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The series is a result of co-creation between students and teachers in the course Strategic Brand Management (BUSN21 – 7.5 University Credit Points; 8 weeks 50% study time), part of the master program International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund School of Economics and Management, Sweden. The published papers represent the result of the intellectual work of students under supervision of the heads of course. The content of the papers is to be read as student reports albeit the journal format. The papers are free to download and should be cited following international conventions.

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Are limited editions limited to products?

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to explore whether service can be implemented as limited edition in order to strengthen the brand and to drive business.

Methodology/Approach: This research is based on a qualitative approach with a multi case study analyzing Visit Sweden, Finnair and Lund University. Each brand has implemented a limited service of own kind this year.

Findings: The research showcases the potential of service as limited edition, and it proves that limited services can valuably shape a brand and its image. Limited services create an urgent purchase incentive that rests upon the scarcity mechanism.

Research limitations/implications: This paper introduces services as limited edition with a focus on raising awareness for the topic. As such, further research must be conducted with more cases in other industries, comparative studies towards limited products, and in-depth analyses that evaluate the phenomenon step by step.

Managerial Implications: Managers may find this paper useful in order to conduct persuasive marketing with limited services as alternative strategy and unique business measures compared to other sales promotion techniques.

Originality/Value: This paper addresses the existent gap between limited editions and service that can be noticed in both business and research areas.

Keywords: limited edition, service, Visit Sweden, Finnair, Lund University

Paper type: research paper

Introduction

Limited editions are a certain type of innovations that currently conquer the market but along their way, they are somehow losing their magic—they "stray into lazy marketing" (John Mathers in Clark, 2010, p. 24) and their contour becomes more and more meaningless. As such, limited editions are not an all-time (or all-brand) solution, and they need to be managed and monitored (Clark, 2019)—or maybe even re-created.

Today's society is dominated by services as central creator of customer value, and the value adding process is strongly affected by the interaction between customers and the company's front-line (Echeverri & Edvardsson, 2012). Here, it feels like customers seek unique adventures rather than pure performance, and Cialdini (2006) very much addresses these social needs with his principles of persuasion: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking and consensus. For the magic of limitation, scarcity and consensus are the key players, and service can adequately depict these and, thus, address today's social proof and fear of missing out (FOMO) (Merriam Webster, n.d.)—maybe even better as products do themselves.

Limited services and limited products can be summarized under the umbrella term of limited editions but their intentions and outline very much differ. However, it seems like there is a gap between limited editions and services in both brand management and research analyses. As such, our aim is to disclose the potential of limited services, and to evaluate whether limited services are thinkable and/or even already exist: how do they look like, what do they do, and what are their strengths?

Literature review

The idea of limited editions in service may not be, overall, new but it still is an unformulated concept that, moreover, misses research. Since temporary products have congested the market for a couple of years already, their outline became blurry so that they have to be 'post-defined' first in order to access it for service again. In this regard, service may also require new considerations from yet another angle that allows us to consider it for a limited implementation. Both concepts—the first one more than the latter—must also be evaluated in concern of their impact for companies and customers so that a thorough review of both terms is indispensable.

Limited edition

Most new products on the market are line or range extensions (Esch & Winter, 2009; Kapferer, 2015), and limited editions have conquered a striking amount (Clark, 2010). Limited editions (LE) are a special form of line extensions as additional products to an existing product category under an existing brand's name—and compared to other extensions, they are of limited availability and moderate atypicality (Esch & Winter, 2009).

The editions' deliberate limitation taps into the scarcity principle and its premise that a product seems more valuable as soon as, or as far as, it appears to be limited (Wu & Lee, 2016). This scarcity mechanism partly rests upon the commodity theory stating that a commodity—a transferable, useful and desirable product—grows in value if it is difficult or even impossible to obtain (Brock, 1968). There are typical types of scarcity messages: limited-time scarcity (LTS) that refers to a certain duration of time, and limited-quantity scarcity (LQS) that rests upon a certain amount of products (Jang et al, 2015). Both types create an aura of exclusivity around the product that is translated into an enhanced evaluation by the customer and—depending on other moderating attributes such as personality traits, motivation, culture—higher purchase incentives (Jang et al, 2015).

As such, consumers are willing to make an effort in obtaining a product although other comparable alternatives of the same product category are easily and immediately accessible in the market (Jang et al, 2015). In fact, they are eager to take this effort for conspicuous products, unlike non-conspicuous ones, that signal uniqueness, status and wealth towards others—and here, LQS editions score best (Jang et al, 2015), depending on the product/service.

