomplish strong links between the brand and the buyer (Kapferer, 1997 see Wesley et. al 1998:170). Brand identity characteristics thus personify the retailer, which makes them attractive or unattractive to consumers (Wesley et. al 1998:170). Retail brand identity therefore serves as an influencer on customer perceptions, store patronage and loyalty (Ailawadi & Keller, 2004:331 and Burt & Davies 2010:870). According to Kapferer (1986), brand identity can thus be used by retail companies to differentiate themselves from competitors where the retail product and also the store in some ways can be comparatively easy copied and imitated (Kapferer 1986 see Burt & Davies 2010:870, Burt & Davies 2010:872). Consequently, companies must find a possibility to show and demonstrate the retail brand's identity to its consumers in a clearer way than through traditional advertising (Gwinner 1997).

Brand image

Brand image is the counterpart term of brand identity (Melin 2006:85). The congruence of the identity of the brand that the company aims to send out and the image that the consumers receive in their minds, are of crucial importance to all companies (Janonis et. al 2007:69). This since the image and added value of the brand in turn generates value to the consumer, enhance their buying power, their willingness to pay more and not change between brands. Grönroos (2002) means that the consumers' appreciation for a brand, its image, works as a filter which decreases or strengthens the consumer's experience of the product or offer associated with the brand. An image is created by the consumer's earlier experiences with the brand, the company's communication; marketing and word of mouth (Grönroos 2002:190, 317-318, 325-327). Thus, brand image provide a basis for differentiation and positioning of a product (Claycomb & Porter 1997:374).

Retail companies can for example create brand image by advertising their own products or creating brand value in their own stores and transfer this image to their physical products (Davies 1998, 140). However, retail companies often need to invest in advertising through different media and other types of external communication to reach out to consumers and to create a brand image. This since the retail companies' brand image often is created within its own stores by for example staff and design (Davies 1998:144). In retailing, researchers have emphasized store image as one of the most important decision making elements of retail patronage and purchase behaviours (Erdem et. al 1999:139. This is coherent with researchers who have conceptualised store image to entail store attributes, thus with a connection between

store attribute, image formation, and store patronage (Erdem et. al 1999:139, Claycomb & Porter 1997:373). That is to say, brand image and retail image are inextricably linked to one another (Claycomb & Porter 1997:373).

2nd Building block: Brand implementation

In the strongly competitive market of today it is very difficult to remain successful and establish and uphold the company's brand identity in retail and other industries (Janonis et. al 2007:70). There is also too much choice and too little time for customers to compare different brands. The brand awareness is thus crucial and the trust of the brands unique benefits (Kapferer 2008:9). However, it is not often the brand itself that can provide this, but the managing of the brand and how it is communicated reflecting the brand's identity (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:331 and Calderón et. al 1997:294). All brands need to communicate with consumers to stay put in the market where identity helps to develop a relation between the brand and consumer to position and build the brand (Janonis et. al 2007:70). The communication also aims to awake the consumers' interest, creating brand awareness that can result in brand loyalty (Melin 2006:75). In the media noise of today as well as consumers conscious and unconscious resistance to marketing communication, the managing of the brand and the strategic communication of the brand is crucial as it can enhance the value of a product (Ailawadi & Keller 2004:331, Calderón et. al 1997:294). Different communication methods are worth considering, since they give a wider vision of brand value by taking into account the consumer's perspective (Calderón et. al 1997). A brand within a retail context is communicated through the retail marketing mix (McGoldrick 2002), which will be described further below.

3.2 Integrated marketing within a retail context

Retail advertising and promotion seems to be in a stage of transition where newspapers have traditionally been the medium of retail marketing and advertising, but these traditional marketing approaches appears to have decreased in importance (Junu Bryan, 1993, Marchetti, 1994, Underwood, 1994 see Nowak et. al 1996:175). Due to mentioned consumer demand changes and media noise, the interest of retail companies has moved away from traditional advertising with large audiences and generalizable messages. Instead greater focus is on an integration of targeted communication forms such as sales promotion, direct marketing, public

relations and events on an individual-level rather than “market-level consumer information” (e.g. Schultz, 1995, Smith, 1995 see Nowak et. al 1996:174). Integrated marketing communication can thus be seen as a flexible tool to target the right audiences with the promotional message (Pitta et. al 2006:156).

It is vital for retail companies to integrate an engaging and interactive communicative marketing mix as a way to increase brand awareness, product knowledge, brand image and brand preference (Pitta et. al 2006:160, McGoldrick 2002). But what is actually meant by an integrated marketing approach? Integrated marketing can be resembled with a marketing mix which consists of integrated marketing components and takes into account synergies of different types of promotional activities to build the brand of a product or a service (Hartley & Pickton 1999:97, Pitta et. al 2006:156). Integrated marketing can on the one hand be divided into non-personal, one-way communications aimed at segments without any dialogue involved. On the other hand integrated marketing can take the form of personal two-way communications performed face-to-face in order to understand the consumer’s needs in a better way and create a relationship (Hartley & Pickton 1999:101). Integrated marketing entails all encounters and “brand contacts” that consumers have with a company (Fortini-Campbell 1992, Schultz et al. 1992 see Nowak et. al 1996:178). It is the responsibility of the marketing managers to mix certain given promotional components in an optimal way to create competitive advantage (Melin 2006:69).

However, there is no clear evidence of what kind of variation of the promotion mix that is needed to create best possible results. In other words, a marketing mix differs between different companies and industries, it is adjusted to the specific company when trying to create brand awareness, brand identity and brand image to help improve the promotional effort (Pitta et. al 2006:156). Integrated marketing is versatile and with the large consumer choice of today’s market, marketers within retail and other industries face a big challenge to reach the consumers (Pitta et. al 2006:156-157). Applying the right combination of promotional elements is therefore crucial in order to decrease these communication barriers (Pitta et. al 2006:156-157, 159).

3.2.1 The retail marketing mix

In retailing, integrated marketing is presented by the retail marketing mix. The retail marketing mix originates from the traditional marketing mix of promotion, product, price and

place (McGoldrick 2002:5, 235, 279, 369, 411). Lazer and Keller (1961) define the retail marketing mix as: "the total package of goods and services that a store offers for sale to the public" (McGoldrick 2002:5). However, what can be discerned from the above definition is that retailing is not just about providing products for sale; service is a crucial factor in the mix as well. Service and building relations have been some of the most important elements of the retail marketing mix recently. Before, it was usually manufacturers who were the only ones who spoke directly to customers, but now customer relations has been more important for retail companies in order to attain sustainable competitive advantage through for example loyalty programs in order to create brand loyalty (McGoldrick 2002:7, 411). Retail companies have gained more power in recent years due to the initiation of their own brands, making it possible for them to exploit their promotional activities to reach their strategic goals (McGoldrick 2002:5-6).

McGoldrick (2002) highlights the growth in the utilization of relation activities such as sales promotion through for example Public Relations, that supplements or coordinates traditional advertising. He further means that retail companies have managed to circumnavigate traditional one-way media advertising through direct marketing to their consumers helping them breaking through today's increasing level of advertising clutter where it is hard to conveying a distinctive and clear message (McGoldrick 2002:411, 418). Sales promotion activities has also increased due to the rising costs of media advertising and this in turn has lead to some shifting of promotional budgets away from traditional advertising. This trend toward a powerful retail branding has further called for the use of long-term publicity devices, publicity that might achieve a higher credibility than traditional, often short-lived, advertising (McGoldrick 2002:409, 416, 418).

Retail companies, according to the literature, however most often use traditional advertising that is built on price, service, assortment and availability in order to affect consumer behaviour (Burt & Davies 2010:870). Nevertheless, Kapferer (1986) means that emphasis should be on "engagement" with customers, learning about their perceptions and attitudes and for the consumers to learn about the personality of the company, i.e. the brand's identity (Kapferer (1986) see Burt & Davies 2010:870). Moreover, Berry (2001) means that; "today shoppers want the total customer experience" where companies need to meet and exceed consumers needs, create deep and emotional connections as well as respect (Berry 2001 see McGoldrick 2002:8). Brand must hence be experienced by consumers at the contact point

through an interactive promotion activity in order to activate behaviours and create brand loyalty (Kapferer 2008:12).

3.3 Relationship building: creating a brand relationship with the consumer

Leading on from above discussion, companies must create a brand relationship with the consumer, which can be achieved through interactive relationship marketing. Grönroos (2002) means that the goal with this approach is to get the consumer to choose a certain brand over another (Grönroos 2002:37). Many brand customer relationships are created when the brand is considered a person or an organization, rather than a product (Aaker 1996:103). This is in line with Burghausen & Fan (2002) who means that relationships often are created to the company behind the brand or product rather than with a non-living product or service occasion (Burghausen & Fan 2002:93). Organizational associations might thus translate into a respect and liking that forms the basis of a relationship. This relationship can be the base of positive feelings towards a brand (Aaker 1996:103). Berry and Gresham (1986) mean that relationship building for retail companies is highly relevant in the current competitive environment due to the fact that relationships can increase sales to current customers and reduce the risk of losing them to competitors (Berry & Gresham see Macintosh & Lockshin 1997:487).

