Three clicks away
A multiple case study of how technologies change the customer journey in the retail furniture sector.
Abstract

The digital world is constantly growing. This contributes to increasing expectations and demands in the technical aspect. Digitization is powerful, but it further contributes to a number of challenges, such as the coordination of physical and digital stores. During the corona pandemic, the digital transformation has accelerated for companies to adapt to customers. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to understand how Swedish retailers can manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector. Further, the purpose is to investigate how retailers can use technological touchpoints to change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey.

To be able to answer the empirical findings, six semi-structured interviews were obtained through a multiple case study. The theory from previous research and the empirical results were then discussed in the analysis.

The conclusion of the thesis resulted in the management of digital touchpoints is different depending on whether it concerns companies using physical stores or e-commerce. This thesis has identified that retailers in the furniture sector manage technological touchpoints to create a seamless customer experience, increase customer satisfaction, more easily engage customers and to be able to integrate with customers in several ways. Digital touchpoints have made it easier for companies to measure results and to be able to improve the customer journey. One identification was that customer engagement has increased in relation to the increased digitalization, but also that the researched companies believe that digitization is vital for increasing customer engagement. Due to the technology, opportunities are created to be able to develop the quality of the customer journey. Further, by being able to measure the customer journey, the companies gain an insight into what should be constantly improved.

Key words

Customer experience, customer journey, touchpoints in customer journey, technological touchpoints, customer engagement, experience quality, retail, technology and furniture-sector.
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1. Introduction

In this chapter, the authors present the framework of the study. This supports the reader to understand the common thread as the thesis follows. The first chapter initially presents the background with the continuation of problem discussion and problem formulation. This is to clarify underlying information about the topics that are going to be discussed. The chapter continues by presenting the research questions and the purpose of the thesis. It concludes with the target group for which the research is aimed.

1.1 Background

The digital world is constantly growing. This contributes to increasing expectations and demands in the technical aspect (Cgi., 2021). Thanks to the digital tools, many opportunities are available, especially to companies and their business activities (Rachinger, Rauter, Müller, Vorraber & Schirgi., 2019). In today's society, people are under time pressure and are becoming increasingly comfortable. Therefore, it simplifies for the customer to shop via the internet instead of going to the store (Svensk handel., 2021). Digitization is powerful, but it further contributes to a number of challenges, such as the coordination of physical and digital stores. The integration of these channels is an important challenge to process in order to maximize the experience for the customer and be competitive on the market (Handelsradet., 2016).

In order for companies to keep up with developments in the digital sector, it is important that it becomes an integral part of the practical aspects of work and the processes in the organizational sector (Morell., 2017). Digitization has reformed how companies deliver value to the customer in a positive way (Enterpriseproject., 2021) and during the corona pandemic, the digital transformation has accelerated for companies to adapt to customers (Internetstiftelsen., 2020).

Many physical stores go into bankruptcy because digitalization is constantly evolving and e-commerce is taking over (Taylor & Francis online., 2020). A major problem at the moment is also the pandemic, which means that brick and mortar stores are lacking in operations and the supply chain is destroyed. As a result, an apocalypse is forecast in physical stores, which means that many stores will go bankrupt. For companies that are forced to go bankrupt, omnichannel is an opportunity to be able to keep their business. Omnichannels lead to an increase in the purchase frequency,
higher order value, more customer loyalty and that customer engagement grows (Taylor & Francis online., 2020).

The pandemic has affected the whole world on a large scale and not least the retail trade. E-commerce has increased drastically and has been confronted with enormous challenges regarding sales and security (Handelstrender., 2021). Customer journey is defined as all the stages a consumer goes through during the whole purchase process (Hoyer, Kroschke, Schmitt, Kraume & Shankar., 2020). In order for companies to meet customers’ requirements for the customer journey, it is important to understand customers' expectations. Covid-19 has made the situation more difficult, leading to a change in business strategy among several companies. Companies must find innovative ways to keep their promises to the brand. Using digital touchpoints makes customer service more efficient. This is a difficult task for companies, however a task that is rewarding and an opportunity to change the Customer delivery model, which can be beneficial for the business (Ringman., 2020).

During the corona pandemic, digital touchpoints have become more important than ever. Companies need to have a great deal of knowledge about where and how consumers are treated. The companies need to find out where they are going to meet their customers and this is done by a screening of all touchpoints. The screening is done to see to what extent individual touchpoints support customer satisfaction and strengthen the brand (Kantarsifo., 2017). In the furniture company sector, consumers expect meaningful and genuine interactions where and when they are in contact with furniture companies (Volmer., 2012). Touchpoints are important regardless of whether they are physical or digital interactions with the customer and it is therefore a significant factor to carefully check and review each touchpoint within the furniture company. Touchpoints in the furniture sector can include a website, social media, advertising, product catalogs and product reviews. Furniture companies need to understand which touchpoints are relevant to their particular company in order to create a positive experience for the customer (Cadesignform., 2021). It is further discussed that in the future it will mostly be the technology that connects the company and the customers, instead of the use of human touchpoints (Hollebeek, Sprott & Brady., 2021).

When integration with customers takes place through the company's touchpoints, speed and relevance are essential. The integration can take place physically or virtually, through a catalog or site-specific text message. Transition or permanent is as well a touchpoint that applies to a conversation between customer and seller or an indirect contact with the company, for example a catalog (Volmer., 2012). To create
result-rich experiences with touchpoints, three can be concluded: information, immediacy and integration. The information the company provides at each touchpoint is valuable and creates a successful brand strategy. Immediacy is important because customers have high expectations that it will go fast, both through physical and digital touchpoints. This applies, among other things, to the interaction between the consumer and the company's sales, credit, customer service and delivery department. The integration includes the coordination of experiences of the customer during the shopping trip. It is important for companies to integrate every interaction with the consumer in a seamless way to get customers to where they want to be (Volmer., 2012).

One of the consequences of covid-19 resulted in customers staying home from work, which contributes to consumers focusing on creating delectable homes during the corona pandemic. Moreover, a larger number of customers buy furniture online. Customers have as well expected faster deliveries, as well as more competitive prices on the furniture (Lectra., 2020). In order for the furniture companies to keep up with developments, a lot is invested in digital technology. The furniture sector's focus is to maximize the production process to provide improved results and products faster (Lectra., 2020).

This thesis will be directed to Ellos Group, Möbelmästarna, Mio, Company A and IKEA. Digitization is of great importance for IKEA. If the furniture company had not laid the foundation several years ago for its efforts in digital transformations, they probably would not have had the same opportunities during the pandemic. IKEA uses augmented reality (AR) within Google cloud, an app where customers can see the products in their own homes to assess whether they fit (Donnelly., 2020). The company also has an app that is mobile-adapted so that customers do not have to visit the website via mobile devices. IKEA's artificial intelligence (AI) is also applied to suggest products to customers based on previous purchases and searches (ibid). The furniture company has used Google cloud infrastructure to be able to deal with problems that arise on its website. The use of Cloud has given IKEA the opportunity to focus on the integration of augmented reality and AI to improve the customer's journey and experience (Donnelly., 2020).

IKEA is a company that has benefited from using multi-channels by offering its customers professional service, online as well as in physical stores. In 2019, IKEA invested in a reorganization in digitalization, city stores and home deliveries to meet the changed customer behaviour (Nyteknik., 2019). Covid-19 is one of the major reasons why customer behaviour has changed drastically during the past year. Many
stores have had to close and people have needed to work from home. For the interior design company IKEA, teleworking has meant a great deal because they can offer furniture and furnishings that make it cozier and more comfortable to work from home (Donnelly., 2020). In this condition, IKEA's technical team has reacted quickly and seen it as an opportunity to focus on more digital solutions. Depending on the situation, the retail company has adapted to customers' needs and listened to what customers ask for to satisfy the customer journey (ibid). Online orders have increased sharply and the click-and-collect facilities where customers pick up their orders have been greatly useful. It is therefore important for the home furnishing company to place great emphasis on this customer journey to get the best results from the customer experience (Donnelly., 2020).

1.2 Problem discussion

1.2.1 Theoretical problematization

During later years, a big amount of research has been conducted in the field of how retailers use technological, innovative tools to create a unique and value-generated customer experience and customer journey. Customer experience is an overarching theory that includes customer journey, and these have been studied widely and have become extra important to consider during recent years (Hoyer, Kroschke, Schmitt, Kraume, & Shankar., 2020). The customer experience is defined when the customer meets the company (Lemke, Wilson & Clark., 2011) and the customer journey is defined as all the stages a consumer goes through during the whole purchase process (Hoyer et al., 2020).

In previous research, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) claims that it is critical for retailers to understand customer experience and the customer journey over time. As customers are offered to interact with companies in several channels and through a range of touchpoints, the customer journey gets more complex. An increasing focus on customer experience has emerged due to the previously mentioned reasons. Challenges and opportunities are also created for firms as social media contributes to customer-to-customer interactions. Other factors influencing the customer journey are found in peer customers that influence the experience (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). This makes experiences in nature become more social, which leads to companies today overall having much less control of the customer journey and customer experience. The reduced control that companies have of the experience together with the explosion in potential customer touchpoints, require companies to integrate multiple business functions. These for example include information technology and service operations regarding delivering a positive customer experience. The experience and journey of each customer has become increasingly complex for companies to create, manage and attempt to control (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).
the same time, the quality of the customer journey may differ while consumers' abilities are different regarding the use of technological touchpoints (Wang., 2017). Previous studies have also examined how customers' willingness affects their use of self-service technologies (Wang., 2017).

The core research in the area of customer journey and technology for the most part treats factors regarding how new technologies transform the customer experience, and how technology impacts the customer journey (Hoyer et al., 2020; Grewal & Roggeveen., 2020). Moreover, the field of technologies and customer experience have been studied in a closer examination of the impact of specific technologies for example virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies (Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús., 2019). Another type of technology that have been studied are self-service technologies and factors influencing consumers' acceptance of using these (Wang., 2017).

The touchpoints in the customer journey are defined as all the moments of integration between the company and the customer during the customer journey (Dhebar., 2013). In the field of touchpoints within the customer journey research mainly has been conducted about how touchpoints work in the decision-making of customers. For example some touchpoints are presented before, during and after the purchase (De keyser, Verleye, Lemon, Keiningham & Klaus., 2020; Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús., 2020). Research has also shown that companies can add value by using technology and connecting different virtual-physical touchpoints, which improve the experience of the customer journey (Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús., 2019). Moreover, research has also examined that touchpoints together with context and qualities need to be considered to be able to make companies create strong customer experiences (De keyser et al., 2020).