LE had previously been reserved to high involvement products only but they are now—and for a couple of decades already—adapted for low involvement products as well (Esch & Winter, 2009). The most successful LE evolve with the "desire to create something exceptional" (Clark, 2010, p. 25) with a particular quality or taste, and these editions are most likely to "strike a chord, turning the casual consumer of a product into an

avid collector and advocate for the brand" (Clark, 2010, p. 25).

The label of scarcity—referred to by phrases such as "limited edition", "only for a short period of time" or similar—significantly increases the product's exclusiveness (Jang et al, 2015) but it also, on purpose or by accident, often misses a specific declaration.

The promotional mechanism of LE very much differs towards general products (Jang et al, 2015) and also towards seasonal editions that are bound to certain times of the year (e.g. winter) or even more specific events (e.g. Christmas) (Clark, 2019)—as such, seasonal products are bound to time, while LE are bound to a time (or quantity) frame. For LE, it is more likely to obtain the label of "deluxe edition", "special edition" or "collector's edition" as somehow synonyms that clearly state their value. It is also important to distinguish, or rather oppose, scarcity towards popularity as conflicting promotional mechanisms: scarcity as a supply-driven approach creates LE (and LTS) with a feeling of exclusiveness, whereas popularity as a demand-driven tactic rather calls for best sellers with a social preference (or LQS) (Wu & Lee, 2016).

Service

Service refers to "a valuable action, deed, or effort to satisfy a need or fulfill a demand" (Business Dictionary, n.d.) and both Grönroos (2015) and Kotler et al (2006) suggest that this is a process of different activities rather than a single act. As such, service is a complex phenomenon, and many attempts have been made to categorize its wide range of types. Grönroos (2015), for a start, classifies services by the level of complexity, standardization, consumer contact and consumer involvement, and he also evaluates the main point of reference: high-tech services refer to the handling by technological equipment whereas high-touch services emphasize social interaction. Services can further be divided in regards of their regularity: Continuous services happen regularly with a close contact to the customer, whereas discontinuous services are sporadic (Grönroos, 2015). Lastly, service can be evaluated upon four distinctive characteristics: intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability (Echeverri & Edvardsson 2012; Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016).

1. A service is intangible since it can neither be experienced before purchase nor returned after consumption—as such, it is abstract and difficult to assess.
2. A service is heterogeneous since it cannot be standardized—as such, it is determined by its actors and difficult to compare.
3. A service is inseparable since it is produced and consumed at the very same time—as such, it is inextricably bound to the specific situation and difficult to judge objectively.
4. A service is perishable since it cannot be stored or saved up for later—as such, it is inextricably bound to place and time, and difficult to evaluate.

Hence, the service person and the consumer coevally create customer value by offering and demanding service that cannot be altogether homogenized. Here, customers hardly access experience and credence cues because a service can only be assessed while or after having happened, and it can never truly be compared to alternatives (Kapferer, 2015).

A company's perspective

New products are an important leverage for a company's growth, and the creation of LE has become an almost natural part of marketing strategies in order to test-launch new products without running the risk of negative effects (Esch & Winter, 2009): if a product fails, it can easily be withdrawn while a successful edition may be prolonged to stay (Clark, 2010). As such, LE decrease the risk of "loss of face" (Esch & Winter, 2009, p. 235) while, simultaneously, increase the customer's purchase incentive, the customer's awareness for both the product line and the brand, and the brand's image and differentiation towards competitors (Esch & Winter, 2009). This product trial on the real market under an established brand name holds lower risks and efforts than creating a new brand from scratch, and while weaker brands may increase their overall brand image, stronger brands—with a relatively stable image—earn credits for their creativity (Esch & Winter, 2009). In general, it is this creativity and energy that allows companies to spread excitement on the short-term and desirability on the long-term (Maxwell, n.d.), and it perfectly addresses social proof and FOMO.

In today's mass market, atypical editions strike best, and the label of limitation—as phrase endowed to the product/service—allows companies to stretch beyond boundaries, and to gradually increase their market fit (Esch & Winter, 2009); and if limiting the edition in more than one respect (e.g. time AND supplier), companies can further boost their presence and exclusiveness (Clark, 2010). In addition, LE can also decrease the cannibalization within the company's product portfolio, and they also are a valuable alternative to mainstream sales promotions (Esch & Winter, 2009). In a way, a LE is a company's genuine chance to free itself from every day's business, and to re-create the connection to their customers that—nonetheless—must stay authentic to the brand's essence (Maxwell, n.d.).