This viewpoint is further relevant in a retail context, which is characterized by the exchange of both goods and services (Gummesson 1987 see Kwon et. al 2001:402). Retailing is viewed more and more as a process rather than a function where relationships, behaviours and capturing of value become vital (Burt & Davies 2010:872). Capturing of behaviours and value can according to Grönroos (2002) effectively be accomplished in a relation through a communicative and interactive interoperation between companies and consumers (Grönroos 2002:36, 45). To maintain the strongest relationship with the customer it is crucial for the company to get to know their customer in terms of what they need, prefer, their worries, issues and lives in general (Pitta et. al 2006:156, 160). In retail, as mentioned above this is often achieved through retail loyalty clubs (McGoldrick 2002:7, 411). However, to unveil customers' preferences and needs at a deeper level, two-way communications, preferably face-to-face is important in order to create a relationship (Pitta et. al 2006:159-160). Therefore direct personal communications aimed at individuals who may have the chance to engage in immediate dialogue such as in events, trade shows, direct response marketing and personal selling have developed radically in significance (Hartley & Pickton 1999:101).

Building relationships for competing retail companies is also of crucial importance due to the fact that they imitate each other's strategies when it comes to pricing policies, promotions, and products. For example store environments of directly competing retail companies located in the same place usually look more alike than different (Kwon et. al 2001:402). Therefore, many retail brands/stores use different relationship building activities hoping to increase retail brand loyalty (Zimmerman 1992 see Macintosh & Lockshin 1997:487). Grönroos (2002) means however that despite companies' efforts trying to affect the consumer, it is the consumer him/herself that makes the final decision about what to take in and if the relationship is of importance (Grönroos 2002:45-46). Studying relationship building for retail companies is complex since relationships can exist on different levels. That is to say, relationships can be built between retail sales people and customers, customer relationships with stores and /or with the brand, where in this thesis we will focus on the latter (Macintosh & Lockshin 1997:487-488).

3.4 Retail marketing communication in the experience economy

Moreover, for retail companies integrating experiences in the retail marketing mix has become important since we are currently living in an experience economy. This is a time when anything from reconditioning our broken-down car, to handling our household economy are presented as potential amusement in our daily lives. Obviously the most mundane economic activity is transformed into spectacular entertainment, why it is essential for marketers not only to focus on the core product but also to focus on activities stimulating consumers' senses. Therefore, it is important to integrate innovation and creativity in various marketing activities and to create exciting open-ended experiences (Sköld 2010:11, 20, Pine & Gilmore 1994:4). Pine and Gilmore (1999) define experiences as "events that engage the consumer in a personal way" (Pine & Gilmore 1999:12).

The experience economy concept has become an important factor to consider when conducting organizations marketing strategies. Morgan et. al (2009) and Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that companies only by staging, casting and performing memorable and unique experiences can achieve long lasting competitive advantage over its competitors. Previously the concept "experience economy" has primary been connected to the tourism industry in terms of similarities regarding its origins and its implications. Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Mossberg (2003) claim that our developed world has moved from a service- to an experience-based economy due to an increased volume of leisure time and tourism attractions such as

sports events and theme parks (Morgan et. al 2009:201-202 & Mossberg 2003:184 & Pine & Gilmore 1999:2-3,5,12-13).

Due to the mentioned economical change of focus in the introduction, there has also been a shift regarding consumer decision-making from an emphasis of the rational to the emotional aspects of decision-making, it is a transition from satisfying needs to fulfilling subjective desires, aspirations and hedonic consumption (Morgan et. al 2009:203-204 & Addis et.al 2001:50-51 & Mossberg 2003:11, 21). Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that experiences also offer intellectual stimulus such as personal development (Pine & Gilmore 1999:12). Thus, it is essential to learn about consumers' wishes and behavior during consumption connected to experience-oriented services (Mossberg 2003:14). Within the experience economy the consumer is seen as an active participant rather than a passive consumer, this approach results in active consumers who integrate and participate in the creation of the experience (Morgan et. al 2009:203 & Mossberg 2003:17, 19, 39). Since consumers expectations and characteristics has shifted, organizations need to create alternative approaches to mass marketing. As a response new marketing communication channels and activities have been developed such as events to offer consumers engagement in new types of experiences (Morgan et. al 2009:213).

The experience economy has affected the retail industry since it also needs to adjust to these new experience demands and emotional aspects to attract consumers in order to stand out from competitors in the retail market (Mossberg 2003:34,37,39). Retail marketing within the experience market has according to Mossberg (2003) three main aims. *Firstly*, to strengthen the entertainment feature where the product or service is promoted with help of events or activities. *Secondly*, to give a concurrency of business and fun giving the consumer a feeling of "saving" time when e.g. shopping combined with reading and eating. *Thirdly*, to give the consumer that little extra; it is not just about outperform consumers' expectations, it is about provide the consumer with the unexpected that he/she has not even thought about in before hand. Brands within the retail industry have founded experiential approaches that includes various events and arrangements as "experience shopping", for example Nike town in the US as well as taste samples in food stores. Mossberg (2003) argues that companies within the retail industry more and more are on the leap towards the entertainment business. Furthermore, the author means that this is a result from the constant hybridization and circulations of ideas between different industries (Löfgren 1999 see Mossberg 2003.34-

37,184).

3.5 Event marketing communication

Event marketing can be used as a creative, innovative engaging marketing tool for companies, such as in the retail industry, to create *relationships, experiences* and *make a buzz around the brand* (Close et. al 2006:420-422). Event marketing is an umbrella term for marketing through event (Grönkvist 2000:11). The author Close et al (2006) outline event marketing as:

“The practice of promoting the interests of an organization and its brands by associating the organization with a specific activity”

(Close et al 2006:421)

Grönkvist (2000) argues that the overall goal with event marketing is to create meetings between people in a creative environment, to reach a broad audience and to generate a closer relationship directly at place with the company’s target group (Grönkvist 2000). More precisely, event marketing is about using strategic promotional tools that are available to nurture the brand in the best possible manner for example by creating increased brand exposure and a strong impact on consumers (Grönkvist 2000 & Roos and Algotsson 1996). That is to say, event marketing is a tactical and effective approach to engage the target audience to feel, touch and interact with the brand. Event marketing should be considered an integrated marketing communication strategy rather than a stand-alone communication tool (Sneath et.al 2005:420, 422, 430). Events, according to Grönkvist, are concentrated to a one-off meeting through example a kickoff, a launch or a demonstration. (Grönkvist 2000)

Event marketing is one of the fastest growing marketing communication tools within organizational communication strategies and it is an increasingly important component in a company’s integrated promotional mix since it is a communication channel challenging traditional media usage. Furthermore, event marketing takes the consumer’s entire experience with the company into consideration and enables companies to have direct face-to-face contact and personal interactions with their target group (Sneath et.al 2005:373-374 & Close et.al 2006:420). Promotional communication through events provides an active information exchange between companies and consumers and unlike traditional marketing activities event marketing can create an open dialogue and interaction with the attendees. Events are designed to add value for the visiting consumer and can thereby raise the consumer’s involvement level

to interact with the brand and its personality (Close et.al 2006: 420, 422 & Grönkvist 2000:).

Marketing trends indicate that retail companies are in an ideal position to create buzz around the brand through experiences for their consumers that may involve for example product brands, corporate brands or the store as a whole (Keller 1998:337-338, Ailawadi & Keller 2004:338).

3.6 Linkages within our theoretical framework

All of the concepts within our theoretical framework have been linked to our two major building blocks representing different concepts of the brand building process; brand strategy and brand implementation. The brand strategic building block has been presented by the brand building elements; *brand awareness*, *brand identity* and *brand image*. These brand-building elements have been used to illustrate brand building within retailing on how to build a retail brand. This led us into the second building block of brand implementation to capture how these brand strategic elements are and can be implemented through different marketing practices, in this case through the retail marketing mix where relationship building and experiences have constituted major marketing approaches. Event marketing is thus a marketing practise that organically grows into the retail marketing mix in the implementation building block. Consequently, due to this implementation of event marketing within the retail marketing mix, the question of how this implementation will affect the brand strategic elements within the brand strategy building block is inevitable. Thereby, to repeat our research question: *What is the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand?* will be described throughout our empirical part and analysis.