Customer experience quality (EXQ) is a concept that has grown among companies and has become important to consider in the philosophy of customer orientation (Mohd Rais, Musa & Muda., 2015). Quality of customer experience is likely to determine the perceived value of the service and beyond, leading to other outcomes such as repurchase intentions (Lemke, Wilson & Clark., 2011). Previous research in this field has found that there is a connection between the two concepts of customer experience quality and customer loyalty (Kusumawati & Rahayu., 2019; Bagozzi., 1992). The consequences of the digital era of digitalization and virtualization have contributed to a move in focus of product quality to service quality. Depending on which point of view the customer has, the experience quality may differ (Vargo & Lusch., 2016). Research has also studied key building blocks of customer experience
within the concept of quality (De Keyser et al., 2020).

In connection with the increased use of technological touchpoints regarding the interaction between business to consumer, the level of customer engagement has increased (Sharma & Singh, 2021). In the current decade, customer and brand engagement has been the major movement in customer management. With a focus on value extraction, behaviours and attitudes, several definitions have been produced of customer engagement. To distinguish between customer attitudes and behaviours beyond purchase is something that customer engagement tries to do (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). Vivek, Beatty and Morgan (2012) define customer engagement as the customers’ commitment to a brand, a company, a product or a service. Pöyry, Parvinen, Mattila & Holopainen (2020) claims that increasing use of digital touchpoints among companies have created new levels of customer engagement.

1.2.2 Managerial problematization
A leading management objective during companies is now to create strong customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). A study conducted by Accenture (2015) showed that when executives were asked about their top priorities of the coming 12 months, improving the customer experience received the most number one rankings. Today many companies have chief customer experience officers or customer experience managers who are responsible for creating and managing the customer’s experiences (Accenture., 2015).

During recent years digitalization has contributed to a growth of e-commerce. Physical stores are nowadays facing problems with survival since new, innovative, and convenient approaches for shopping have been developed, contributing to a change in the customer journey and the touchpoints between business and consumer (Jonsson, Egels-Zandén, Hagberg, Lammgård & Sundström., 2017). This challenge has been huge for many retailers during the past year during the corona pandemic. Many retailers have been forced to quickly change their strategies by using new approaches to reach their customers online, since the restrictions have complicated the physical shopping approach. Therefore, to offer the customer technological touchpoints in the customer journey have never been more important than what it is right now. The ongoing technological development facilitates the trend for customers to shop online. Moreover, the situation with the pandemic places new requirements for many retailers to reach their customers partially or completely without physical touchpoints (Svensk handel., 2019).
The customer journey has changed during the recent years. Simultaneously globalization has opened up for an unrestricted market. Researchers in the trade-field notes that the trade will be changed faster during the ten coming years than what it has changed in the past fifty years (Svensk handel., 2019). The factors behind this can be explained by globalization, digitalization and robotization. This contributes to a higher level of competition and big challenges for retailers. It further places higher requirements on the trading companies such as they need to be innovative and dynamic to be able to keep up with the fast development (ibid). The trade is in the midst of a transformation where physical and digital ways of buying are integrated with each other, in which services linked to goods sold emerge. The buying behaviour of today's consumers are controlled by the strength of different brands and experiences. At the same time the focus of the customer increases. The trade of today can be seen as a field in which retailers do not have any guarantees for survival or success but a field in which creative entrepreneurs have new opportunities (Svensk handel., 2019).

The 11th of March 2020 the organization WHO claimed that covid-19 was a pandemic. The day after, 12th of March several retailers testified that the sales were highly decreased and in urban areas the streets quickly became empty (Svensk handel., 2020). The drastic decrease of revenue continued until the middle of April and almost 50 percent of the companies in the non-durable goods trade had a decrease in revenue of at least 40 percent. A loss of 60 percent of the revenue was noted among a quarter of the companies. Compared to a normal situation of sales, it was not uncommon that companies lost over 80 percent of the revenue during the start of the pandemic (ibid). Compared to the non-durable goods trade, the grocery trade worked better with the sales during the crisis, since the sales online highly increased as customers found new approaches to shop their groceries. For example, this contributed to an increase in ordering groceries online to get it delivered at home. As a consequence of people not leaving their homes as much as before the pandemic, e-commerce highly increased in some areas (Svensk handel., 2020). The covid-19 departure has affected both societies and people all over the world. Moreover, the pandemic has and is still affecting companies and organizations with inevitable consequences, contributing to forcing many retailers to change their strategy to be able to reach their customers in a new approach (KPMG., 2020).

IKEA is a retailer that has succeeded with the sales during the covid-19. In Sweden the company even increased their sales during this period. Many people during the pandemic have invested in their homes, which is an explanation for the increased sales (Frostberg., 2020). Another explanation of the increased sales during the
pandemic can be IKEA’s innovative approach in digitalization and technological touchpoints that their previous have developed. One of these features that the company offers their customers is the click- and collect function that allows customers to order furniture from home to easily collect it in the nearest department store. When the order is ready the customer gets an email with an QR code to show while picking up the order (IKEA., 2021).

Because of the increasing number of complexity of customer touchpoints and the belief of a customer journey with strong, positive experiences will result in improvements of the bottom line, the customer experience is viewed as one of the most important research challenges in the coming years (Marketing Science institute., 2014). This study becomes relevant as there is limited empirical work of research regarding customer experience and customer journey since it is still a growing field of research. On the other side there is a deeper research about specific aspects of what is called “customer experience” (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). Moreover, the study is relevant as it is right on time, as the trade is now in a paradigm shift caused by digitalization and globalization that affects the trade and the retailers (Svensk handel., 2019).

As technological development changes the customer journey, the retailer's strategies need to be changed and adapted in the same phase to constantly reach the customers in new channels in an efficient and satisfying way. This study is therefore relevant as technological development needs to be considered for retailers to attract and be able to satisfy customers with the right strategies today, but also in the future (Hoyer et al., 2020). The challenge of interacting with customers partly or completely without physical touchpoints is something that many retailers are aware of and have been dealing with during the recent years. It becomes harder and harder for physical stores to survive (Jonsson et al., 2017). This is something that retailers have been faced with during the pandemic and this may be continued after the pandemic.

By making a study about how retailers can manage technological touchpoints in the customer journey with a focus on quality and customer engagement, the empirical findings can help retailers to facilitate their work with creating an innovative and creative customer journey. This can contribute to an understanding of development in creating more efficient technological touchpoints and moreover become a competitive advantage among retailers. Since many retailers today are struggling with keeping their physical stores alive, this study focuses on helping retailers to deal with the technological touchpoints in a long-term and innovative perspective. Further this
research aims to facilitate the process of satisfying customers in a digital future-approach.

1.2.3 The research gap
Related to customer experience and customer journey there is limited empirical work. Instead the research is directed to specific aspects of what is now called “customer experience” (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). This study differs from previous ones in different ways, since it integrates and looks into connections, understandings and impacts between three different concepts. These main concepts are technologies, customer journey and touchpoints. These concepts are important for todays and future retailing since a changing customer journey is important to consider for companies as it becomes more complex (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

This research is also unique as it focuses on understanding the impacts of two specific variables. These are experience quality and customer engagement. Customer engagement is a well-known concept, while looking into previous research, while experience quality is connected to a field of a lack of research. These two variables have a good connection to the three concepts mentioned above. Research shows that technological development creates great opportunities for customers to engage in touchpoints (Pöyry et al., 2020). At the same time, the quality of the technological touchpoints are also important for companies to perceive to create a satisfying customer experience (Hyunsik & Beomjoon., 2013). A mix of these two variables can contribute to valuable information for companies to consider in their strategies in todays and future retailing, since customer experience nowadays is an important factor in retailing (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Based on the problem discussion, a knowledge gap that can be identified is based on two factors. Firstly there is less research in the field of how retailers in the furniture-sector can manage the technological touchpoints in the customer journey. Secondly there is a lack of research in the area regarding how retailers can use technological touchpoints to change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey. Customer experience quality is a concept that has not been studied widely and therefore, there is a need in studying this concept (Lemke, Wilson & Clark., 2011). Previous research also shows that there is a lack of research in the same area but from the perspective of customer engagement. Since the level of engagement is changing while the customer uses technological touchpoints instead of physical, this is an important factor for retailers to review to be able to manage innovative digital customer journeys (Pöyry et al., 2020).
These two aspects lead to examine how companies can manage the technological touchpoints in customer journeys and also how the technological touchpoints change these two variables of customer experience quality and customer engagement in the customer journey.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to understand how swedish retailers can manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector. Further the purpose is to investigate how retailers can use technological touchpoints to change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey.

1.4 Research questions
- How can retailers manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector?
- How can retailers use technological touchpoints to change the quality & customer engagement in customer journeys?

1.5 Target group
The study is conducted for students, researchers and marketers in the research areas. For the students, the results of this study can contribute to knowledge development and a deeper understanding in the research area. For corporate marketers, the authors contribute information about how they can create the study information into real-world contexts and use it in their daily operationalization. For the researchers, the thesis creates an opportunity to continue research in the field and find interconnected threads of the approach.
2 Theoretical background

In the following chapter the literature review that the thesis is based on is presented. The chapter begins to explain the main concepts in the theory of customer experience that are included in the thesis. The concepts are: customer journey, touchpoints, customer engagement and customer experience quality. These concepts are reviewed from a technological perspective of the customer journey. The chapter is ending with a research gap related to the concepts and a theoretical synthesis that explains visually how the theory and concepts are connected.