As such, LE earn a special position within a company's product portfolio (Esch & Winter, 2009) and its distribution network (Clark, 2010) so that it deeply affects a company's consistence: it complicates its procedures by (potentially) adding steps to different stages in the supply chain, and it can also overshadow the daily business and certain core activities (Esch & Winter, 2009). Besides, the limitation in time (and additional regards) creates a pressure to sell the products on the whole, and rather fast, so that the remaining stock—after the limited time frame—must be else-how and elsewhere flogged (Clark, 2010); however, this is even stronger for seasonal products. In contrast to well-established products, LE also risk fast saturation and wear-off effects (Esch & Winter, 2009).

Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate both short-term and long-term impact, and all resources involved because energy and budget may—for certain cases—be better placed for investments in the development of the flagship product and/or innovations (Clark, 2010), against the LE creator's (or creators') opinion or wish.

With LE, companies aim to (better) address differentiated customer needs so that they—most certainly—come from a market orientation: an outside-in mindset in which the customers and their actual and latent wants are in the center of an organization so that brand image is key (Urde, Baumgarth &

Merrilees, 2011). As such, companies follow a market-driven approach by responding to the current market situation but they, simultaneously, create unique value propositions that base on rather market-driving concepts (Ghauri & Cateora, 2016). However, successful LE add a brand perspective into this new value proposition so that companies gradually shift from a market orientation to a market and brand orientation in which customer centricity is still key but brand identity also a virtue (Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees, 2011). By doing so, companies re-innovate their value adding process and—literally—start off with new product attributes and also positioning, while acting for the customers as image creator and catalyst (Melin, 2002). This process raises both brand awareness and brand image that—as the main piles of brand knowledge—increase brand equity (Keller, 2006) and additional goals that lie outside of the company's inner power: free PR, and buzz in traditional and social media. In addition, the deliberate limitation achieves other immediate goals as well: (maintained) exclusivity and increased profit (Shin, Eastman & Mothersbaugh, 2017).

A customer's perspective

LE also influence the value adding process on the customer's side with higher involvement, sensitivity and awareness (Kapferer, 2015). Among a range of products to choose from, consumers aspire to own LE in order to reinforce their self-esteem and/or their social status (Shin, Eastman & Mothersbaugh, 2017). A foremost research in consumer behavior by Russel Belk (1988) describes the role of consumption for the human identity by which possession creates an extended self that ultimately leads to an ideal version: what I own is who I am. Here, Higgins (1987) advanced with his idea of the true self, the ideal self and the normative self in both a private and a social perspective, and LE are used for the everlasting hunt of an ideal self to both private and social extent.

Customers are encouraged by private and social events, and Maslow (1943) states that their motivation is determined by the fulfillment of different needs—and LE may be all about belonging, esteem and self-actualization. As such, customers constantly seek innovation and change, and the LE's perception and judgment rest upon scarcity, exploration and categorization (Esch & Winter, 2009).

The idea of deliberate scarcity provides different equations that all explain the customer's purchase incentive: a scarce product is attractive (in order to boost the customer's self-image), costly (in order to highlight the customer's status) and/or unique (in order to increase the customer's experience) (Esch & Winter, 2009). However, it is mostly about the "use-it-or-loose-it" (Esch & Winter, 2009, p. 235) mechanism with the transience of opportunity that drives customers into purchasing (Esch & Winter, 2009). This scarcity effect mainly happens upon deeper involvement, and detailed consideration that create a positive judgment and stronger purchase intentions. However, these effects can also be realized upon low involvement throughout heuristic mechanisms (Esch & Winter, 2009).

The idea of exploration refers to the wish for a change that is motivated by the consumer's level of boredom and, ultimately, leads to a more positive attitude and stronger purchase intentions (Esch & Winter, 2009) —and it is here, where atypical editions strike and also score best.

Lastly, the idea of categorization refers to the customer's identification of a product's belonging to a certain group, and LE can here—with levels between assimilation and contrast—achieve atypicality (Esch & Winter, 2009). As such, customers assess the relationship between LE and the brand (with its classic products and/or prototype), which strongly influences the judgment In addition, customers may translate the product's belonging into a social perspective: with having a product of a certain brand and type, the consumer belongs to a certain group of people.