4

Empirical findings

In this fourth part we will present our empirical findings from conducted interviews and secondary sources consisting of analysis of retail companies' homepages, press releases, blogs, YouTube.se, Facebook.com and other web pages connected to mentioned retail companies from the interviews. These empirical findings have been combined and categorised according to our two major theoretical building blocks and different concepts within our theoretical framework. However, we will begin this part by presenting the term "event marketing" through the eyes of our respondents. The names of our chosen event agencies will be abbreviated; Rider Eventmarketing AB will be referred to as "Rider", Hansen Event & Conference AB will be referred to as "Hansen" and Stenhammar Music Group will be referred to as "SMG". Additionally, we will italicise, what we mean are words of importance for understanding the role of event marketing when building a retail brand.

4.1 Event marketing through the eyes of our respondents

"It is a term divided into two words, "event" and "marketing" with two different meanings. "Marketing" refers to branding, which is about strengthening the brand long-term or about short-term sales /.../ However, both result in sales eventually. The term "Event" can also be defined as two different things /.../ an "occurrence" or an "invitation". At the occurring event the consumers have no expectations and it is harder to get the attention from the consumers compared to the event where you are invited, where it is easier to target the right audience. /.../ that is what event marketing is according to me"

(Selling project Manager, Rider)

"It is an opportunity to meet the consumer and having the chance to integrate them with the company and the brand. Event marketing is about creating a publicity in a pleasant and readily susceptible way"

(Event Manager at SMG)

"Event marketing is about promoting an idea, a product, changing an attitude or increasing competence through an experience!"

(Head of B2B, Hansen)

"It is about creating communication through meetings and to create a dialogue with the consumer, this is to me the core of event marketing, it is not one-way communication"

(Chief Executive, Rider)

These quotations show that the majority of our respondents are unanimous about the definition about the term event marketing. However, one of our respondents mean that the phrase event marketing can be divided into two words with different meanings but that these different meanings in the end intend to promote sales and strengthen the brand. It is a marketing approach that seems to promote a brand through live meetings where interactions and dialogues are in focus in order to build and strengthen a brand. Experiences are an important factor easing the delivery of the promotional message from sender to receiver helping to integrate the consumer with the company and the brand.

1st Building block: Brand strategy

4.2 Brand building in a retail context

Brand awareness

According to the Selling Project Manager and the Chief Executive at Rider it is important to create *top-of-mind experiences* when aiming for brand awareness. They both mention the Swedish coffee retail company “Gevalia” as an example of a company in the beginning of the 1990’s using event marketing to increase brand awareness by combining the brand with an event creating *an emotional bonding to the brand*. They further explain that this event was displayed through a bus that had crashed into a house at a city square in Stockholm, conducted in 3D with the commercial message “when you get an unexpected visit”.

This is confirmed by our secondary sources of web pages that provided us with information about this event and additional examples about other similar “Gevalia” events with the message “when you get an unexpected visit” for example when a subway jams up through the ground at a square in Stockholm or a fake airplane crashed at another famous square in Stockholm. Event personnel were stationed at the same area handing out free coffee (e24.se, kraftfoods nordic.com).

The Selling Project Manager at Rider described the “Gevalia” event with the crashed bus as a top-of-mind event, which might not immediately generate direct sales, but an example of how to create an awareness of the brand. The Chief Executive at Rider explains further how this

commercial message “an unexpected visit” is a symbol for the communication applied in a meeting. The Selling Project Manager at Rider says:

“It is about stealing time, getting the consumer to react and get the promotion to affect the consumer’s five senses. Getting the focus of consumers is crucial, even so for a split second and getting the consumer to repel from other concerns, duties and stress factors that day. This makes the delivery of the brand message easier and in the same way making the consumer more responsive”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

He argue that “**stealing time**” is important when trying to create brand awareness but it is not easy to perform through traditional marketing such as a newspapers, for example getting the reader to actually read the advertisements. The Selling Project Manager at Rider and the Head of B2B at Hansen mean that in order to break through the media noise and get consumers to repel from stress factors, companies must find creative ways to affect all five senses and simply get people to **catch their attention**, stop and listen and be observant of the promotional advertising. The Head of B2B at Hansen argues that:

“Event marketing is extremely important in order to build awareness around brands in today’s society when the information is “thundering” against us; information and communication that we do not even notice. All brands are competing about the same space of being seen and recognized. Therefore it is essential to fuel the retail brand with a feeling or experience. This since experiences often are associated with a certain brand e.g. a scent of a cinnamon bun experienced via an event can be an element relating to a certain brand and the event it self”

(The Head of B2B, Hansen)

The Chief Executive at Rider argues that brand awareness through event marketing can be both cheap and done by easy means but still get an effective result with attention in media. He points out an example and describes a small retail pet-store in Malmö, selling products for dogs:

“The store personnel went out in Malmö putting small notes on piles of dog poop with the store’s address and store brand logo. This communication approach to promote their retail store and create brand awareness can have a powerful effect that other more traditional communications forms lack”

(Chief Executive, Rider)

However, he means, depending on what stage in the product lifecycle the promoted retail product is in it is treated differently, for example if it is a new product of an established brand that is to be launched. Then, event marketing can never be compared to the volume of consumers reached through television commercial when it comes to creating brand awareness. He means that if for example an established soft drink brand would launch a new taste the company should preferably use aggressive TV commercial, but he questions whether that is enough? “Would it not be better to let the consumers taste the product and evaluate the new taste through an event”.

The Event Manager at SMG claims that event marketing is a trend within the retail industry is an essential promotion tool since it is getting harder and more expensive to reach out through traditional media trying to establish brand awareness and also to deliver the company’s brand identity and to create a correct brand image in consumers’ mind.

Brand identity and brand image

The Selling Project Manager at Rider points out that events can affect consumers’ five senses by letting the consumer taste, smell, hear, see and feel the brand, but these have to be related to the brand identity. All our respondents agree that event marketing is a possibility for a retail company to show and ***demonstrate the brand identity*** to the consumers in a clearer way than through traditional advertising. However, the Selling Project Manager at Rider means that to reflect a retail brand’s identity through an event, it is crucial to have the right person at the right place delivering what the brand stands for:

“Event marketing does not entail any dress rehearsal, which is why having the wrong person representing the brand at an event can be disastrous. It is also crucial to speak and deliver the correct “brand language” so that what retail companies communicate is congruent with the brand identity. The

picture that the consumer receives and experience in his/her mind, i.e. the brand image, should be coherent with the brand identity”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

The Chief Executive at Rider argues that the message of the brand identity should also be trustworthy regardless of the aim and the company’s overall goal. That is to say, that the brand should not promise anything it can’t keep and not “create a picture” of something that it is not. In line with this statement the Head of B2B at Hansen means that companies have to be careful with what they say and do in order to be able to keep their promise to the consumers. The Chief Executive at Rider and the Selling Project Manager at Rider explain that some retail companies, such as Nike, have a very strict policy in how their brand identity should be portrayed. While other retail companies are more open to be represented through new ideas. The Head of B2B at Hansen argues that companies want to ***deliver a certain feeling or identity based on the five senses*** and that is a reason why retail companies choose event marketing. He explains:

“It can be a general feeling of the event as being casual or laid back or the company can choose to deliver a specific feeling such as salty, cold or cocky representing the brand identity. An example of a retail brand that really portray their brand identity, through experiences in store, is Abercrombie & Fitch, which fragrance their stores with their signature perfume, plays loud Euro disco, has in-store dancers and uses personnel looking like models. This displays a somewhat cocky and youthful brand identity”

(Head of B2B, Hansen)

It was confirmed to us through our secondary sources that Abercrombie & Fitch do use event marketing to portray their brand identity. It was for example explained that the company express their fierce attitude through “hot personnel” and “hot models” handing out give-aways to consumers when visiting the store. Additionally, we noticed the company also uses more public events, when for example opening a Flagship store in Paris, through lining up male models along the magnificent avenue Champs Elysées ([facebook.com/abercrombie](https://www.facebook.com/abercrombie)).

The Event Manager at SMG states that all elements are important to consider when trying to reflect a retail company's identity:

“Everything from the personnel's attitudes to messages on banderols or the safety at the various activities. The personnel are very important since they are the brand ambassadors and the messengers of the brand. For example if a retail company with a healthy profile allows their brand ambassadors to smoke, then the promotional message is non credible”

(Event Manager, SMG)

The Chief Executive at Rider further means that utilizing brand identity can be an effective way to position the brand. He gives the example of the retailer and sunglasses brand “Carrera” as a retailer that has adopted this approach by positioning themselves as a brand within a context associated with sailing, horse racing and motorsport. He means that this has been achieved by for example branding “Carrera” to the right target group at the right place at sailing events. Further he argues that the aim of this activity is not to increase direct sales but rather to strengthen and clarify the brand's identity and thereby *position the brand in the mind of the consumers i.e. creating a brand image.*

Carrera using sport events were confirmed to us by our secondary sources which explained that Carrera uses event marketing within a context associated with sports and in large international sports contexts such as skiing, sailing and motor racing (carreraworld.com).