2.1 Customer experience management

The world is becoming increasingly competitive and expectations for satisfactory and complete experiences are increasing for customers. It is important that companies today focus on the entire customer experience and not just product quality, price or service quality (Tom Dieck & Han., 2021). In an article conducted by Klink, Shang and Athaide (2020), Abbott (1995) claims that people intend to care more about satisfactory experiences rather than products. Furthermore, in the same article, Pine and Gilmore (1998) claims that the focus of customer experience is about finding a personal way to engage individuals. Schmitt (1999) instead identifies five different types of customer experience readings that are essential: Emotional, cognitive, sensory, behavioural and relational values that replace functional values. Schmitt (1999) further mentions that customer experience management includes a five-step focus. These five steps consist of (1) analysis of the customers' world of experience, (2) building the experience platform, (3) designing the brand experience, (4) structuring the customer experience and (5) participating in continuous innovation (Schmitt., 1999).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) demonstrate in their research article that customer experience management is important to gain an advantage in competition and to create customer loyalty (Pine & Gilmore., 1998; Klink et al., 2020). Since then, research has grown in this subject and the structure of customer experience management has been developed and advanced (Klink et al., 2020). According to previous research, customer experience is a wide theory including for instance service quality, customer commitment and customer centering (Klink et al., 2020). Lemon and Verhoef (2016) believe that the experience for the customer is like a journey together with a company and / or brand during the buying process, as a whole in the experience for the customer together with several points of contact together with the company and brand (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).
According to Mansoor, Awan and Allobidyeen (2020), customer experience has become popular to study over the past 20 years. The authors present as Klink et al. (2020) that positive experiences for the customer can lead to long-term competitive advantage for companies, and also generate satisfied and loyal customers. Mansoor et al. (2020) also mention that the positive customer experiences result in positive word-of-mouth and create better retention levels. Positive as well as negative experiences for the customer reflects the customers' satisfaction (Meyer & Schwager., 2007; Mansoor et al., 2020). The research article also claims that the customer's decision-making process before purchasing a service or a product is supported by these knowledge and experiences (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler., 2012; Mansoor et al., 2020). Recamadas (2018) claims in its research article that the interactions between companies and customers are incredibly important for experiences that customers encounter. These experiences have a major impact on consumers' spiritual, emotional and reactionary levels and examine experiences with their expectations in comparison with organizational offerings (Gentile, Spiller & Noci., 2007; LaSalle & Britton., 2003; Mansoor, Awan & Syed., 2020).

Klink et al. (2020) mention that the experience for the customer is studied as the new area exposed to competition for companies. Furthermore, Manning and Parrish (2017) mention that companies that have a strong and dominant customer experience grow on average five times faster than businesses with inferior experience for customers. More than 80 percent of customers turn out to pay more to have a better customer experience. Klink et al. (2020) explains in their research article that the responsibility for an improved customer experience lies largely with marketers. This is for the reason that marketers take care of the majority of the budgets within companies in order to improve customer experience management. In the research article, the authors suggest that customer experience management is widely important in the marketing methods for the future (Homburg, Jozić & Kuehnl., 2017; Klink et al. 2020).

In previous research, Edelman and Singer (2015) mention that the rapid growth of touchpoints and reduced control over the digital shopping experience contribute to a more complicated relationship where companies produce special and unique experiences for the customer. Customer experiences as a company strive to manage and control to create good results and for it to be successful. While De keyser, Lemon, Klaus and Keiningham (2015) describe the customer experience as "consisting of the cognitive, emotional, physical, sensory, spiritual and social elements that mark the customer's direct or indirect interaction with other market players" (De keyser et al., 2015, p 71).
2.2 Technologies impact on customer journey
Customer experience and customer journey belong to a field that scholars have researched primarily during the recent years. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016) the field of customer experience management is a relatively new “greenfield” for future research, although human experience has been studied for at least a hundred years. The importance of creating a satisfying customer experience during later years have become a crucial factor for companies. To be able to identify critical gaps in customer experience the article of Lemon and Verhoef (2016) brings together existing research about customer experience to understand its origins. Based on the current era of increasingly complex customer behaviours, the authors also develop a stronger knowledge of the customer journey and customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

In a research conducted by Grewal and Roggeveen (2020) the authors claim that to survive in this technology intensive environment, it is important for retailers and manufacturers to understand the role of customer experiences at each stage of the customer journey. Further they define customer journey management (CJM) as “understanding and managing customers’ experiences throughout their shopping journey” (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020, p. 1). The article also notes that cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses are involved in the customer journey. The research conducted by Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros and Schlesinger (2009) also define customer experience as a multidimensional construct including the three dimensions and moreover sensorial and social responses.

According to Hoyer et al. (2020) the customer shopping journey includes “the complete stages a customer goes through from pre-transaction to transaction to post-transaction” (p. 58). Research also indicates that technological development affects the customer journey and customer experience in particular ways (Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez & Orús, 2019) and to understand how technology impacts the customer journey is of critical importance (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020). According to Hoyer et al. (2020) existing touchpoints in the customer journey will be transformed and replaced by new ones. The different stages that customers go through in the customer journey will be influenced by new technologies, which will affect how consumers search for products and brands, evaluate alternatives, make choices, and consume products. The article also claims that the process of customer relationship management will be improved by new technologies (Hoyer et al., 2020). Grewal and Roggeveen (2020) establish that to have an integrated and systematic customer journey management system in place is of paramount importance for service providers and retailers. To ensure that manufacturers optimize placement of their
products and services and their communications in store and online, it is just as important that they understand customers’ journeys and experience (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020).

In the article of Flavián et al. (2019) the authors discuss the impact that different types of technologies such as virtual, augmented and mixed reality can have on the customer experience. Neuhofer, Buhalis and Ladkin (2014) proposed the “experience hierarchy” containing four different types of experience related to levels of technologies included. In level one (conventional experiences) include experiences where technology is limited or non-existent. In level two (technology-assisted experiences) technologies do not let the customers interact or co-create their experience. Instead it makes it possible to assist customers and plays a facilitating role. Level three (technology-enhances experiences) makes it possible for customers to shape and be active in creating their experience. The fourth level (technology-empowered experiences) require that technologies need to be used to make it possible for the experience to take place. Technologies at fourth level creates high levels of involvement for the customers, which leads to added value and opportunity for co-creation (Neuhofer et al., 2014).

According to De Keyser et al. (2020) the TCQ nomenclature including touchpoints, context and qualities are introduced as standardized key components to consider in the customer journey to be able to move the customer experience field forward. The article’s perspective lies in viewing customer experience from an integrated view of the three components rather than looking at an individual aspect of customer experience (De Keyser et al., 2020). Research about self-service systems has earlier been discussed by scholars. Hwang and Kim (2007) discussed and tested the effects of the perceived web quality with service contents on e-trust, mediated by the website's user’s affective variables such as enjoyment and anxiety (Hwang & Kim, 2007).

During later research, AI has been discussed several times regarding customer experience and customer journey. Hoyer et al. (2020) has conducted research about using AI technologies in the customer journey. Further the authors examined a study of technologies powered by AI and how these technologies transform the customer experience and how they impact each broad stage in the customer journey (ibid). The article furthermore creates a conceptualization of managing new AI technologies to create experiential value related to cognitive, sensory/emotional and social dimensions of customer experience. AI has also been studied with connection to other perspectives (Hoyer et al., 2020). Hollebeek, Sprott and Brady (2021) conducted a
research about the connection between customer engagement and AI-based service interactions.

Nowadays AR is increasing regarding overall improving the customer experience in the retail industry. IKEA is one retailer using AR technology to improve the customer experience (IKEA, 2021). In an article examined by Romano, Sands and Pallant (2020) a research was conducted to determine if augmented reality impacts the customer experience and customer journey in a positive or negative way. The results from the study proved that consumers' product consideration set pre-purchase could be broadened with the use of AR, while the choice set gets narrowed. The study also showed that AR can reduce brand value and make it possible for emerging brands to connect with customers (ibid). Moreover, the study suggests that AR can drive hedonic value and facilitate product curation during the point of purchase. The research further notes that AR at the post-purchase stage can strengthen cognitive dissonance and influence consumer choice confidence (Romano et al., 2020).

2.3 Touchpoints and interactions in customer journey
The field of touchpoints has been widely discussed in previous research. By doing research on different customer journeys and their touchpoints, the customer journey can be improved and the interaction between company and consumer can be strengthened. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) claims that the customer experience includes seven touchpoints that consist of different combinations depending on channels. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) further highlights touchpoints such as technological, processes, atmospheric, communicative and production elements. Moreover, the authors mention touchpoints within customer-employee interactions. The content of the study offers understanding of the customer experience that supports the company to make personal touchpoints available. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) claims that social media and mobile devices have also been developed as an important touchpoint for increasing interaction between company and the customer. Brewers and Holmes (2020) state in their article that customer service levels have grown along with the need to deal with a larger number of channels under the company's control.

Flavián, Ibáñez-Sánchez and Orús (2019) have also researched in the field regarding touchpoints and came up with the conclusion that touchpoints have great impact on the customer experience. In the article, touchpoints are presented in the different parts of the customer's decision-making, such as before, during and after the purchase. Similar to Flavián et al. (2019) the article by De keyser et al. (2020) also contains research on touchpoints that affect the customer before, during and after purchase.
The first step in the buying process within the customer journey is before the purchase decision (ibid). Steps that include a customer's interaction with a special touchpoint before the purchase is completed, including needs recognition and information retrieval. The purchase step in the customer journey is when the customer interacts with the company through touchpoints during the purchase decision (ibid). These are interactions with connection to ordering, delivery, collection and payment within the customer journey. After the purchase is completed, touchpoints are those that are associated with the use of a product or service, also called consumption- and return moment (De keyser et al., 2020).

In the research article by Edvardsson and Enquist (2011) the company's interaction with customers through the buying process is described, similar to the article by Flavián et al. (2019), but within IKEA. The article emphasizes that IKEA creates interaction with the customer by creating personal solutions even before the purchase. The company does this through showrooms that make customers experience the rooms for "real" before the time of purchase. Edvardsson and Enquist (2011) states that functionality is combined with emotional commitment and that it forms an experience for the customer that is beneficial for IKEA. The showroom is a solution that increases the customer's imagination and that the customer's interaction with the company grows (Edvardsson & Enquist., 2011).

De keyser et al. (2020) focus on describing TCQ. It is further described that the customer journey is divided into different touchpoints, how the context is created and the qualities provided. De keyser et al. (2020) expounds what motivates or demotivates consumers during their customer journey and the connection to the company. The research shows that touchpoints in nature can be human or physical, which is the most common for companies to use. There are also digital touchpoints and a mixture of these three, which are becoming more and more popular in the online customer experience. De keyser et al. (2020) also mentions how the retailer offers customers an experience in the cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensory and social responsibilities during the buying process. In the customer journey, the experience for the customer is also improved if the company creates added value by using technology and connecting different virtual-physical touchpoints (De keyser et al., 2020).