If all these perspectives—scarcity on the brand's side, and exploration and categorization on the customer's side—score high, a LE is most likely to succeed (Esch & Winter, 2009) and to create a sense of urgency (Shin, Eastman & Mothersbaugh, 2017; Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011). This urgency may also rest upon certain biases, and Kahnemann (2011) argues that these—attribute substitution, halo effect and similar—happen in the fast working and unconscious part of the brain. As such, a company must address the customer's monkey brain.

Methodology

In order to approximate the phenomenon of LE in services, we will present three case studies from different areas of business.

A case study can be of qualitative nature (Lundahl & Skärvad, 2016) so that we will describe and analyze cases in order to, for the first time, outline the concept of limited services—and this shall be used for further research. The chosen brands are Visit Sweden, Finnair and Lund University, and this selection allows us to study different forms of organization and different services to be

marketed: a country, a flight, and education. All of the evaluated services happened during this year so that they were realized upon recent developments in society and economy and, thus, serve best for analyzing what can be considered as 'next level of LE'.

The multi-case study allows us to draw cross-case conclusions. Each service is briefly described before analyzed in detail, and we will apply the suggested theories in order to create groundwork for comparison. Our aim is to shed light onto LE in services: whether they are, at all, thinkable or, even, already exist. Sales promotions and product terms are excluded due to their link to a specific business reason or product. We will also focus on services that are not (directly) linked to products, and we also assume that the services are—to a certain extent, as to the premise of limitation—discontinuous. In addition, temporary performances at for example festivals or opera houses can also not be taken into account because their limitation is an essential part of their business model.

Case 1: The Edible Country

'The Edible Country' is an initiative from Visit Sweden (2019), 'the marketing agency' for Sweden, and it aims to transform the whole country into a do-it-yourself gourmet restaurant. In collaboration with four of Sweden's Michelin-starred chefs, this enterprise offers high-class recipes online and spectacular tables on premises across the whole country—for free, and add-on services such as cooking kits but also chef or guide participation against payment. The whole menu consists of nine courses, and each of them represents a season and a part of Sweden while each chef brings in individual notes. With this service, the initiative wishes to inspire people to eat healthier, and to increase awareness for

the country's nature—because people tend to eat unhealthy with ingredients from all over the world but Sweden.

Note: This initiative was available from roughly May to September, depending on the tables' location in either Southern or Northern Sweden—with available bookings on every Thursday. The whole project was realized with contributions by bookatable, Fjällräven and Primus, and support by The European Agricultural Fund and The Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation. All actors and all Swedish counties actively promote this initiative, and also its values of health, closeness to nature, and the freedom to roam.

Case 2: Hear the Taste

"Hear the Taste" is a pilot project from Finnair (2019) and it aims to revolutionize airplane dining with a 100% taste experience. In collaboration with its signature chefs and various musicians (e.g. Roxette), Finnair offers scientific soundscapes with sounds from Swedish Lapland to create the perfect setting for an in-flight meal—because the plane's low background hum reduces all effects of flavors. In order to share this idea, Finnair set up a pop-up lab " Hear-the-Taste" in Stockholm in March: enthusiasts were able to try chocolate samples while listening to selected soundscapes. With this service, Finnair wishes to create a more enjoyable dining experience, and to increase awareness for the brand itself. Although this project is on pause right now, other signature menus and soundscapes are yet to come.

Note: The pop-up store was located at Norrmalmstorg in Stockholm from 07 - 09 March 2019, while another event—a silent-headphone-party-styled dinner for selected guests—already took place in November 2018. The whole project won

an ISA-award and it especially increased the brand awareness in the Chinese market that was first to be addressed, and most advanced when it comes to interests in technology and Nordic nature—this is why an artificial intelligence mini program, which recognizes food and offers soundtracks, was launched via WeChat as well.

Case 3: SBM Class 2019

Strategic Brand Management is a course at Lund University and it aims to bring forth the brand managers of tomorrow. In collaboration with two lecturers, this class offers insights into brands and brand assets in order to deepen the knowledge and understanding of brand management. As such, both teachers alternate in lecturing while the students prepare assignments and presentations. With this service, Lund University wishes to provide its students with the best knowledge, and to increase awareness for the brand itself.

Note: This year's class is scheduled from 2 September 2019 - 21 October 2019, while the class in general is held each year for students from all over the world—with different backgrounds and different interests.