The Selling Project Manager at Rider again refers to his example of the Swedish coffee retail company “Gevalia” where he means that the bus, which had “crashed” into a building created an experience through event marketing without any face-to-face interaction with the consumer. He means that:

“This leaves the evaluation of the event to the eyes of the viewer and the experience in itself is worth what the audience gets the impression of, which in turn results in an either negative or positive image of the brand“

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

The Head of B2B at Hansen argues that retail companies have to create an image that is coherent with what the company wants to be associated with long-term. Moreover, he means that event marketing is an effective way of *enhancing the brand image* through brand identity, not only just through the senses of seeing and hearing which is possible through traditional media. He argues that it is possible to also deliver the brand identity, trying to enhance brand image, through a taste or a smell via for example taste samples of cinnamon buns at a live event.

A brand building strategy of a retail brand through event marketing, including; brand awareness, brand identity and brand image with a possible outcome of brand loyalty, can be exemplified by the retail example described below:

The Selling Project Manager at Rider gives an example of how the retail brand Ben & Jerry's affect all the different elements of the brand by using event marketing. He explains that Ben & Jerry's creates brand awareness and brand loyalty by portraying their identity through their annual Swedish summer tour where they are visiting Swedish summer towns promoting the Ben & Jerry's brand:

“It is about promoting the brand completely, not just selling the products. At the summer events Ben & Jerry's sells ice cream but every crown goes to charity so creating brand awareness is in focus as well as trying to promote Ben & Jerry's laid back and social responsible identity and get the consumers to receive the same image in their mind. Ben & Jerry's creates an atmosphere with contests and lounges to create an oasis where relations can grow and hopefully brand loyalty will be created in the end if consumers can see the benefits of buying Ben & Jerry's instead of for example Häagen-Dazs. Here Ben & Jerry's brand is supposed to be seen as a hero, and place itself “top of mind”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

This example is confirmed by the secondary sources such as press releases at Ben & Jerry's home page. The same press releases additionally presented how the company during the

summer visits some of Sweden's largest festivals to spread joy among the visitors through this mentioned event by various competitions and relaxing lounges. The ice cream purchases of the consumers goes to charity and the first stop is "Peace and love festival" in the Swedish towns Borlänge and Sundsvall. According to the Ben & Jerry's web page the company has a responsibility to the society in which it is operating (benjerry.se).

2nd Building block: Brand implementation

4.3 Integrated marketing within the retail marketing mix

Our respondents mean that media today is fragmented and target group oriented. Since there are so many more TV-channels than twenty years ago companies need to turn to the target group directly to satisfy the different needs of consumers. Therefore they claim that retail companies must use integrated marketing activities including *targeted* events in order to reach out to their consumers.

The Event Manager at SMG also argues that:

"If the consumer has done an active choice participating in an event and its activities then the consumer is more receptive to the retail company's promotional message, than he/she would have been via traditional one-way communication such as TV-commercial that is not self elected. The brain often screens information that is uninteresting, which means that even if you watching a TV-commercial the commercial message might be forgotten two minutes later. However, when participating in an event the consumer is more active and thereby remembers what has been communicated"

(Event Manager, SMG)

In line with the Event Manager at SMG the Selling Project Manager at Rider, the Chief Executive at Rider and the Head of B2B at Hansen all discussing the same issue of traditional advertising and argue that it is easy to avoid traditional marketing for example by turning off the TV or radio when the commercial is on. They explain that the consumer can choose when to be affected or screen off information that he/she is not interested in.

The Selling Project Manager at Rider argues that it might not be enough to write, “come and buy our product”, on a sign when trying to promote a product and a brand. He further means that:

“In order to sell a retail product the message additionally might need to be presented through an event with direct personal face-to-face contact, where the product and its benefits are explained and demonstrated in a two-way targeted communication”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

He claims that this is a phenomenal promotional approach to let the consumer “feel” the product and interact with the brand. Although he argues that:

“On the other hand, if the messenger i.e. the retail brand wants to convey a message about “buy more milk” to a large audience then TV-commercial might be a better solution than an event. Through this traditional advertising medium the company can control exactly how many consumers they can reach and how frequently, for example three million people, twelve times a day. Here an event might be more expensive and not the right medium to reach out to such a large audience. That is why it is important to ask the question what we want to sell and communicate”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

The Selling Project Manager at Rider, the Event manager at SMG and the Head of B2B at Hansen all claim that there are so many different marketing tools available today due to the fact that different products demand different media. The Event Manager at SMG further states that:

“Event marketing is not the answer to everything but nor is TV-commercial and that is why it is important to combine different media”

(Event Manager, SMG)

The Chief Executive at Rider also means that event marketing is one of many marketing disciplines:

“Even if I say that event marketing can fulfil this goal it is not the only solution or cannot be used by its own. It is necessary to interact and integrate with other communication forms”

(Chief Executive, Rider)

Moreover he explains and exemplifies that if the goal for a retail company is to sell a specific product the company can combine different forms of marketing communication:

*“In a first step the retail company can use traditional TV-commercial where the benefits of the product and brand is explained while at the same time reaching a large audience. In combination, to enhance the brand the retail company can also benefit from integrating an interactive moment-of-truth experience, such as an event, where the retailer can interact directly with the consumer and also let he/se feel and “taste” the brand. This combination helps the company to **break through today’s media noise**”*

(Chief Executive, Rider)

He means that this type of integrated communication is about communicating the same promotional message but through different channels. Moreover he explains that by integrating this interactive moment-of-truth-event the retailer can receive fast results of what the consumer thinks about the product. Although, the company can never be sure, at that time, if this event created a long-lasting relationship to the brand.

4.4 Relationship building: creating a brand relationship with the consumer

Two of our respondents, the Event Manager at SMG and Head of B2B at Hansen explain that it is vital for retail companies getting to know consumers’ preferences and needs since it makes the retail company able to strengthen the commitment to their consumers and it also enhances the attractiveness of the company. The Head of B2B at Hansen continues and argues that event marketing is to a very large extent build on relationships; “business is made through

relationships with people you trust during live sessions and trustworthy relationships create profit long term”. The Selling Project Manager at Rider agrees and means that:

*“Connections are everything and event marketing is all about meetings, getting people to know each other through dialogues **face-to-face** in order to make good business”*

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

Learning about consumers’ preferences helps retail companies provide stronger and more targeted experiences, which according to our respondents can be achieved by events. The Selling Project Manager at Rider further claims that retail companies through events, are able to invite their specific target group conducting the event according to their preferences, which also makes it easier to create and develop a relationship. Moreover he exemplify this statement through the international whiskey retailer Ardbeg:

“Trough the event “Ardbeg Challenge Stockholm”, which is the world’s largest whisky tasting event, the company invite whisky enthusiasts who thereby by attending the event can get the chance to interact with the Ardbeg brand and establish a relationship both with the brand itself and with other whiskey enthusiasts”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

He thereby, argues that relationship building through an event is very important, especially when launching a new product, since consumers are able to interact with the new product, integrate with the brand through their five senses.

Ardbeg using this kind of events were confirmed to us by our secondary sources, which explained that Ardbeg uses events in order to celebrate the brand and gather like-minded people with a passion for whiskey who are interested to break a whiskey record together by trying out different whiskey types of the Ardbeg brand (peat.se, ardbegchallenge.com).

The Selling Project Manager at Rider means that relationship building also can be exemplified through smaller events, when a retail brand such as Nestlé Nespresso let consumers try their products and provide them with give-aways in a shopping mall. He thereby means that:

“The retailer then buy time from the consumer getting the chance to demonstrate the Nestlé Nespresso-coffee maker. If the consumer then makes a purchase then event marketing has served its purpose by generating sales but is has also created a long-term relationship due to the fact that the consumer in the future has to buy brand-specific accessory units such as coffee pods. Nestlé Nespresso has created a long-term relationship to the consumer initiated by a meeting in a shopping mall”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

That Nestlé Nespresso using event marketing through events were confirmed by our secondary sources, which explained that the company offers experiences in department stores through pop-up boutiques teasing consumers’ senses through the aroma of coffee. Brand ambassadors represent the brand, offering the consumer a sensational experience and a chance to build a relationship to the brand (eventmarketer.com).

Event marketing is according to two of our respondents, the Selling Project Manager at Rider and the Head of B2B at Hansen, an effective way of building relationships to consumers by giving away something to buy time *getting to know the consumers preferences and needs*. An event involves consumers and can help make them alert and interested in the retail company’s products by attending in a dialogue, hence creating a relationship, which has become harder in todays experience oriented society.

4.5 Retail marketing communication in the experience economy

The Event Manager at SMG explains that it is necessary for retail companies to affect consumers in a positive way through extra ordinary experiences in today’s experience demanding society in order to *create a buzz around the brand*. Further she argues that this is easiest achieved through a meeting at an event in order to get consumers to spread a positive word-of-mouth of the brand.