In the article perceived by Pöyry et al. (2020), the authors believe that new technology is much appreciated in interaction with customers. Pöyry et al. (2020) mention that it is important to know which touchpoints customers prefer to use. Further Pöyry et al. (2020) describes what attracts the customer to get involved in order for the company
to be able to interact with corporate customers in the best possible way. Hollebeek et al. (2021) describes that interactions that are automated between customers and companies create a greater commitment in the aspect of the customer. It is also discussed that in the future it will mostly be the technology that connects the company and the customers, instead of the use of human touchpoints (Hollebeek et al., 2021). AI automation is a new chapter in the development and part of industry 4.0, which is characterized by the merging of technologies that strengthen the lines between the digital, biological and physical areas (ibid). Industry 4.0 has a major technical impact that has a huge impact on the interaction between customer and company. In the article, the authors mention that in the next few years, customer engagement will be mostly through AI. Hollebeek et al. (2021) express that a demand for the covid-19 environment can remain even after the pandemic is over because a replacement of human interactions is being exchanged by technology.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) claim, in line with Flavián et al. (2019) and De keyser et al. (2020), that the customer journey is important and crucial for companies. Therefore, it is essential for companies to acquire many touchpoints to be able to integrate with customers in many different ways. In today’s society, companies and customers interact with each other through touchpoints in several channels as well as in the media. The study also shows that the experience for the customer is more social than before (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). Moreover, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) have investigated how customers’ perceptions and behaviours are affected by self-service technologies. Another perspective of touchpoints has been conducted according to research of multichannel retailing. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that previous research has studied how interactions/touchpoints between channels affect experience measures. It has also been observed that it is important that multichannel-retailers create a seamless experience across channels, since stronger sales growth tends to be achieved among retailers with better integration between channels (ibid). On the other side there is evidence in some dissynergies in previous research that shows that a new online channel is less likely to be used by a satisfied offline user. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) further indicates that integration between online-offline channels can create opportunities such as increasing perceived quality of the online channel and reducing perceived risk of the online store. This in turn led to reduced cannibalization in the offline channel and positive choice effects of the online channel (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).

De keyser et al. (2020) also mentioned in the research that has been studied, customers experience touchpoints differently depending on the person. However, it also depends on special times, depending on the context in which the interaction
between customer and company takes place. Touchpoints can vary when it comes to nature, the steps in the customer journey and control. The authors claim that touchpoints can be firm-controlled, which corresponds to touchpoints that are only monitored by the company, for example the environment in the store, the company advertising, the employees and the company's website. There are also touchpoints that customers, influencers or other companies control that the company itself cannot affect, also called non-firm-controlled. These types of touchpoints cause the company to lose control increasingly (De keyser et al., 2020).

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) define as well as De keyser et al. (2020) that today it is not obvious that companies have control over all touchpoints because customers, influencers and other companies are responsible for certain parts of touchpoints. This means that companies forfeit control over the customer journey. In contrast to De keyser et al. (2020), Lemon and Verhoef (2016) show that there are four different touchpoints within the customer experience that the customer interacts with in each step in the different purchasing phases. These are brand-owned, customer-owned, partner-owned, and external/independent/social touchpoints. Brand-owned touchpoints describe the touchpoints that are under the control of the company (ibid). Customer-owned touchpoints are presented as customer measures. These are touchpoints that the company or its partners do not control. The company's interaction with customers during their customer journey, which is created mutually, controlled and managed by companies and their partners, are called partner-owned touchpoints (ibid). The touchpoints that allow others' significant function in the experience for the customer are referred to as external/independent/social touchpoints. The article emphasizes that it is required that companies integrate with more business functions, logistics, marketing, external partners, service and technology in order to generate experiences that are positive for customers and to contribute to a good customer journey (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).

In previous research, Kranzbühler, Kleijn and Verlegh (2018) claims that touchpoints during the customer journey are difficult to handle and that companies contend in making customers satisfied. Kranzbühler, Kleijn and Verlegh (2018) also describes that 72 percent of companies have a priority to improve the experience for the customer and get consumers more involved. To achieve this, companies must carefully examine the interactions with their customers throughout the customer journey (Kranzbühler et al., 2018).
2.4 Customer engagement as interaction

Vivek et al. (2012) define customer engagement as the customers' commitment to a brand, a company, a product or a service. How to engage customers in the best way has become considerably interesting for companies, for the reason that companies can improve advantageous customer experiences. The knowledge of how companies best engage their customers is important for constructing sustainable differentiation (Vivek et al., 2012). It is also important for companies because customer engagement builds long-term customer-brand relationships (Rose, Hair & Clark., 2010) and provides great advantages in competition between companies (Kumar, Petersen & Leone., 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy., 2004).

According to several research articles, customer engagement has received much attention from researchers (Brodie et al., 2011, 2013; Calder, Malthouse & Schaedel., 2009; Habibi et al., 2014; Hollebeek, Conduit & Brodie., 2016; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie., 2014). Verhoef, Reinartz and Krafft (2010) state in their article that if you look beyond customer engagement, companies can miss opportunities to improve and create new products and services through creation together with customers. Kumar, Aksoy, Donkers, Venkatesan, Wiesel and Tillmanns (2010) mentions that if an incorrect distribution is made of resources in the relationship between consumers, customers will not be valued correctly.

According to Pöyry et al. (2020) the use of new technologies with the customer interactions is a relevant way of trying to increase customer engagement. It is further explained that the use of customer engagement platforms and simultaneously interacting with the touchpoints creates value. In line with Pöyry et al. (2020) the research conducted by Saunila, Ukko and Rantala (2019) claim that customer engagement in the digital context is vital with the increasing digitization. Saunila et al. (2019) further describes in the research article that the customer engagement and consumer behaviour has changed. The use of digital resources to interact with customers allows the possibility for the customer to exploit the digital platform. Sharafi, Hedman and Montgomery (2006) found out in their research report that the customers had positive engagement when using technology to learn new accomplishments. Sharafi et al. (2006) further explains that there are vital and clear connections between customer experiences and technological platforms that creates customer engagement.

The article by Sharma and Singh (2021) states that customer engagement has expanded thanks to the great development of technology, as well as digital and social media. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) also emphasize the positive thing about digital
development, that it has created greater activity among customers and consumers become contributors to the value of companies by becoming effective co-creators. Prentice, Wang and Lin (2018) express that commitment is a reviewing approach to create value for the customer and generate loyalty to the brand. Prentice et al. (2018), as well as Sharma and Singh (2021), mention that the customer's commitment to companies and brands has been facilitated with the help of social media. Further commitment shows consumers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural connection with the brand (Prentice, Wang & Lin., 2018). Factors such as brand trust, commitment and satisfaction are also important components of commitment (Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner & Verhoef., 2010). Goh, Heng and Lin (2013) defines that information received by social media that is related to the brand has an impact on buying behaviour among customers. It also emerged in the article that customer engagement in a community to the brand increases the purchase of products and services (Goh, Heng & Lin., 2013; Prentice et al., 2018).

In the research of Blasco-Arcas, Hernandez-Ortega and Jimenez-Martinez (2016) describes that companies should encourage the customer's positive emotions by building a commitment platform. This enables customer-to-customer interaction and personalization, which improves customers' relationship with the company and the brand (ibid). Customers' interaction on such platforms, then improves their perception of the company's brand. In order to make customers feel that they are relevant actors, environments must be provided that continue to make customers feel empowered and thus create an improved commitment with the company (Blasco-Arcas., 2016).

In an article by Sharma and Singh (2021), Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) define customer engagement as “a personal connection that exists between a consumer and a brand that grows stronger over a period that culminates in mutual value sharing” (Sharma & Singh., 2021, p 1). A committed customer is also mentioned in the report as an extremely satisfied customer who can also spread a good reputation about the company. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) further mention that organizations are introducing different types of programs to engage consumers to a greater extent. The article by Chiang, Wei, Parker and Davey (2017) describes customer engagement as a concept that specifically focuses on customer behaviour in addition to transactions. Customer engagement behaviours strengthen direct but also indirect relationships between brand and customer, in addition, the results are strengthened for the organization's results (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić & Ilić., 2011; Hollebeek., 2011).

According to Pansari and Kumar (2017), customer engagement is specified as “the mechanics of a customer's value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and
indirect contribution”. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) have also researched in the field of customer engagement and concluded that during this decade, the brand's and customer's commitment has had an enormous focus on customer management. A wide range of different explanations for customer engagement have emerged with a focus on attitudes, value and behaviours (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric and Ilic (2011) suggest that commitment is motivating for consumers and makes them involved in companies. Moreover Brodie et al. (2011) define customer engagement from an attitudinal perspective by suggest that engagement leads customers to participate with firms and is a motivational state: “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships” (Brodie et al., 2011, s. 260).

Compared Brodie et al. (2011), Van Doorn et al. (2010) instead put forth the concept of customer engagement behaviour with a focus on the non-transactional nature and define it as: “the customer's behavioural manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers.” (Van Doorn et al., 2010, p 254). This definition has been extended. The importance of customer engagement behaviour has been strengthened by the digital and social media revolution and contributed to customers nowadays becoming destroyers of value or co-producers of value for firms (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016). Manifestations such as co-creation, customer referrals and social influence through word of mouth are included in the “beyond purchase” behavioural dimension of customer engagement. Developments like this make it easier for customers to positively or negatively engage more with companies (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).

2.5 Technologies impact on customer experience quality (EXQ)
The customer experience is defined when the customer meets the company, regardless how. Quality of customer experience is likely to determine the perceived value of the service and beyond, leading to other outcomes such as repurchase intentions (Lemke & Wilson., 2011). Mohd Rais, Musa and Muda (2016) describes that Customer Experience Quality (EXQ) is an emerging concept among the corporate world, and has become one of the emerging priority concepts in the customer orientation philosophy. Focusing on the core dimensions of EXQ in customer management strategy creates a significant effect on the company's prosperity and sustainability (Mohd Rais, Musa & Muda., 2016).

In the article, Zapan, Yang and Xu (2018) explain that the companies have been affected by the technological revolution in the way of how they work with their
service processes, which also affects the customer's expectations and experiences. According to De Keyser, Verleye, Lemon, Keiningham and Klaus (2020), approximately 90 percent of all business leaders believe that it is of utmost importance that the quality of the customer experience creates and is relevant to achieving a lucrative result. Therefore, retailers must comprehend the real value and changes that the use of smart technology can have on consumer dynamics, and further create a new customer experience in all interactions and perceptions about the business (Keyse and Verleye et al., 2020).