Multi case study

By evaluating these services, we approximate the idea of 'limited services' and establish first ideas about how these can be classified. All brands can be considered as service brands, and the last one may also be perceived as servant brand (Fournier, Breazeale & Avery 2015).

Case 1: The Edible Country

With its initiative "The Edible Country", Visit Sweden educates customers in their need of relating to nature, and simplifies the path to

actually find their roots again—as such, it drives the market towards a more sustainable life that, for many countries, is impersonated in Sweden as a nation. As a result, the company (and the country) positions itself in yet another way around the core values of nature and freedom that are translated into a customer's wants and needs, and created a strengthened brand image. By joining forces with companies that live up to the same standards, such as Fjällräven, it can further increase its reach and awareness—in fact, all partners as well as single counties conduct heavy market communications.

"The Edible Country" was running for a couple of months only, and this time frame was mainly determined by the weather—because the tables cannot be used during early spring, late autumn, and the long Swedish winter. However, it is neither clearly marked with the wording "limited edition" nor described with a definite time frame—it will or it will not come back next year, and everybody that has not yet participated ignored their FOMO and missed out their chance; possibly. As such, this service was limited in time (LTS) and quantity (LQS) because the tables were only available on maximum 22 days— and even less, for tables in the high North. The idea of plucking and picking ingredients from nature is rather simple, although seldom put to practice, while the open-air cooking seems more adventurous. However, it is the tables' placement and the offered add-ons that create the service's atypicality, and an aura of uniqueness that, surprisingly or contradictorily, can be free of charge. With the DIY procedure, the customers' involvement skyrockets in both senses: interest and responsibility. As such, this service is end-to-end high-touch, and it probably is the initiative's aim to even

put back technology for a while in order to focus on the nature.

Customers translate the initiative's scarcity into a unique opportunity, and they are most certainly driven by their need of exploration—they want to break out of daily life, and cook like people back in the days. In addition, the company also breaks out by creating a atypical service apart from classic online information—and this is notices by the customer's categorization that also translates into social perspectives.

If breaking down the initiative's idea, it is a simple process of 'just' cooking in 'just' nature but it nonetheless inherently carries an idea of a unique happening that addresses both social proof and FOMO: participants can show their sense of responsibility for the nature and simultaneously enjoy its magic. In fact, all selves are active: the true self in roaming free, the ideal self in implementing ideas, and the normative self in caring about nature.

Despite the fact that truly everybody can book a table—as long as the tables are still, in regards of time and quantity, available—the initiative creates an idea of exclusiveness because the tables' sites are neither easily accessible nor at all known. As such, Visit Sweden makes exceptional places as a far-fetched idea rather touchable for everybody that feels enthusiastic about nature and the (scenic) range of possibilities. In fact, Visit Sweden does it once again if their marketing campaign with airbnb, in which they marketed the whole of Sweden as accommodation, is evaluated similarly. It seems that Visit Sweden does not have a defined every day's business, which they have to shake off in order to be creative, but rather a conceptual mission that can (better: has to) always be solved differently—its message has

to be renewed while its raison d'être remains the same. In fact, they even prolong their reach by cooperating with companies that share the same values.

The initiative rests upon creativity and a love for details that immediately create associations in the customer's hearts and minds that, eventually, become tangible. Visit Sweden neither has a shop nor products (or services) to regularly offer to customers because marketing a country cannot simply happen throughout souvenirs and gift shops. As such, the initiative is rather discontinuous while Visit Sweden's general service wit online travel information and tips are continuous in a high-tech way. With only having services, however, Visit Sweden encounters high complexity that even increases with the variety in proposition and duration. The offered customization—having open-air dinner with or without a cooking kit, or with or without a guide—is realized throughout bookatable's standard service and Visit Sweden's additional engagement, and it is surprisingly both that enchants the customer: it helps them to realize an idea that they probably had before.

Despite its uncommon nature, this initiative meets all characteristics of services: it is inherently intangible, irreversibly heterogeneous, always inseparable and overall perishable. As such, it is an exciting start of a promising analysis but it nonetheless provokes questions: do the various sites where the service takes place will reduce the initiative's uniqueness; or is it just accessible for a wider range of customers so that it addresses more people? Is it a line extension to a normal restaurant? Is it in-between seasonal and limited editions? Can a service be for free?