Retail companies can according to the Head of B2B at Hansen affect consumers emotionally and activate them through influencing their five senses, which can have a great impact on consumers' decision making in today's experience economy. The Selling Project Manager at Rider argues that:

*“The consumer attending an event becomes participant and do often develop a feeling towards the retail brand, which is one of the aims of the event marketing discipline. It is hard to create a feeling towards a product or a brand through traditional advertising but this can as mentioned definitely be achieved by event marketing giving the consumer a chance to be **active** and try the product”*

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

The Consumer Manager at Rider continues and argues that this active action, an event, is sometimes needed for the target group to become loyal for example regarding a new shelf product in a grocery store: “it is hard to persuade the consumer to buy this product without letting them try it first and interact with brand ambassadors through face-to-face conversations”. He further states that it is essential for retail companies to engage consumers to be active participants in the event and thereby creating a dialogue. He explains that it can be something as simple and cheap as: “blowing up a balloon, put it on a stick and ask a mum if her son wants a balloon. It is again about “stealing time” through an experience”.

The Event Manager at SMG and the Chief Executive at Rider also explain that events is all about letting the consumers be active participants, get them to engage in the process, ask questions and develop the communication process. The Chief Executive at Rider claims that, that is what event marketing it is about:

“Creating activities and moments within the event that invites the consumer to react and interact, creating an activity that forces a counter performance from the consumer. This will probably strengthen the consumers' memory of an event and the hosting retail brand”

(Chief Executive, Rider)

However, he argues that: “How to get consumers active is obviously dependent on the target group and the retail company’s identity and aim”. The Head of B2B at Hansen states that it is the effect of the five senses that makes the consumer react and participate in the event. Further, all of our respondents argue that at an event the company basically “forces” itself on the consumers, forcing a counter performance to interact and engage in a dialogue. Although they all agree that in order to accomplish this the event must be executed as pleasant as possible in order to be successful and to affect the consume in a positive way.

Three of our respondent, the Event Communication Manger at Hansen, the Chief Executive at Rider and the Selling Project Manager at Rider further argue that, since we are living in an experience economy it is essential for retail companies to strengthen the entertainment feature, give a simultaneity of business and *fun* at the same time and always provide the consumer with that little extra. The Selling Project Manager at Rider means that these factors can be exemplified through an example of the Swedish furniture retailer IKEA:

“You have been shopping at IKEA a little bit longer than expected even though you just visited the store to purchase a few items but ended up staying longer due to congested aisles and long queues etcetera. IKEA has tried to strengthen the whole shopping experience by offering hot dogs for five SEK at checkout when people have not been eating for a long time and have low blood sugar. An intense shopping experience is completed by a positive experience, which enhances the total shopping trip and gives the consumer that “little extra”. It is a simple thing but important in order to create a final impression and to “trick” the consumers last memory of the retailer before leaving the store”

(Selling Project Manager, Rider)

That IKEA uses event marketing as a marketing tool was confirmed to us through a secondary source, IKEA’s own web page, which states that IKEA provide hot dogs for five SEK in their bistro according to their home page, “food that do good” (ikea.com). Additionally, it was explained that the company often invites consumers and club members to different activities such as workshops and seminars. These events are often conducted in their own stores creating experiences where the consumer has the chance to interact with the IKEA brand and receive special offers (ikea.com).

The Event manager at SMG agrees that another Swedish retailer, ICA, tries to promote and *communicate their brand through experiences* in their stores by cooperation with famous Swedish pop artists, such as E.M.D, popular among families and especially children, in order to create a buzz around their brand. This was further confirmed through our secondary sources consisting of various web pages such as E.M.D's official web page, Youtube.com and a tv4.se blog. It was explained that ICA and E.M.D collaborated through promoting each other through example events where E.M.D signed CDs in local ICA-stores. According to secondary sources these events attracted a lot of consumers and got a lot of attention by consumers who visited both the ICA stores and the pop artists (emdartist.se, youtube.com, andreas.idol.tv4.se). Other secondary sources provided us with an additional example where ICA-stores invited school children and teachers to their fruit and vegetable counter letting the children feel, smell, taste and learn about this nutrient food from an invited dietitian. The goal with this in store-event is to teach the children about healthy food and learn about what ICA stores have to offer within this food category (pirab.se). Shopping is thus, according to the Chief Executive at Rider, about a total experience where retail companies have to create a shopping environment offering additional services, giving something back to the consumer.

Analysis of empirical and theoretical material

5

In this fifth part of the thesis we will relate and analyse our empirical findings and the findings of our secondary data to our theory. This, by using theory to argue for our different theoretical concepts and put these in relation to event marketing activities that, according to our respondents, play a major role for retail companies when building a retail brand. Furthermore, our secondary sources will serve as a support of major importance of the empirical findings from the respondents. This will form the basis for our analysis. Additionally, we will italicise, what we mean are words of importance for understanding the role of event marketing when building retail a brand.

1st Building block: Brand strategy

5.1 Brand building in a retail context

The brand adds value to the company through different elements, where in this thesis, we have focused on brand strategic intentions; brand awareness, brand identity and brand image. These different value-adding elements of the brand can be built in different ways through different media. This way of communicating a brand has become an important resource for retail companies since their products and stores can be easily imitated and most of the value lies within the brand (Janonis et. al 2007:69, Burt & Davies, 2010:870). From our interviews and secondary sources it has become clear that event marketing is an activity that can be used when building a retail brand, focusing on strategic elements such as; brand awareness, brand identity and brand image.

Brand awareness

As Melin (2006) points out in the theoretical part brand awareness is obvious when consumers have noticed and recognises the brand, this statement is further strengthened through our empirical findings that argues that event marketing can create recognition and brand awareness. Through insights from our respondents' examples and through secondary sources of how event marketing in a retail context is used to create brand awareness and ***top-of-mind experiences***, it can be argued that event marketing through spectacular and eye-catching events can ***catch consumers' attention*** and get them to repel from concerns and stress factors of that day by affecting consumers five senses. Catching consumers' attention is

extremely important as information and communication often goes by un-noticed. It can be seen that these eye-catching events ease the delivery of the brand message and make the consumer more responsive. Further such attention and “*time-stealing*” from consumers is much harder and often more expensive to perform through traditional marketing due to today’s media noise explained in our theoretical part. Meetings through an event can *involve* the consumer in a dialogue with the retail brand distracting the consumer’s thoughts away from other brands. Creating brand awareness through events can further be achieved by both cheap and easy means.

Brand awareness according to Kapferer (2008) and Melin (2006) also aims to create an emotional bonding to the brand and what it stands for (Kapferer 2008:23, Melin 2006:119). As pointed out in our interviews this *emotional bonding* can be created through event marketing to fuel the retail brand since experiences often are associated with a certain brand, for example a scent of a cinnamon bun experienced via an event can be an element relating to a certain brand and the event itself.

However, the role of event marketing when creating brand awareness, as pointed out by one of our respondents, can be argued not to be compared to the role of TV-commercials when launching a new product. This, since the role of TV-commercial in this stage has a larger penetrating power reaching out to a larger audience more frequently. Although, the majority of our respondents share the same opinion and question if event marketing might be more appropriate when creating brand awareness of a product in this launching stage. Our respondents further share the opinion that this is due to the fact that the retail company through an event can create a dialogue directly to the consumer about the new product letting the consumer experience and evaluate the product directly at place.

Brand identity and brand image

The majority of our respondents claim that retail brands can utilize their brand identity by using in-store experiences that *activates consumers’ five senses* in order to *highlight their brand identity*. Confirmed by our theoretical framework retail companies must employ brand identity to differentiate themselves since it has become necessary in today’s competitive market where retail products and stores can relatively easily be imitated (Kapferer 1986 see Burt & Davies 2010:870, Burt & Davies 2010:872). Therefore, other competitive advantages have to be built that will persist over time (Melin 2006:126, Aaker 1996:70). From our

empirical findings it was found that events could affect consumers' five senses by letting the consumer taste, smell, hear, see and feel the brand. Companies must deliver a certain feeling or brand identity based on more than one sense and this is the reason why retail companies choose event marketing as a marketing tool. Event marketing can therefore be argued to play a role portraying the brand identity via five senses and demonstrating the functional problem solving capacities as well as symbolic associations through the event. This was pointed out in the theoretical part confirming that companies need to create associations to the brand, which consists of symbolic or functional associations based on the brand identity i.e. what the brand stands for and what makes it unique (Melin 2006:126, Aaker 1996:70). Gwinner (1997) means that companies must find a possibility to show and ***demonstrate the retail brand's identity to its consumers in a clearer way*** than through traditional advertising. This is something that is agreed upon by all of our respondents who also mean that retail companies can achieve this through an event in order to deliver what the brand stands for and what makes it unique.