Zapan et al. (2018) describe how the technological revolution affects customer experience and expectations. Lu, Chi, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2019) further describe that the emergence of the technological era has facilitated customer journeys. The emergence of AI, creates an ability to influence the perceived journey for the customer. Through digital services, you can create positive attitudes and behaviours, which will generate satisfaction-buying loyalty (Lu et al., 2019). Vargo and Lusch (2016) also describes that the new digital era of virtualization and digitization affects companies with a completely new logic, from a paradigm of a focus on product quality to service quality.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) describes how you have succeeded with the customer experience can vary by who you might ask. Companies may believe that they have succeeded in creating a qualitative experience, but the customer experience will be created from each customer's point of view. This means that depending on which point of view you capture, the quality may differ (Vargo & Lusch., 2004). Brakus, Zarantonello and Schmitt (2015) describe that the customer experience is affected by various components, such as sensory, affectivity, behavioural and intellectuality. De Keyser et al. (2020) explaining that there are key building blocks for customer experience within the concept of quality, where they distinguish different dimensions from each other. For instance, where dimensions such as time flow are discussed.

A study conducted by Roy (2018) describes that experience quality is used as both effective and cognitive aspects, which will be generated from the services during the visit to produce value. The customers can create in accordance with the obtained benefits. The article also emphasized that experience quality comes from the interaction that will trigger customer involvement (Roy., 2018). This is in line with the attitude theory in the article by Roy (2018), developed by Bagozzi, (1992) describing customer perceived value as the result of affective attitudes formed by cognitive attitudes, namely experience quality. In other words, to get the result of customer satisfaction is by forming affective attitudes of cognitive attitudes. Bagozzi
(1992) concludes in the research that the total value and benefits that consumers receive after a purchase can give consumers satisfaction. In other words, if consumers values and benefits are considered greater than expected, consumer satisfaction will also increase customer perceived value and have a significant effect on customer loyalty (Bagozzi., 1992). Kusumawati and Sri Rahayu (2019) also describe as the result of the study by Bagozzi (1992) that the concept of experience quality has a significant effect on customer loyalty through customer perceived value. Kusumawati and Rahayu (2019) describe that there are clear links between EXQ and customer loyalty. Mohd Rais, Musa and Muda (2016) further explains that the strategies in the EXQ must focus on the efforts to create a unique, compelling, and memorable customer experience due to its significant impact on the company welfare.

2.6 Summary
After reviewing previous literature, it is of high importance for companies to create a memorable customer experience and customer journey, to be competitive on the market. Klink et al. (2020) mention that to be competitive from others, the experience for the customer is studied as the new era. A positive customer experience can generate satisfied and loyal customers and can create long-term competitive advantages for companies (Klink et al., 2020). New technologies influence the customer experience and the stages that the customer goes through in the customer journey. This in turn affects how consumers search for products, evaluate alternatives, make choices and consume products (Flavian et al., 2019). Hoyer et al claims that technological development will result in a transformation of the touchpoints in the customer journey, in which existing touchpoints will be replaced or transformed by new ones. Grewal et al. (2020) claims that it is of critical importance to understand how technology impacts the customer journey. According to Sharma et al. (2021) the great development of technology and digital and social media have opened up for higher levels of customer engagement. Verhoef et al. (2010) states that companies can miss opportunities to improve and create new products and services through creation together with customers, if they look beyond customer engagement. Moreover, the technological revolution has affected companies in how they work with service processes, which creates new levels of quality in the customer journey (Zapan., 2018).

2.7 Theoretical synthesis
The theoretical synthesis for this research is based on the main concepts of the literature review. The concepts that previously have been reviewed as considered important for the research are: customer experience, customer journey, touchpoints, experience quality and customer engagement. The figure illustrates how the different concepts of the research are integrating with each other. The figure can resemble a
funnel model, starting from the left. The figure starting from the overarching fields of
the research contained the technological development and the retail furniture-sector.
After reviewing the literature, the customer experience is an important factor to
consider for retailers to be competitive on the market (Lemon & Verhoef., 2016).
Within the theory of customer experience, the concept of customer journey takes
place. The customer journey in turn consists of technological touchpoints that will be
studied in the first research question in this research. The second research question
will focus on the two last steps in the model by investigating how retailers can use
technological touchpoints to change the experience quality and customer engagement
in the customer journey.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework
3 Methodology

In this chapter, the authors provide the reader an understanding for how the research has been conducted by introducing and explaining different approaches, strategies and methodologies chosen for the research. The authors present the different cases that the collection of data is made from. The chapter also considers the reliability and validity of the research followed by ethical and sustainable considerations. The authors also explain why the strategies and approaches used for the research are relevant and appropriate.

3.1 Research approach

There are three approaches in defining how theory and research are connected to each other. According to Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) these are deductive, inductive and abductive. The deductive approach starts from the theory and often includes creating hypotheses. The collection and analysis of data is then made after the hypothesis (Bell et al., 2019).

This research started with a review of the present literature in the area of important concepts supporting the research. The sources used were secondary data including peer-reviewed academic articles published during the last ten years. The sources that the authors had used within the articles were also followed up to get a deeper view of the different concepts. The authors used The literature review process, following an upward spiral to continuously narrow down the literature during the search-process (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill., 2019). These articles laid the foundation for important theories and concepts supporting the research. This contributed to a deductive approach, since the research did emerge from theoretical findings. The databases that were used to find these articles were Onesearch, EBSCO and Emerald. The following keywords that were used in different combinations while searching in the databases were: “customer experience”, “customer journey”, “touchpoints in customer journey”, “technological touchpoints”, “customer engagement”, “experience quality” and “furniture-sector”.

Because of less research in the field of technologies impact on quality and customer engagement in customer journey, the most efficient approach was to start with theory (deductive) and further continue to collect empirical data to get a deeper understanding of the subject. Furthermore, the approach can be linked to an inductive approach since the collection of data from the five different companies could contribute to a new theory building. However, this thesis follows a deductive
approach, since the data collected was analysed in comparison to the theories in the literature review (Bell et al., 2019).

3.2 Research strategy
There are two main research strategies in business research. The research can be conducted quantitatively and qualitatively. Depending on the research question and purpose, the research strategy should be carefully considered and developed. Bryman and Bell (2017) describe different choices of research strategies depending on the type of study being conducted. The qualitative method enables the interviewer to adapt the questions and also makes it possible for the respondents to adapt the answers during the research. The qualitative strategy enables a capacity for an extensive and in-depth analysis and results of the conducted interviews. (Bryman & Bell., 2017).

Due to the thesis purpose and approach, a qualitative research strategy was chosen. The strategy was chosen due to the thesis focusing on the companies' perspective. By using the chosen strategy, it is possible to gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of how companies in the furniture sector can manage technological touchpoints. Application of the qualitative research strategy is significant in order to gain a deeper understanding of the research issues (Merriam & Tisdell., 2016).

3.3 Research design
According to Bell et al. (2019) a framework for the collection and analysis of data is defined as a research design. Saunders et al. (2019) describes the research design as a general plan about how the authors will go about answering the research question/questions. The thesis will also have a nature as either exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative or a combination of them. All of these fulfill different purposes in the thesis. The research design also includes the choice of one or more research strategies that fits best to answer the research question in the thesis. The choice of methodology and strategies will moreover affect the choice of time-horizon of the thesis. Potential ethical considerations can arise from a specific research design and different research designs have different levels of quality (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.3.1 Multiple case study design
The most appropriate research design considered for this particular research is a case study design, since this research is focusing on generating insights from an in-depth inquiry of a phenomenon in a real-life setting. The definition of case is referring to a group, organization, person, process or event. To understand the dynamics of a specific topic being studied within a specific setting, is the purpose of a case study. Using a case study leads to development of theory since the researcher gets rich,
empirical descriptions (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Saunders et al. (2019) case studies can be used to understand effects of a situation or identify what is happening and why. While using more than one case in the research, the research strategy is called a multiple case study. The use of multiple case strategy is focusing to which extent across cases where findings can be replicated (Saunders et al., 2019). The reason why a multiple case study was chosen was to be able to easily discover patterns and replicable answers from the different retailers in the furniture sector selected for the research. Moreover, the research question was directed at a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, to companies in a real life setting and therefore a multiple-case study felt natural to use for the research. As this multiple case study is characterized by interviews conducted in a short period of time, the research is based on a cross-sectional study (Saunders et al., 2019).

This research is also based on combined studies of exploratory and descriptive study in the research design. The reason is because the purpose of the research is to get a deeper understanding and description of how retailers can manage a phenomenon in a specific context (Saunders et al., 2019). The exploratory study becomes relevant while discovering what is happening and gaining insight about a topic of interest by asking open questions. It is also used while clarifying an understanding of a problem or phenomenon and exploratory research questions therefore begin with what or how. The descriptive studies aim to give an accurate profile of companies, situations or persons, and are also based on research questions including how (Saunders et al., 2019). This research is based on getting an understanding of how retailers can manage a phenomenon/issue regarding a specific context. Moreover, giving an understanding of letting retailers describe how they manage these problems. Therefore this type of research design becomes relevant.

3.4 Type of data
Research can include primary and secondary data. Primary data is when information is collected by the researchers for their own research report due to being able to get answers to the research questions to be answered (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). The primary data may consist of focus groups, surveys, interviews and through observations. The method used to collect this type of data depends on various factors in the study, including the resources and knowledge provided for the research report (Kumar, 2018). The secondary data is collected by previous researchers for other purposes, which simplifies the use of information for own research (Bell et al., 2019).

Since this research is focusing on a specific context based on data collected from semi-structured interviews, no secondary data was used to answer the research
questions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how companies in the furniture sector work with technological touchpoints in the customer journey regarding quality and customer engagement. These interviews were also conducted to create a basis for the thesis.

3.5 Research method
The research method is a strategy for collecting important and significant research for the thesis. To collect reliable data, qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups and observations, are useful tools for the researcher to use (Saunders et al., 2012). Interviews can be conducted in various ways, including through personal interviews, via digital tools such as skype or zoom and by telephone (Bell et al., 2019). The qualitative research method includes semi-structured interviews, which have a list of specific topics that are to be discussed during the interview with the respondents (Bell et al., 2019). The semi-structured interviews provide a kind of freedom to discuss more with the informants and gather more information through deeper discussions (Saunders et al., 2012).