Case 2: Hear the Taste

"Hear the Taste" clearly states the aim of enhancing the experience of dining by adding yet another sense to smell and to taste: hearing. As a continuous innovation (or at least an idea), this pilot project needs a noticeable launch that captures the consumer's attention, and a separate space that allows the idea to grow. The pop up lab had a defined duration of 3 days, and it only visited Stockholm. As such, it was clearly limited in time (LTS) and, in a way, also limited in quantity (LQS) because a certain amount of chocolate had been in stock—however, everyone was able to just stop by. In contrast, dinner party was reserved for a selected group of people, and the AI mini program for app-users only.

A pop-up store naturally attracts attention so that this service is marked for its limitation by its appearance and concept rather than a label. Surprisingly, this store was mainly communicated via word-of-mouth marketing so that the common people on the street were targeted rather than a specific group.

Pop-up stores have become a common measure during the last couple of years so it must be the service within that creates atypicality: soundscapes for in-flight meals. However, as this technological development is not implemented for actual flights yet, it is a combination of both interaction with service people and application of technology that influence a customer's impression. The close consumer contact is yet another factor that makes this service unique—because customers rarely are in personal contact with an airline itself, or in a conversation with a cabin crew member that lasts longer than for ordering a drink. As an airline, Finnair inherently is a service brand

without stores on premise—except for counters at the airport. As such, it serves on a continuous high-tech basis for purchases, and a high-touch basis for their execution: flights with service on board. This combination was applied to the pilot project as well: strong skills in technology helped in developing soundscapes while the feeling for people increased the actual outcome.

Customers translate the project's scarcity into uniqueness, and their spontaneous experience on the street led to stronger impressions—and in addition, the service handles sensitive issues that people touch upon every day: music and food, creatively combined. Here, the exploration begins with the experience, and the customers start reflecting upon the humming noise on the airplane more intensely—and everybody can relate to that annoying sound. The categorization, in addition, proves the atypicality of the service because it is not—necessarily—bound to Finnair's core business; and if people categorize themselves, they are among the first to try out new technology. As such, it addresses the ideal self when it comes to technology usage, and the true self when it comes to just enjoying a meal. Here, the customer's involvement actually grows during the experience: from tasting chocolate to trying soundscapes to enjoying the moment to admiring the idea. As temporary 'point of experience', a pop up store resembles an event in a way, and both its organization and realization requires financial and human resources as well as time. In addition, the cooperation with popular musicians must be established (and maintained) but this is well worth the effort—it achieves greater reach and also awareness. In fact, this service is uniquely designed but, nonetheless, closely attached to the company's core values and future ideas

so that its position in the market gets strengthened valuably. On the whole, the pilot project was shared across the media so that it will be difficult to, in the end, evaluate the pop up store's impact; besides the amount of visitors and so on. Yet, it very much increased the brand's awareness as well as its image. Finnair had been able to sense the market's wants for another kind of in-flight dining, and to initiate a solution—hence, the company coevally acts market driven and driving without losing its image either way.

However, Finnair draws attention to an issue—annoying plane noises—that is not properly solved yet: customers have to download soundscapes before departure but cannot—as an on-board service—access it during the flight. As such, people may be more aware of distracting plane sounds now but—in that very moment—probably remember Finnair. With this ending, the following questions arise: does a LE change the customer's expectations, and does it manipulate? Does it alter the brand? Does it hurt the brand?

Case 3: SBM Class 2019

The Strategic Brand Management course kicked off for the 16th time this year, and it involved lectures by Mats Urde and Frans Melin, guest lectures by representatives of different international companies as well as students' presentations. This set up already suggests a high-touch service with a close consumer contact and strong involvement—although students rarely seem to be customers in the common sense. This specific class is just among others within the program that—itself—is among many within Lund University so that all its organization results in a heap of complexity—and it can only be standardized to a certain extent (e.g. multiple-choice quizzes).

However, it allows students to truly contribute to the course's (or program's) outcome that influences their lives—and it seems that this is both conspicuous and non-conspicuous, and market driven and market driving. Lund University aims to change a student's life, and it thus has to increase its brand awareness first in order to reach people: by composing a program, arranging lectures and evaluating the outcome in the end—each year. As such, this class is indeed a university's everyday business as continuous service but it still has determined factors that cannot be fully controlled—and it may very much differ to other universities' classes in its atypical composition. Presentations and content can surely be saved but the overall impression is bound to its happening, and this is what stays in the students' minds.