It also occurred, during our interviews, that when building a retail brand through event marketing retail companies must link all activities within the event to be coherent with the brand identity to avoid non-credible outcomes and a distorted brand identity. However, it occurred that two of the respondents emphasised that to reflect a retail brands identity through an event it is crucial to have the right person at the right place representing what the brand stands for. This, since event marketing does not have any dress rehearsals it is vital to have the right brand ambassadors with the right personality coherent with the brand identity delivering the right brand language. Confirmed by our theoretical framework it is necessary to get the consumer to associate a certain, but also a correct brand identity with the company since it connects the brand with the target group (Roy & Cornwell 2003). The retail brand identity should be coherent with the individual identity of consumers in order for consumers to feel a connection between their individual identity and the identity of the brand (Wesley et. al 1998:169).

The brand identity and the brand image that the consumers receive in their mind should be coherent in order to portray what the brand stands for and position the brand in the mind of the consumer (Janonis et. al 2007:69). It has come to our knowledge that event marketing functions to help position a brand. Event marketing can be seen as a way to connect the retail brand identity to the right target group and thereby ***position the brand*** in the mind of the

consumers' long term i.e. the brand image. As pointed out in our theory, due to the fact that brand image is created by consumers' earlier experiences with a brand the retail company has to create a positive experience in order to position the brand in the mind of the consumer. Companies aim to create a favourable image to increase consumers' willingness to pay more and to stay loyal to the brand (Grönroos 2002:317-318, 325-327).

Event marketing can be seen to have a role *enhancing the brand image*, not only just through the senses of seeing and hearing which is possible through traditional media, but also to create an image through a taste or smell via for example taste samples of a cinnamon bun. During our interviews and information from our secondary sources it can be argued that event marketing also has a role creating brand image for retail companies without having any face-to-face interaction directly with the company behind the brand. The interaction instead can be seen to be between the brand and the consumer through a spectacular experience. In our theoretical part it is stressed that brand image is seen as one of the most important decision making element of retail patronage and purchase behaviour (Erdem et.al 1999:139)

2nd Building block: Brand implementation

5.2 Integrated marketing within the retail marketing mix

It can be argued, according to all of respondents that it is important for retail companies to consider what they want to accomplish and then use event marketing as an integrated component within their retail marketing mix in order to achieve penetrating power and *reach through the media noise* in today's the experience society. Our respondents also pointed at the importance of target oriented event marketing as a way to reach consumers directly and satisfy their needs. This, can be argued to be in line with theory which demonstrate that due to the media noise many retail companies have turned away from traditional advertising with large audiences and generalizable messages, instead greater focus is placed on an integration of *targeted communication* forms on an individual level such as events in the retail marketing mix (Nowak et. al. 1996:174).

Our theory unveils that it is important for retail companies in their retail marketing mix to take into account the synergy of different types of promotional activities, i.e. integrated marketing to build the brand of a product or service (Nowak et. al 1996:174-175). Our

respondents share the opinion that event marketing is an increasingly important component in a company's promotional mix since it is a communication channel challenging traditional media usage. Although, our respondents claim that the goal of a retail company's promotional message, depending of what kind of message, must be put in relation to frequency when choosing which marketing components to be used when delivering the promotional message. If it is a question about a complex message our respondents argue that it might not be enough to just use one-way communication in order to sell a product and promote a brand. Additional two-way targeted communication, such as event marketing, is needed in order to get a direct contact with the consumer to explain and demonstrate the benefits of the product and the brand and thereby the company can receive fast results of what the consumer thinks about the product. If the retail company gets the consumers to stop and listen to the message and get their attention, the company has the chance to interact face-to-face using event marketing. This is in compliance with McGoldrick (2002) who means that the advertising noise makes it hard to convey a distinctive and clear message, why it is important for the consumer to engage and interact with the brand in a direct dialogue (McGoldrick 2002: 411, 418). According to this statement it can be argued, with support from our respondents and secondary sources, that event marketing can function as a marketing tool within the retail marketing mix easing the delivery of a message in a clearer way and making the consumer engage in a dialogue with the retail company. It can be argued that a retail company can strengthen the brand by an interactive moment of truth experience where the company can get the consumer to feel and taste the brand. In line with McGoldrick (2002) such sales promotion activities, for example an event, can help enhance powerful retail branding that might achieve a higher credibility and fast results of what the consumer thinks about the product than short-lived traditional advertising would achieve on its own (McGoldrick 2002:409, 416, 418).

On the other hand, it can be argued with the support of our respondents, if a retail company wants to reach a large audience as well as control exactly how many consumers they want to reach and how frequently, event marketing might not be the most appropriate marketing tool to use. Then it might be more preferable to use traditional marketing through for example TV-commercial. Event marketing can therefore be argued not to be seen as a stand-alone marketing tool used by its own, rather as an integrated tool in the retail marketing mix. This can be seen to be in line with Hartley and Pickton (1999) who in our theoretical framework mean that an integrated marketing mix can be on the one hand divided into non-personal one-way communication and on the other hand take the form as personal two-way communication

performed face-to-face (Hartley & Pickton 1999:101). As pointed out by the majority of our respondents event marketing is not the answer to everything but nor is TV-commercial, it is important to combine different media in order to enhance the brand.

5.3 Relationship building: creating a brand relationship to the consumer

Retail companies must, according to all of our respondents create value through brand relationships with the consumer, which can be achieved through interactive relationship marketing. This is in compliance with Burt and Davies (2010) who mean that this is due to the fact that retailing is increasingly viewed as a process rather than a function where relationships, behaviours and capturing of value become vital (Burt & Davies 2010:872). Capturing of behaviours and value can according to Grönroos (2002) effectively be accomplished in a relationship that is built on a communicative and interactive interoperation between companies and consumers (Grönroos 2002:36, 45). Grönroos (2002:37) further argues that the goal with this approach is to get consumers to choose a certain brand over the other. When building relationships our respondents are in agreement that event marketing can function as a tool for retail companies to *get to know the consumer's needs*, making the company able to commit more to the consumer. This in course with with Pitta et.al (2006) who stress the importance of companies getting to know their customers since it can ease targeting the right audiences (Pitta et. al 2006:156, 159-160). Event marketing can thus be argued, with support from our respondents, to fulfil the lack of information about the retail company's consumers. Relationship building can thus be executed through events with a *face-to-face interaction* in order for companies to gather this personal information, since according to theory a physical interaction with the retail company and brand is more efficient when creating a relationship due to the direct dialogue (Burghausen & Fan 2002:93). Moreover, through events, according to the majority of our respondents, retail companies are able to invite the specific target group, conducting the event according to their preferences, which makes it easier to create and develop a relationship. Relationship building activities as pointed out in our theory are used by retail companies hoping to increase brand loyalty, since for example the store environment of directly competing retail companies usually look more alike than different (Macintosh & Lockshin 1997:487).

Through our empirical findings it has become clear that event marketing is to a very large extent build on relationships. Our respondents points out that business is made through

trustworthy relationships during live events which can foster profit and value long-term. This can be referred to as what Grönroos (2002) calls relationship marketing (Grönroos 2002). Thereby event marketing can be argued to serve as a relationship builder for retail companies through events, strengthening the relationship to consumers by getting to know consumers. This can be achieved by demonstrating the products and give away samples in order to get the consumer interested in the company and the brand and hopefully generate sales and maintain consumers.

5.4 Retail marketing communication in the experience economy

It has been noted in our theoretical framework that it is important to integrate innovation and creativity in various marketing activities and to create exciting experiences (Sköld 2010:363, 375 & Mossberg 2003:11, 20) With this theory in mind, it can be argued that retail companies are in an ideal position to *create experiences and a buzz around the brand* for their consumers through events in order to build the brand in our experience economy. Through our interviews and theory it can further be argued that retail companies today through event marketing can affect consumers emotionally by influencing their five senses, which can have a greater impact on consumers' decision making since as pointed out in the theory emphasis is on emotional aspects of decision-making instead of rational features (Morgan et. al 2009:203-204 & Addis et. al 2001:50-51 & Mossberg 2003:11, 21, Sköld 2010:11,20).

Moreover, as discussed in our theory consumers within today's experience economy is seen as active participants rather than passive consumers, who integrate and participate in the creation of the experience (Morgan et. al 2009:203 & Mossberg 2003:17, 19, 39). Our respondents share the opinion that the event marketing discipline can be seen as an effective tool inviting consumers to *become active participants*, by for example asking questions engaging them in the communication process via various activities at the event. Thus consumers will affect the outcome of the event, which hopefully will result in the consumer spreading positive word-of-mouth and become loyal to the retailer. The above argument can be confirmed by our theory where it is discussed that the consumer as an active participant, rather than a passive, act as a co-producer influencing the outcome of the experience when attending an event (Morgan et. al 2009:203, Mossberg 2003:17, 19, 39).