In this research, a qualitative research method with non-standardized interviews seemed to be most relevant for the research. Standardized interviews in the form of a questionnaire would not provide enough information for the research question and an unstructured interview risk to provide information beyond the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were therefore applied because it provides a deeper understanding for the authors and therefore that method is considered most appropriate in this research report (Bell et al., 2019).

3.5.1 Semi-structured interviews
The research method is a strategy for collecting important and significant research for the thesis. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a sequence of questions and themes in a general and comprehensive form as a guide for the interviews. This type of interview gives the researcher a greater chance to ask follow-up questions and help the respondents if difficulties are experienced during the interviews and to get important and valuable answers. Semi-structured interviews also give the interviewers the opportunity to adjust the order of the questions in the interview depending on the dialogue during the interview (Saunders et al., 2012).

This research is based on six semi-structured interviews from five different companies in the furniture-sector. The number of interviews is to get a wider range of information, to be able to identify patterns and get a more generalized result.
Moreover, semi-structured interviews provide a deeper understanding of the results of the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to be able to discuss and delve into specific topics of answering the questions of the research. To get a wider range of information from the interviews, follow-up questions have been asked based on the participants' answers (Saunders et al., 2012). An important factor was to conduct the interviews digitally to follow the restrictions and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

3.5.2 Collection of data
The authors chose to use semi-structured interviews because it provides a deeper understanding of the companies and creates a greater opportunity for discussion that cannot be done in surveys. An interview guide was prepared so that the authors would guide the respondents through the interview and through the special topics that are of great importance to the research. The authors also analyzed the websites of the companies concerned before the interviews were conducted, as well as to be properly prepared for the interviews. Before the interviews were conducted, the interview questions and the purpose of the interview were sent by email to the interviewees, to make it possible for the participants to prepare before the interview. The questions in the interviews were designed to be relevant and important for the thesis.

During the interviews, the interviewers were assigned different responsibilities. All interviewers asked questions and were responsible for specific questions related to different topics. While not interviewed, two of the interviewers took notes and wrote down extra important quotes. During the interview, supplementary questions were asked from all interviewers. The interviews were conducted online through Microsoft teams and zoom, depending on what the respondent wanted. The interviews were conducted between 30th of April and 17th of May. The interviews were recorded via three different mobile phones due to ensuring the sound quality and so that the interviewers then could transcribe what the informants had said. The findings from the interviews are further described in the empirical chapter.

3.6 Operationalization
The operationalization was conducted to make a structure of the thesis and to easier connect the main concepts of the research to the research questions. By using the operationalization the authors assured that the research questions became relevant for the study. Moreover, it clarified the purpose and reason of asking the different questions in the interview guide. The interview guide was applied in this dissertation to guide the interviews through the specified topics promoted by the research questions. The questions for the interviews were mostly structured by open-ended questions due to
creating an opportunity for the informants to give detailed answers within the various interview topics.

The interview guide was based on English but was also translated into Swedish for the reason that the authors conducted the interviews with the respondents in Swedish. It was a choice that the authors chose to make to make it easier for the participants, to avoid linguistic constraints and misunderstandings and to have the opportunity to have deeper discussions. Furthermore, a translation and transcription of the informants’ answers was done carefully to not risk that the answers were incorrect or distorted by the original answers received in Swedish.

3.7 Selection of cases
According to Saunders et al. (2019) there are two main categories of sampling, called probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The probability sample is characterized by all cases having equal part of being selected from the target population and provides a general result. The non-probability sampling instead makes it impossible to generalize the findings on statistical grounds. This type of sampling is used when the chance of each case being selected is not known (Saunders et al. 2019). Since this research is focusing on getting a deeper understanding of a specific issue in a specific context, the best alternative was to choose a non-probability sample to get an in-depth understanding to be able to answer the research questions. Moreover, typically qualitative research is focusing on providing an in-depth collection of data. The use of non-probability sampling is to find theoretical saturation rather than using a big sample size, which also was most appropriate for this research (Bryman & Bell., 2019).

3.7.1 Purposive sampling
The non-probability sampling technique selected for this research is based on the purposive sampling. Saunders et al. (2019) claims that when using your judgement to find cases that will answer your research questions in the best way, a purposive sampling is used. While selecting the samples in a purposive sampling, the research questions and objectives need to be considered and the sample will be selected dependent on these. The purposive sampling techniques facilitates getting information-rich cases (Saunders et al., 2019). Because of the specific research questions and the small sample size, the purposive sample was the most appropriate technique for selecting the samples, since it tends to give relevant and information-rich results to answering the research questions. The sampling could also remain a snowball sampling since the authors at the end of the interviews, asked the
participants if they could recommend another person for the area of the interview (Bryman & Bell., 2019).

### 3.7.2 Company criteria

While choosing a purposive sampling for a research, the goals of the research is important to consider while conducting the samples. To be sure that the research questions will be fully answered, the cases selected for the research need to meet different criteria. Because the criteria for selecting the cases for this research are established in the beginning of the research, the sampling is defined as a priori purposive sampling (Bryman & Bell., 2019). The companies chosen for this research have a few common criteria to achieve. The criteria that was developed for this research was:

Criteria for company:
- Established in Sweden
- Furniture-sector

Criteria for interviewee:
- Employed in the field of e-commerce, customer experience management or digital marketing.

This multiple case study contains companies established in the Swedish market and within the furniture-sector including home furnishing. The participants of the interviews are employees with experience of the approaches and strategies that the company has regarding the field of e-commerce/digitalization, customer experience management and digital marketing. Thus, with the use of the criteria, the companies have been selected randomly regardless of the size. The physical and digital aspect have also been considered. This has been made consciously, since the authors believe that the differences of size and online/offline-factor can provide a wider range of information about how different companies work. This can lead to an improvement of the information used to answer the research questions.

### 3.7.3 Table of cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Interview length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellos group</td>
<td>Chief marketing officer (CMO)</td>
<td>Mathias Ekström</td>
<td>30/4</td>
<td>Semi-structured</td>
<td>46 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Möbelmästarna E-commerce manager Sebastian Winding 5/5 Semi-structured 34 min
IKEA Customer experience manager (CEM) Torbjörn Andersson 7/5 Semi-structured 52 min
Mio Owner Mio Karlskrona Åsa Jobratt 10/5 Semi-structured 46 min
Company A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Person 1 11/5 Semi-structured 65 min
Mio Head of Customer relationship Management (CRM) Thomas Thorén 17/5 Semi-structured 62 min

Table 1: Table of cases

3.8 Data analysis
Saunders et al. (2019) describe that there are different methods for analyzing the collected qualitative data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) describe that data analysis is the process of answering research questions. Which is considered to be an interplay between data collection and analysis. Using a qualitative strategy also signifies the complexity of compiling and analyzing data. By analyzing the qualitative data, Saunders et al. (2019) describe that there are two different strategies, grounded theory and thematic theory. The thematic analysis has its focus and goal to find patterns and identify themes in the data which is applied to find relationships between qualitative data (Gray., 2019). Thematic analysis is a theoretically independent method with the possibility of flexibility (Gray., 2019). The analysis also has a great ability to create rich and complex results, which helps the authors to be able to answer the research questions. For this reason, the authors have decided that a thematic analysis will be practiced in this research.

3.8.1 Thematic analysis
With thematic analysis as an approach, identification of patterns and themes will be used to gain knowledge about how retailers handle technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector. Thematic analysis provides a customizable interpretation of data, and by classifying them into a wide range of themes, it becomes easier to process large amounts of data. Following the implementation of categorizing
themes and patterns in the transcribed interviews, the empirical findings were summarized in the chapter on empirical results.

3.9 Quality of research
Bell et al. (2019) describe validity and reliability as two measurable quality criteria that must be implemented in research, with a description of the significance of the criteria and what consequences it may cause within the study.

3.9.1 Reliability in qualitative research
Bell et al. (2019) describe that the criterion for reliability is about how reliable the investigations would be on repeated occasions and how identical the empirical results would be. If a researcher replicates the study and obtains the same result and conclusion from the case study, reliability is achieved (Bell et al., 2019). There are two different orientations, external and internal reliability. Internal reliability is about how researchers in the study interpret and agree on the data collected. Depending on the extent to which the study can be repeated, it is referred to as external reliability (Saunders et al., 2009).

The two factors confirmability and dependability will be taken into account (Bell et al., 2019). All authors are present during the interviews and the interviews are recorded. Semi-structured interviews are conducted, in which the authors provide an interview guide as an approach. Through this approach, the authors did not necessarily follow the stated order of questions in the interview guide. This is to be able to create an in-depth knowledge of the participants' answers and the opportunity to follow up questions (ibid). The researchers indicate that the results during this dissertation will maintain objectivity that no individual interpretations and values will be presented. Recorded interviews and complete transcripts are not included in the dissertation but are available on request. To achieve confirmability a compilation of the empirical data was sent to the participants of the interview to get an opportunity to review and approve if the authors have interpreted the information correctly (Bell et al., 2019).

3.9.2 Validity in qualitative research
The concept of validity is an important research criterion according to Bell et al. (2019). This concept measures the researcher's ability to the content being studied. The validity criterion is designed to assess whether the conclusions drawn after the investigation are consistent. Internal validity and external validity are two criteria that are described through credibility and transferability, which the authors describe about how these criteria are applied in qualitative research (ibid). Internal validity is connected to credibility, which is about causality. Whether the researchers
'observations are in line with the researchers' developed theoretical ideas. External validity is linked to transferability, which applies to the extent that research results can be generalized (Saunders et al., 2019).

Using a qualitative research method, includes an in-depth study of a few individuals or cases. This means that it can make the study more difficult to achieve transferability (Bell et al., 2019). The authors use multiple case study design with research of a few companies in the furniture industry in the Swedish market, which may be too narrow a selection to be generalized. On the other hand, some type of generalization of patterns and themes where possible for the authors to achieve, since five different companies were analysed. Thus, the purpose with the qualitative study is to reach an in-depth perspective, which reduces the importance of achieving generalization. By considering communicative validity, the participants who have provided the primary data will take part in the researchers' complete interpretation of the empirical results. Furthermore, assess whether the researchers have interpreted the information from the interview correctly, which is a measure to strengthen the credibility (Bell et al., 2019).