In order to create a mutual knowledge transfer and growth, which is the aim and aspiration of both students and lecturers, this course must be limited to a maximum amount of students (LQS), and also restricted to a certain time frame (LTS)—as such, only a selected group of students is able to attend. This limitation is communicated throughout the whole application process in which certain qualifications—bachelor degree, resume, and motivational letter—are considered to be relevant. As such, the service is labeled in the sense of LE but not by the use of its term. This scarcity may be costly for some, attractive to many but unique to all, and it attracts throughout the students' interests rather than boredom. The course is clearly classified as a typical service of Lund University, and this may be the reason why its service character becomes invisible. It is, however, visible if we translate it onto a social perspective, all students appreciate to belong to a strong student (and subsequent alumni) network, and they will carry this experience for the rest of their lives. As such, it seems to be a development from true to something different that—hopefully—rests upon the ideal self rather than the normative one; because it is important what the students want to be, instead of what they may be ought to be. This last case also evokes questions: how abstract can limitation become, and can everything be a limited service? Does it have to be purchased? Does it have to come from a classic brand? Is there even a classic brand?

Discussion

All the cases differ in duration (= short or long time frame), accessibility (= restricted or for everyone), and relation to certain events or business measures (= bound or non-bound). While two of them (case 1 and 2) are clearly recognized as uncommon services, the other one (case 3) seems to be omnipresent and, thus, not immediately classified as either service or limited.

1. "The Edible Country" is implemented by a service brand that normally acts on high-tech basis but now establishes high-touch interactions between customers and external actors.
2. "Hear the Taste" is implemented by a service brand that—apart from on-board service—normally acts on high-tech basis but now seeks high-touch interactions between customers and employees.
3. "Strategic Brand Management" is implemented by a service brand that always acts on high-touch basis, and this is why it will always—in a sense—be limited.

Case 1	LTS and LTQ	From high-tech to high-touch	LE mark by feelings	Creating awareness and responsibility
Case 2	LTS	From high-tech to high-touch	LE mark by appearance	Creating awareness and buzz
Case 3	LTS and LTQ	Inherently high-touch	LE mark is invisible	Creating awareness and knowledge

Figure 1: Overview of the limited service multi case study's results (own work)

In general, all brands implemented their LE in order to increase brand awareness, and some brands may also aim for improving their image (e.g. Amazon visits)—as such, it is less about avoiding a "loss of face" but rather about "show of face" (case 1). As such, companies can create LE by freeing themselves from their daily business or rather their common way of doing business—they change from high-tech to high-touch (or vice versa), or from discontinuous to continuous. In fact, the customers' appreciation of LE also rest upon the companies' difficulty and effort to implement these: they may be higher if e.g. an online brand opens a pop-up store, and lower if e.g. a offline brand just adds another shop. Here, services involve more than production step efforts (with e.g. employee trainings and workshops) so that especially limited ones with a thorough preparation add tremendous complexity to the brand.

Services are rather intangible without the possibility of depiction so that its limitation cannot be attached to a packaging—it relies on both the service's description and the customer's perception (case 1 and 3). As such, it is even more about the emotions that they create because their impact can neither be shown in a picture nor the brand's long-term slogan.

In addition, the customer's expectation increases if an edition is obviously marked as limited, whereas the accidental encountering of a LE (case 2) may be higher valued—because for the latter one, it is more about the appearance that an edition creates than an expectation that a customer had before. The urgency to participate in the limited services is, for all cases, created by scarcity, exploration and categorization but each equation reaches different levels per case: case 1 and 2 mainly rest upon scarcity and exploration, whereas case 3 provides for exploration only. As such, the categorization of products may be of lower importance, whereas a categorization on a social level—with social proof and FOMO—increases. The characteristics of service only strengthen its scarcity because it naturally cannot be saved until later—it is now or never, and this is why every service becomes limited in the very widest sense so that LE have to be narrowed down (again).

For limited services, a very close customer contact and involvement (see case 1 and 3) is more likely although it can also happen on a regular basis. Although services have always been determined by its customers, they now enter a stronger position in the service process that allows them to influence

the outcome—and the more they influence it, the more they keep it in mind (especially proven by case 3). With this stronger dependency, the customers are in the driver's seat, and the limitation of service allows the companies to—for once—loosen their reins: if the service fails, it is gone for good, and if it works, it can be repeated or even added to the portfolio. As such, limited services can—very much like limited products—work as a trial and a special form of market research.