Creating activities that invites the consumer to react can further be performed through an event forcing a counter performance from the consumer and will thereby probably strengthen consumers' memory of the event and dialogues that have taken place during the event and thus the brand. This is confirmed in our theory where Morgan et. al (2009) and Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that companies by staging, casting and performing memorable and unique experiences can achieve long-lasting competitive advantages over its competitors (Morgan et. al 2009, 201-202, Pine & Gilmore 1999). Furthermore it was stated in the interviews that the way to get consumers active is dependent on the target group and the aim. The reason why the consumers are able to participate in the communication process through events can be claimed to be due to the affect of the five senses that can be stimulated during the event by engaging activities. The retail company can thus "steal time" by communicating the brand through an experience creating a dialogue. Since the consumer has done an active choice participating in the event he/she thereby can be argued, with the support of our respondents, to be more receptive than via traditional one-way communication through for example a TV-commercial that is not self elected. In traditional marketing, in accordance with our respondents, the brain often screen information that is uninteresting, which means that even if the consumer see a TV-commercial the message might be forgotten two minutes later. However, when participating at an event it can be argued that the consumer is more active and thereby probably remembers what has been communicated.

As pointed out in our theory the experience economy has highly affected the retail industry where Mossberg (2003) therefore argues that companies within the retail industry are on the leap towards the entertainment business (Mossberg 2003:34-37, 39-43). In line with this theoretical statement all of our respondents were unanimous that event marketing can create positive experiences via events which according to our theory; can strengthen the entertainment feature, give a concurrency of business and *fun* and also give the consumer that "little extra" when delivering a promotional message which is requested by consumers. These elements are further pointed out by Mossberg (2003) to be the aim of retail marketing within the experience economy (Mossberg 2003:34-37, 43). Further, these elements were exemplified through a large Swedish furniture retailer that incorporates these joyful event elements and additional services giving something back to the consumers in order to enhance the total shopping experience.

Conclusions

6

This sixth part of our thesis aims to relate our learning outcomes to our problem discussion to illustrate how our learning outcomes can contribute with insights around our purpose. We will clarify what we believe constitutes contributions to the research from this thesis and finally our recommendations of what we mean, can be interesting to investigate further. Additionally, we will italicise, what we mean are words of importance for understanding the role of event marketing when building a retail brand.

6.1 Learning outcomes: The role of event marketing for retail companies when building their brand.

The purpose of our thesis has been to enhance knowledge about the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies to build their brand in a strong experience economy and media buzz. To study the role of event marketing in this perspective we have concentrated on; brand strategic intentions and practical implementation when building a retail brand. To study this we have used a qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews as primary sources and secondary sources to confirm, contradict or add information to the primary sources. Moreover, we formulated following research question:

What is the role of event marketing as a communication tool for retail companies when building their brand?

In the analysis part we have tried to identify the role of event marketing for retail companies when building their brand in today's experience economy and increased media noise by analysing our two major building blocks with concepts belonging to these blocks.

The role of event marketing when building a retail brand is to...

...involve, steal time and bind consumers to the brand emotionally

We have distinguished that event marketing in a retail context is used to create brand awareness and *top of-mind-experiences*. Further, we mean that event marketing plays an important role to *catch consumers' attention* and get them to repel from other stress factors of that day. These eye-catching events ease the delivery of the brand message for retail companies' making consumers more responsive. Events and top-of mind-experiences thus functions as "*time-stealing*" approaches. Event marketing also has a role in creating meetings where events *involve the consumer to interact and engage in a dialogue* with the retail brand distracting the consumer's thoughts away from other brands. Furthermore, we mean that event marketing has a role in *creating an emotional bond* with consumers through interaction in order to relate a certain retail brand to the event itself, which can enhance the remembrance of the retail brand. However, we have learnt that event marketing when creating brand awareness cannot be compared to the role of traditional TV-commercial when launching a new product reaching a large audience with a generalizable message.

...clarify brand identity via five senses

The role of event marketing building brand identity for retail companies is important to differentiate these companies from competitors. It is crucial for the retail companies to adjust its promotional approach to the targeted consumer in order to meet the individual identity of the consumer and thereby creating coherence between the retail brand identity and the personal identity of the consumer. It is necessary in today's competitive market to have a distinct brand identity since retail products and stores can be relatively imitated. We state that event marketing thus have an important role for retail companies *demonstrating the retail brands' right identity in a clearer way* in order to deliver what it stands for and what makes it unique and thereby differentiate the brand from competitors. This since events can affect consumers' *five senses* creating both symbolic and functional associations of the retail brand *highlighting the brand identity* by letting the consumer taste, smell, hear, feel and see the brand.

...enhance brand image in the mind of the consumer

Since brand identity is the counterpart of brand image we state that event marketing is effective when creating brand image since events *help positioning a retail brand in the mind*

of the consumers enhancing the brand image. Event marketing functions to build brand image since it is created by consumers' earlier experiences with the brand where events can provide spectacular experiences affecting consumers' image of the retail brand via different senses, which can enhance consumers' buying power, their willingness to pay more and not change between brands.

...provide targeted communication and reach through the media noise

In the second brand implementation building block we highlight the role of event marketing as a marketing component complementing traditional advertising activities within the retail marketing mix. Retail companies must take into account the synergy of different types of promotional activities, i.e. integrated marketing to build a brand since it is a communication channel challenging traditional media usage. Thus, we mean that event marketing can achieve penetrating power and *reach through the media noise* in today's experience economy by acting as a source of *targeted direct communication* in contrast to more generalizable traditional advertising. The integrated marketing approach can consist of different mixes of marketing tools delivering the promotional message. Depending on what kind of message, it might not be enough to use one-way communication in order to sell a product and promote a brand. Additional two-way communication, such as event marketing, might be needed in order to get a direct contact with the consumer and fast results about what the consumer thinks about the product. This marketing approach with event marketing as an integrated component within the retail marketing mix can help break through today's advertising clutter and help retail companies provide a distinct and clear message through targeted face-to-face interaction and achieving a higher credibility. Event marketing should not be seen as a stand-alone marketing tool since other traditional marketing tools can serve a better purpose depending on the message delivered, rather it should be seen as an integrated tool in the retail marketing mix.

...create a face-to-face interaction and a forum learning about consumers

Building relations is one of the most important factors of the retail marketing mix due to the fact that many retail companies today lack information about their customers and since stores and products look more alike. Therefore we claim that retail companies must *learn about consumers' needs* at a deeper level through events in order to strengthen relationships and thereby get consumers to become loyal. Moreover, learning about consumers' goals and preferences through an event makes the retail company able to commit more, fulfil the lack of

consumer information and enhance the attractiveness of the company. We mean that event marketing therefore is an effective way for retail companies to get to know consumers through a *face-to-face interaction* and by engaging in an immediate dialogue unveiling consumers' preferences. Event marketing can furthermore target the right audience since it serves as a forum where retail companies are able to invite their specific target group, conducting the event according to their preferences, which makes it easier to create and develop a relationship.

...create a buzz, experience and fun through active participants

Finally, we state that event marketing has an obvious role integrating creativity and innovation via various marketing activities creating exciting experiences. This is crucial in today's experience economy in order to meet changing consumer demands and thereby *create a buzz* around the retail brand. Moreover, retail companies can through positive experiences affect consumers emotionally by influencing consumers' five senses, which can have a great impact on consumers' decision making of retail brands since decision making is grounded in emotional aspects rather than rational features. Event marketing has further appeared to have impact activating consumers through *experiences* and thereby "*creating*" a *participant consumer*. The consumer thus becomes a co-producer creating value and affects the outcome of the event, which therefore can strengthen the consumer's memory of the event and the retail brand. Event marketing, according to this thesis, consequently plays an important role for retail companies when creating experiences via events in order to strengthen the entertainment feature, give a concurrency of business and *fun* and give the consumer that "little extra" when delivering a promotional message.

In summary we state that event marketing plays a vital role for retail companies when building their brand by incorporating brand building elements such as; brand awareness, brand identity and brand image. This since, event marketing has the role of taking into account the experience economy, today's media noise, changing consumer demands, a competitive environment where relationship building is vital, demand for targeted experiences and the importance of the brand as a competitive weapon. Furthermore, we can demonstrate that event marketing functions as a tool for retail companies to maintain their current customers and thus create the overall goal and outcome of brand loyalty. An event can help provide the retail company in engaging in personal contacts with consumers, which can

generate positive feelings and make the consumer spread positive word-of-mouth to acquaintances enhancing the consumers' loyalty to the brand.