3.10 Ethical considerations
The authors' own thoughts and emotions have not influenced the reasoning around the results regarding the thesis. The authors respect the ethics principles by aiming to achieve reliability. The thesis should be achieved with honest results and conclusions, which means with the collecting of secondary data, all information that is relevant is taken into account. To facilitate the thesis process, the collection of personal data is saved with the informant's approval.

In understanding with the Svenska Vetenskapsrådet (2017), the research ethics principles: the consent requirement and the information required will be followed. The informants' consent must be respected. The intention of the study is communicated with the informants before the interview, with approval of consent to appear for participation. The questions will be sent to the informants before the interview takes place. It gives the informants an opportunity for preparation and if there are any objections and thoughts about the questions. The interview is also informed that it is completely voluntary and that the participants may cancel at any time. The participants were also asked for approval before being recorded. The informants' answers are only used in the study, and that the answers are not going to be published elsewhere. Based on the confidentiality requirement, the integrity of the interviewees will be respected, since personal information or anonymity is taken into account and will be respected. Within recommendations from the Svenska
Vetenskapsrådet (2017) on how personal data should be processed, all personal data will be deleted after publication. All personal data will be stored and processed by following the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Linnaeus University is responsible for the processing.

3.11 Sustainable considerations
In today's society, not only the traditional economic aspects of the business are measured. By gaining a more accurate and complete picture of the company, the TBL model was developed. It measures aspects of companies’ perspectives on their business and relationships with the environment, society, and the economy (Sustain. Wisconsin., 2021). The research will be implemented by conducting a qualitative study with the five participating companies, in which the research will take the three pillars of the TBL model into account, and social, environmental, and economic sustainability will be considered as high priority factors. It is an important tool that the authors have taken into account and have taken measures to maintain sustainable development.

Through the research, the goal is to be socially responsible. To always have responsibilities and respectfulness, and to contribute to a positive social development in the areas according to the research. This is achieved by the authors always respecting rights and equal value, by offering all authors of the research a fair, safe and non-discriminatory work environment. Moreover, the authors will be neutral and dispassionate while conducting the interviews to reduce impacts on the informants. Due to the situation with the covid-19, the authors individually worked from home and avoided public locations to reduce the spread of infection. Therefore, the interviews were also conducted online. It is of importance during this research that the environment should not be negatively affected. To have as little environmental impact as possible, the use of energy and materials has been limited. The interviews were conducted digitally and this will reduce use of energy and fuel consumption and transportations will not be needed. All used literature will be online sources or books borrowed from the university library to avoid unnecessary consumption, and no printed versions of the project will be used. These measures can also be linked to the economic aspect being taken into account in the research. By conducting this study, the authors took the economic perspective into account, by reducing costs on materials and travel transportations.
4 Empirical findings

In the following chapter, the companies are presented together with the empirical findings from the semi-structured interviews. Since the data is analysed from a thematic analysis, the themes chosen for the empirical findings are based on the concepts in the theories in the literature review. The themes that the data is divided into are: customer experience management, technologies impact on customer journey, touchpoints and interactions in customer journey, customer engagement as interaction and technologies impact on customer experience quality.

4.1 Cases

4.1.1 Ellos Group
Ellos Group was founded in Borås with the brand and company as Ellos. The group of Ellos today consists of four e-commerce sites such as Ellos, Stayhard, Jotex and Homeroom, which is active throughout the Nordic region (Ellos group., 2021). Ellos Group is purely digital, an e-commerce company that is a leading player in home furnishings as well as fashion. The furniture company has for 70 years made everyday life easier for its customers. Ellos group constantly creates and improves product offerings that meet consumers’ needs and wishes. The company meets customers with trends that are up to date and through continuous development of technical solutions improves the shopping experience for customers (Ellos group., 2021).

Mathias Ekström (2021) works as Chief marketing officer (CMO) for Ellos Group. The position at group level includes work such as UX, the customer experience, marketing and branding strategy. It also includes internally payment solutions and financial services. Ekström (2021) works operationally as marketing and e-commerce director for Ellos as well. Ekström (2021) has worked on Ellos for about 13-14 years and been working on group level for four years.

4.1.2 Möbelmästarna
Möbelmästarna define themselves as "we are what we are called- Möbelmästare!" (Möbelmästarna., n.d.). A furniture company that was started in Skåne about 30 years ago. Today, Möbelmästarna has both physical stores and a digital store, but they focus mostly on the 30 physical stores that the chain consists of. The furniture company offers smaller items for the home, to larger furniture such as beds and sofas. Möbelmästarna focuses a lot on the physical contact with customers, quality and price ranges for everyone (Möbelmästarna., n.d.).
Sebastian Winding (2021) currently has the position as an E-commerce manager at Möbelmästarna. Winding (2021) had the position for six weeks but has previously worked for six years as a marketer and marketing manager at another e-commerce company. Möbelmästarna has high priority for developing e-commerce. Since e-commerce is newly launched, Winding (2021) works a lot with marketing, fixes with functions for the website and to facilitate barriers.

4.1.3 IKEA
IKEA’s vision is “to create a better everyday life for the many people”. Ingka group consists of three different business areas. The first is IKEA retail, which is the core business, existing across 30 markets and consisting of 378 IKEA stores. IKEA is a global company with 706 million visitors and 3.6 billion visitors at IKEA.com, each year. The second part is Ingka centers, including 45 shopping centers that are experience-oriented and existing in Europe, China and Russia. The third part is Ingka investments, which works by making investments in the core business. Ingka investments includes partnering with companies with similar values as IKEA, which contribute to a growth in IKEA retail business (Ingka., 2021).

Torbjörn Andersson (2021) is Customer manager at IKEA Ingka and is positioned in Malmö. This working position develops the customer experience in collaboration with other functions. Andersson (2021) has a global function, supporting all IKEA countries and works on the head office globally. Andersson (2021) has a long working experience at IKEA with different positions including consulting and working with digital channels of IKEA, IKEA.com and applications.

4.1.4 Mio
Mio was founded 60 years ago and is a swedish leading retail chain for furniture and interior design. Mio's central offices and service offices are located in Tibro and Stockholm. The company has stores in over 70 locations in Sweden and also has an e-commerce store. Mio is based on the franchise concepts, "Mio should be the obvious choice when it comes to furniture and interior design for the price- and quality-conscious customer and always deliver a positive customer experience.” (Mio., 2021). The concern is based on being Sweden's destination for interior design and furniture. The company has blurred the boundaries between the channels in the customer meeting.

Åsa Jobratt (2021) took over the family company, Lindahls möbler 20 years ago, which is a franchise company to Mio AB. Jobratt (2021) is a part of a product council
that decides which range to have. Jobratt (2021) is also a member of Mio AB’s board, as a representative of the smaller owners. With a background at the university within the economics program with a focus on small businesses, Jobratt (2021) started at Mio as store manager in Karlskrona. Thomas Thorén (2021) also works at Mio today, previously working at Gina Tricot, starting up their customer club. Thorén has worked at Mio for five years. The journey within Mio began with implementing Customer relationship management (CRM). Thorén (2021) is now head of customer relationship management at Mio.

4.1.5 Company A
Company A (2021) is a Nordic e-retailer in furniture and interior design, which includes four different online-stores in the corporation group. The company has a total of 430 employees. In addition to the online stores, the company also has physical stores and several physical showrooms in Sweden. The company's business idea is to offer a wide range of good prices with a goal that every customer should have a positive experience.

Person 1 (2021) has been positioned as Chief executive officer (CEO) of the company since September 2020. Person 1 (2021) has 25 years of experience in e-commerce in Sweden. Person 1 (2021) has been positioned as CEO of a previous e-commerce company in furniture and interior design.

4.2 Customer experience management
According to Ekström (personal interview, 04-30-2021) working with customer experience is about understanding the touchpoints that the customer has with the company, by mapping out the customer experience in the areas of pre-purchase, purchase and post purchase. As Ekström (2021) presents, Ellos Group has been working with customer journey mapping since around 2016/2017 to be able to review a typical customer journey for the company and moreover be able to start tracking the customer experience and put KPI measures to it. Ekström (2021) describes why the company started with implementing the digital customer experience in the work process as: “the more and more competition that came and the more specialist and niche parts that came into e-commerce the more focus there was on the customer experience”. Ekström (2021) moreover presents that the company consists of a UX team that works with customer experience together with analysts. Further Ekström (2021) notes that there is not only one section that works with customer experience, since it's in the vision of the whole Ellos group. Instead the company rather has a section that performs and improves the customer experience. Ekström (2021) describes that the company has a strategic report that is reviewed on a monthly and
quarterly basis, which is mainly oriented around customer experience. It is extremely central for the company. Ekström (2021) describes that the digitalization has improved the customer experience: “We see where we get more or less satisfied customers, we see which products drive higher or lower customer satisfaction and repeat customers”.

According to Winding (Personal interview, 05-05-2021), the customer experience includes all contact between a company and a customer in different channels for instance, through websites, stores, with people, products at home and outside stores, and e-commerce. Since Möbelmästarna mostly interacts with customers physically today, the company uses very few digital touchpoints such as emails when ordering / delivery and marketing channels. Möbelmästarna does not have a department that currently works with the customer experience. Winding (2021) further mentions that Möbelmästarna today has no strategy for the digital customer experience or a holistic approach to the customer's experience, but that there are many plans and thoughts for improvements. Winding (2021) points out that digitalization has changed the conditions for creating a good customer experience through the process of following the customer journey digitally. Winding (2021) further mentions "You can build relationships much better with the help of digital tools”.

According to Andersson (Personal interview, 07-05-2021), customer experience is all interactions that any person has with IKEA. Andersson (2021) further explains: "in summary the result of all perceptions, all emotions and all interactions you have indirectly and directly, as you have with the company - it is customer experience for me ". Andersson (2021) mentions that IKEA has always been very customer-focused because their vision is to make everyday life easier. Andersson (2021) mentions that the work process regarding the digital customer experience has changed a lot because the company has today a retail experience that is a mix of physical and digital channels. IKEA has a function called customer with the purpose to put the customer in focus. Together with several other functions, like the customer insight department, they explore what the customer wants, and what the customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with. The customer experience is a high priority for IKEA and therefore the company has measures to continuously improve and develop it (Andersson., 2021). Andersson (2021) mentions that IKEA's strategy for innovation is not to be afraid of trying something new, develop and improve continuously. According to Andersson (2021), digitalization has created more opportunities to meet customers in several channels and to take part in information in other ways. Thanks to the development of digitalization, as an example, customers can now furnish an entire room with IKEA's furniture digitally and create a feeling of what it will look like.
Andersson (2021) believes that physical and online shopping have both opportunities and challenges, but that no one is better than the other, the channels need to work together.