All brands can be considered as service brands so they all perform on a continuous basis. The scale of continuous and discontinuous service, however, is critical in the era of digitalization because customers do not always recognize the actual effort happening upon a request for online services—hence, there is always high-tech but not high-touch contact. In addition, the scope of conspicuous and non-conspicuous editions is not properly applicable for services because of their intangible character—here, limited services serve the self-image rather than self-presentation.

LE of high involvement (e.g. cars) are often limited in quantity whereas low involvement products (e.g. chocolate) are mainly limited in time—here, it is to boost self-image and status or to spread an amount of products. This differentiation can be applied to services as well but in general, services—even low cost ones—may be purchased with more thought than any daily product. A limited service—as abstract subject—immediately vanishes upon the limitation's expiration while a limited product—as concrete object—remains existent (unless consumed). In case of a particularly poor service performance, however, the service may be more damaging than a product,

which can just be discarded, while a particularly successful performance increases the overall impression.

Services can perfectly be split to being both exclusive for perhaps influencers and inclusive for almost everyone (see case 2), very much like products with placements with influencers and normal selling—however, services may be more secret whereas an unboxing is just meant to be shared.

In the beginning, case 3 seemed to be rather general (or abstract or even simple in regards to an analysis) but it in fact, it is the strongest service: it is mostly driven by its actors, and this allows the class to come back in different shape each year.
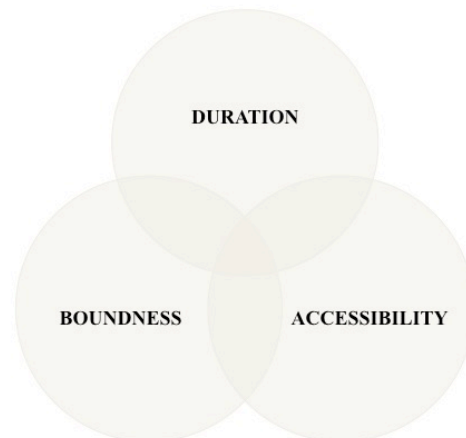

Figure 2: perspectives of LE (own work)

Conclusion
We were able to manifest first ideas of how to observe limited editions in services—and they do exist, and they influence a lot. For a company, a limited service gains in brand image and brand awareness while it better incorporates the customers—old and new ones. The services' outline can very much differ but it essentially has to be a change in the normal brand's appearance. As such, a service must be limited in a way but its scarcity does not

have to apply to multiple perspectives—being both LTS and LQS, however, may skyrocket the purchase's urgency. In fact, the scarcity is not only created by its definite formulation but also by its provoked feeling so that duration, accessibility and boundness (to events, marketing measures or similar) can create different compositions (see Figure 2).

Managerial implications

The multi-case study and the subsequent cross-case comparison allow to closely explore the topic of limited services, and to draw conclusions about their outline and outcome. As such, we encourage managers to step out of their "business zone": by offering a unique service in which customers are in the lead. Irrespective of being a service or a product brand, companies can implement limited services in order to valuably diversify their image and positioning. Persuasive marketing can, throughout scarcity and consensus, prevent a brand from falling into oblivion and, in fact, make them jump into memory. Innovations are crucial to keep a brand from ageing ($\neq$ getting old), and they can be test-launched via limited editions and implemented upon success. Throughout cooperation with another brand (or other brands), a company may also create additional buzz and brand awareness by touching upon other product/service segments and possibly target other groups.

Limited services can be especially of value for brands with eluding market objects: country brands, city brands, university brands and similar. Here, they can give intangible assets a concrete shape and, thus, help the customer to easily grasp the concept.

Limitations and further research

This paper's aim is to introduce the phenomenon of limited services to research so that it focuses on outlining the concept and raising awareness. As such, the multi study case contains three limited services that boast unique characteristics. However, other services may look differently and still exploit their fullest potential so that the paper does not aim to—anyhow—set standards.

Both limited editions and services require focused research that complies with today's chances and challenges, and this research need to connect both concepts on abstract and more specific levels. As such, further research may focus on cases in other industries, comparative studies towards limited products, in-depth analyses as well as management consultancy.

In addition, open questions can be addressed: do planned and/or unplanned annual repetitions still count as LE? Are services accompanying limited products limited services, limited products or another kind of business measure? Are pop up stores naturally LE? And if so, can anything be limited?

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