6.2 Contributinal insights

Since retail companies play an important role of acting as a source of “experience stage” and a source of creating memories rather than simply providing goods to attract their consumers, marketers within retailing must adjust to experience consumer demands by adapting their marketing communication activities. This knowledge can be used by retail marketing managers who can learn from this thesis, where the identification of event marketing's different roles have been emphasized since it has appeared that event marketing is a growing trend within retailing. Therefore, by using the insights from this thesis, managers can ease the adaptation to this event marketing trend. A suggestion for retail marketing managers to consider could be to incorporate event marketing activities by active actions seeking their target group, exemplified by Ben & Jerry's summer tour at festivals. Another consideration could be a business-to-business strategy between different industries. For example a retail apparel company hosting a VIP night can cooperate with a food company that provides the event with food and drinks or popular music artists attending the event to strengthen the entertainment feature.

After our study of event marketing in practice, we have found and identified important learning outcomes, which influence brand building in a retail context that previous academic literature has not emphasized. This, since we have approached brand building in a retail context from a different perspective by integrating event marketing in the retail marketing mix. Thus, we have been able to identify a valuable connection between event marketing and the brand building process in a retail context, which has not previously been illustrated in the academic literature noticed and investigated by us. That is to say, the connection between the stimulation of the fives senses through event marketing and the brand building process in today's experience economy. Thus, we mean that we have contributed with one major academic insight; according to us events are used as the most single effective tool of providing a “high touch” experience by engaging the five senses where retail companies can create more memorable experiences, creating relationships and build their brand. Therefore, we argue that event marketing should be integrated, or at least considered as an important marketing tool within the retail marketing mix when building the brand both in practice and in academia.

Thus, it cannot be used as a stand-alone marketing tool, it has to be integrated since it functions most efficiently in combination with different components within the promotional part of the retail marketing mix. That is to say, the use of event marketing is not the “only” way or the “right way” for retail companies when building their brand, but according to us it is a new insight which we mean is valuable for retail companies to consider when building their brand in today’s experience economy. Although, we mean that event marketing through this study cannot be argued to be considered to be suitable for all companies within the retail industry, since limited information has been evaluated. However, we yet again stress that this study points at an important trend which should be considered by both researchers within the research field but also retail companies who have not yet integrated event marketing in their retail marketing mix when building their brand.

6.3 Reflections and further research

Since we now are in a stage where we have enriched our knowledge about event marketing in a retail context when building the brand it would be interesting to investigate if mentioned retail companies would confirm or contradict our new academic insight of event marketing’s role when building a retail brand. This could be studied and analyzed using a qualitative approach such as interviews. In a next step it would be interesting to evaluate how consumers experience and evaluate the retail brand through events and if it is as effective as we claim in this study. This can be investigated through for example participant observations or surveys. These mentioned approaches might not have generated and resulted in identical conclusions and insights as this study since it is approached from other perspectives and experiences, which might be seen as limitation of this study. We mean that with information and insights from these three different perspectives, it could enhance the understanding of the role of event marketing as a marketing tool when building a retail brand in a wider context.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide

Allmänt om företaget:

Vad innebär din position i företaget?

I vilken bransch återfinns främst era klienter?

Vad innebär event marketing för dig?

Event marketing (huvudområde)

Hur skulle du beskriva event marketings roll för att bygga och utveckla ett varumärke kopplat till begreppen:

Varumärkesmedvetenhet

Företags identitet

Varumärkeslojalitet

Hur tror du att konsumenter integrerar med varumärket genom event marketing?

Vilka är enligt dig de främsta fördelarna med att använda sig av event marketing i ett marknadsföringssyfte?

Vad tror du event marketing som kommunikationsmedel kan tillhandahålla som inte de traditionella marknadsföringsmetoderna, t.ex. tv-reklam, kan bidra med?

Vilken genomslagskraft tror du event marketing har för att nå ut med företags budskap i dagens upplevelse och media mättade samhälle?

Vilken roll har upplevelsebaserade events, enligt dig, när det gäller att skapa relationer mellan era klienter och dess konsumenter?

I traditionella marknadsföringssammanhang, t.ex. tv-reklam, beskrivs ofta kunden som en passiv deltagare. Hur upplever du konsumenternas delaktighet i eventsammanhang?

Hur engagerar ert företag konsumenterna på era klienters events för att de ska bli aktiva deltagare vid event-tillfället?

Som ett eventföretag, ingår det då i era arbetsuppgifter att marknadsföra era klienters event?

- Om ja, vilka marknadsföringskanaler använder ni er då utav för att nå ut till konsumenterna om att ett event ska äga rum?

Vilka svårigheter anser du vara förknippade med sammanställandet av ett event? (Richard)

Event marketing i en retail kontext (huvudområde)

Varför tror du att just retailföretag använder event marketing för att bygga och utveckla sitt varumärke?

Varför använder retailföretag er istället för att arrangera eventen själva?

Varför tror du att det har skett en ökning av användandet av event marketing hos företag inom retail branschen?

Hur kan event marketing bidra till att öka retailföretagets attraktivitet för att generera marknadsandelar?

Hur skiljer sig retailföretag i sammanställandet av events gentemot företag i andra branscher?

Vilka typer av känslor tror du att era retailföretags klienter vill frambringa hos konsumenterna genom ett event?

Hur kan event marketing användas av retailföretag för att öka förståelsen om deras konsumenters behov, efterfrågan och personlighet?

Hur producerar ni era events så för att ge konsumenten ett förhöjt nöjesinslag som förser kunden det lilla extra? (Richard)

Vilka faktorer är viktiga att ta hänsyn till vid framställandet av ett retailföretags event för att återspegla företagets identitet? (Richard)

Finns det tydliga direktiv från företagen? (Richard)

Övriga frågor:

Hur ser du på event marketings framtid inom retail branschen?

Wrap-up question:

Vill du tillägga något övrigt?

Kan vi återkomma och komplettera med eventuella frågor?

Appendix 2

Intervju guide Andersson:

Allmänt om företaget:

Vad innebär din position i företaget?

Vad innebär event marketing för dig?

Event marketing (Ett av våra huvudområden i uppsatsen)

Hur skulle du beskriva event marketings roll för att bygga och utveckla ett varumärke kopplat till begreppen:

Varumärkesmedvetenhet

Företags identitet

Varumärkeslojalitet

Hur tror du att konsumenter integrerar med varumärket genom event marketing?

Vilka är enligt dig de främsta fördelarna med att använda sig av event marketing i ett marknadsföringssyfte?

Vad tror du event marketing som kommunikationsmedel kan tillhandahålla som inte de traditionella marknadsföringsmetoderna, t.ex. tv-reklam, kan bidra med?

Vilken genomslagskraft tror du event marketing har för att nå ut med företags budskap i dagens upplevelse och media mättade samhälle?

Vilken roll har upplevelsebaserade events, enligt dig, när det gäller att skapa relationer mellan era klienter (klienter= era kunder/artister) och dess konsumenter?

I traditionella marknadsföringssammanhang, t.ex. tv-reklam, beskrivs ofta kunden som en passiv deltagare. Hur upplever du konsumenternas delaktighet i eventsammanhang?

Hur engagerar ert företag konsumenterna på era klienters events för att de ska bli aktiva deltagare vid event-tillfället?

Som ett eventföretag, ingår det då i era arbetsuppgifter att marknadsföra era klienters event? (ex. om ICA samarbetar med EMD och det ska promotas i butiken sköter ni då marknadsföringen av eventet eller är det ICA?)

- Om ja, vilka marknadsföringskanaler använder ni er då utav för att nå ut till konsumenterna om att ett event ska äga rum?

Vilka svårigheter anser du vara förknippade med sammanställandet av ett event?

Event marketing i en retail kontext (Ett av våra huvudområden i uppsatsen)

Varför tror du att just retailföretag använder event marketing (i ert fall ex. ICA samarbete med artist) för att bygga och utveckla sitt varumärke?

Varför använder retailföretag er istället för att arrangera eventen själva?

Varför tror du att det har skett en ökning av användandet av event marketing hos företag inom retailbranschen?

Hur kan event marketing bidra till att öka retailföretagets attraktivitet för att generera marknadsandelar?

Hur skiljer sig retailföretag i sammanställandet av events gentemot företag i andra branscher? (i ert fall ex. ICA vs en konsert eller liknande)

Vilka typer av känslor tror du att era retailföretags klienter vill frambringa hos konsumenterna genom ett event?

Hur kan event marketing användas av retailföretag för att öka förståelsen om deras konsumenters: behov, efterfrågan och personlighet?

Hur producerar ni era events så för att ge konsumenten ett förhöjt nöjesinslag som förser kunden det lilla extra?

Vilka faktorer är viktiga att ta hänsyn till vid framställandet av ett retailföretags event för att återspegla företagets identitet?

Finns det tydliga direktiv från företagen vid sammanställandet av ett event?

Övriga frågor:

Hur ser du på event marketings framtid inom retailbranschen?

Wrap-up question:

Vill du tillägga något övrigt?

Kan vi återkomma och komplettera med eventuella frågor?