Jobratt (Personal interview, 10-05-2021) defines customer experience as when the customer meets Mio, regardless of which channel the company provides, for instance through advertising, the store or the website. Further Jobratt (2021) explains that customer experience is a concept that has always been considered in the company, but that has changed over time. The company's process regarding customer experience consists of a professional franchise market organization and a CRM-section of 10-15 employees that continuously simplifies for the customer to shop online and make decisions (Jobratt., 2021). Jobratt (2021) future presents that the reason for putting a lot of resources on that is to follow the customer journey through or to the purchase. Moreover, Jobratt (2021) emphasizes that customer experience is not only a specific section of the company, but rather something that is considered all the time (Jobratt., 2021). Jobratt (2021) also mentioned that the physical store and the website deliver the customer experience together. Jobratt (2021) explains that the company has a strategy and that they continuously follow how the customers use the different channels, if it is via telephone, iPad, the age of the customers, what products they buy. Furthermore Jobratt (2021) adds: “We try to learn as much as possible from our customers so that we give the right offer to the right customer.”

Thorén (Personal interview, 17-05-2021) defines the customer experience as the customer's perception, what the customer thought of the purchase, how simple, practical and how inspiring the experience was (Thorén., 2021). The customer experience has been a clear part of Mio's vision as a brand for about six years. Mio's vision is that “the customer experience should be encompassed by both a simplicity of inspiration and product expression” (Thorén., 2021). Mio does not have a specific department that works with the digital customer experience, but is implemented in the customer relationship management department. Thorén (2021) believes that digitalization has changed the conditions for a good customer journey by having the customer come to the store well informed. Furthermore, it is mentioned that it is considerably easier to create an innovative experience digitally. Partly because it is faster to produce communication and to manufacture inventions. It can also be controlled centrally from the office if it is digital (Thorén., 2021).

Person 1 (Personal interview, 11-05-2021) defines customer experience as what the company does externally, how they build the brand, their digital touchpoints and dialogues with the customer. In addition, Person 1 (2021) explains that the concept of
customer experience has become more prioritized in the company and that they have measured the customer experience with Net Promoter Scores (NPS) for three years. The company works cross-functionally with NPS, including approximately eight employees from different functions having weekly meetings about their strategies and tactics for improving NPS and the customer experience. Person 1 (2021) further explains that the NPS makes it possible to see the customer expectation compared to the actual experience. Person 1 (2021) further explains that the digitalization has built the conditions to be able to offer a larger part of the service compared to before. It is further explained that even though the company has more points of contact today, there are also challenges, it is explained that “the challenges we have are the information to the customer that they must be correct because we also build an expectation through all points of contact. If we say wrong somewhere, the customer experience will be less valuable” (Person 1., 2021).

4.3 Technologies impact on customer journey
According to Ekström (2021), there are approximately five typical digital customer journeys within the company, but with variation in between. Ekström (2021) points out that their most common customer journey starts when the customer searches for a specific type of product or product category on Google, then clicks on a product ad and comes directly to the website. Ellos Group then begins to build recommendations to expand the alternatives, such as a reversed funnel, from a small interest to a larger interest. The company uses NPS to monitor customer satisfaction and cross-check data to constantly get a better insight into how the customer journey can be improved. "We actually put 95 percent of our eggs in the statistical basket," (Ekström., 2021). Remarketing is something Ellos Group works with to recognize a customer early in the customer journey. "For us, it is very much about capturing the interest, seeing what kind of interest it is and then doing as relevant marketing of it as possible to the next step" (Ekström., 2021). The disadvantage of being a purely digital company according to Ekström (2021) is that you can never meet the customer in real life and can not feel emotionally satisfied if the customer is satisfied. Another disadvantage of digital business is not getting direct feedback in the same way as physically.

The digital customer journey according to Winding (2021) starts when the customer comes in contact with Möbelmästarna through their stores and then goes to the website to order. It could also be that the company reaches out through an advertising space that then leads to the website. Once visiting the website, the customer is looking for products and getting to know the brand. If the purchase is completed, the company follows up with marketing and processes further via customer service, email and order confirmation. If a purchase is not made by the customer, Möbelmästarna today does
not have a contact point that follows up the customer and therefore the customer journey ends. According to Winding (2021), improving the digital customer journey can be done to reach customers who do not make a purchase, by collecting customers' emails for sending out newsletters. Another way is to use retargeting ads via Facebook or Google to process. But a significant improvement is to implement a real CRM tool, for the head office and the stores to be able to communicate through one channel (Winding, 2021).

According to Andersson (2021), IKEA has different patterns in customer journey that they delve into. It is further explained that when looking at the customer perspective, Andersson (2021) describes that the customer journey changes depending on the customer's purpose, the information they get, the interactions they have and which move they make. Andersson (2021) further explains by describing what the process is to create an understanding and then be able to improve and develop the customer's journey. Roadmaps are created from the customer's needs and intentions. IKEA measures customers' opinions along the entire digital customer journey and Andersson (2021) describes that they are using a measuring instrument so-called “happy customer score” that measures how satisfied customers are. “We have three clicks away on the computer so I know what customers think of something special. And that is what drives much of our improvement work”. According to Andersson (2021), the pandemic has forced IKEA to develop new solutions. Andersson's (2021) own view is that parts of the physical customer journey will instead be able to be done digitally to a large extent, in the near future.

Jobratt (2021) believes that customers nowadays are more well informed when they visit the store. A typical customer journey on Mio according to Jobratt (2021), begins on the website, where the customer searches and checks what is available. When it comes to larger furniture, it is not so common for the customer to decide immediately. Then the customer comes to the store to try, feel, look at fabrics, colors, because it is more difficult online. Then either the customer orders directly in the store or at home. Then the company gets in touch with the customer again through the notification that the product has arrived or if the customer should have the product delivered. So even if the customer orders from the website, the customer always comes in contact with the store. Jobratt (2021) believes that the biggest challenge of the digital customer journey is to visualize and create a physical feeling of the products. To improve the customer journey, all Mio stores receive an update on what customers thought about the service and products purchased in the store, based on questions sent out to customers who have made a purchase through digital tools (Jobratt, 2021).
Thorén (2021) mentions that the customer journey within Mio is neither digital or physical, instead it is omni: "our business is based on the store being involved, so the typical digital customer journey is a non-journey" (Thorén., 2021). A typical customer journey using both channels usually begins through e-commerce where the customer finds information, checks the product range, and what options are available. Then the customer goes to the store and feels the product and sees the product in reality. The customer then buys the product directly in the store or orders the product online. If it is an order item, the customer enters a waiting phase where the consumer is later met with the delivery date. Between 10 and 20 percent contact customer service regarding product and delivery issues. The customer can then pick up the product in one of Mio’s stores (Thorén., 2021). To improve the customer journey, Mio uses NPS surveys through email to get insight in the customers views of the journey. Furthermore, Thorén (2021) mentions that a GAP analysis is performed to get an understanding of the result of the NPS score regarding expectations and the actual experience. Thorén (2021) points out that the biggest challenge with the digital customer journey is to handle the digital touchpoints in a different manner than the physical.

Person 1 (2021) says that approximately 75 percent of sales take place through the digital channels and 25 percent through the store. According to person 1 (2021) even if the customer searches for the product in the store to check color and quality, the customer journey already begins digitally. Person 1 (2021) believes that the biggest differences between digital and physical customer journeys consist of: "convenience, accessibility and rationality are much greater digitally". Person 1 (2021) further mentions that the physical purchase includes more senses than digital, such as smell, sight, touch and social contact, which contributes to a greater shopping experience. According to person 1, the biggest challenge with digital touchpoints is the security of payment and not knowing exactly what you get. Moreover, not being able to shop with all your senses. Company A works with NPS to improve the digital customer journey all the time. Person 1 (2021) mentions that NPS is a driving force for dissolving and improving the customer experience. When the goods are delivered, the customers rank the company via a score and since company A knows exactly which product the customer is buying, it gives a direct answer.

4.4 Touchpoints and interactions in customer journey
Ekström (2021) explains that the customer journey has improved digitally thanks to all the statistics that the company can obtain. Ekström (2021) further explains that Ellos group uses different KPIs to create an improvement in different parts of the customer journey. It is further explained that the company uses metrics on how many
Ekström (2021) gives an example about when Ellos group digitized the payment experience, they reduced the proportion of questions that have to do with the payments with 80 percent. By working with the KPI in the various parts of the customer journey, it also creates according to Ekström (2021) a customer satisfaction: "Shorter response time to customers because customer service receives fewer questions all the time, which means that those who actually get in touch become even more satisfied with the quality they receive from customer service.".

Winding (2021) describes that Möbelmästarna has a focus on creating and improving its technological touchpoints. Winding (2021) further explains that from being an entirely physical furniture company to “the fact that we launched e-commerce... it must still be the absolute main technological touchpoint. Because it is absolutely most important, from having an informative website to being a website that is selling”. It is further explained that the most palpable matter that customers will soon experience is that the company is developing and implementing a proper CRM tool, where the head office and all stores will communicate through a digital channel.

According to Andersson (2021) the digital touchpoints, compared to the physical, have changed the customer journey in a way that it gives new opportunities. Andersson (2021) further emphasizes the availability of information that the digital touchpoints provide the customer. For instance, today customers can see if a product is available in stock before coming to the store. Anderssons (2021) further explains the opportunities the customers have through the IKEA app in which the customers can create their own shopping list, which they can return to later. Andersson (2021) moreover presents a new function on the IKEA app that exists in some countries today: “in some countries you can use the IKEA app to scan products and then pay”. By using that function the customers do not need to spend time in line. Andersson (2021) moreover mentions: “So I think our new app experience, not least augmented reality and those possibilities, is a pretty cool thing”.

Jobratt (2021) mentions that before the technological touchpoints existed, the customer journey began when the customer walked inside the door of the store or received a catalog in the mailbox. According to Jobratt (2021), the digital touchpoints have changed the customer journey, now the customer journey begins much earlier: “Customers know so much more today than they did before. And then you shop in a completely different way today”. Mio, for example, currently works with influencers who show products and this has a major impact on customers. Without those technological touchpoints, collaborations with influencers would not have been
possible. Mio has had a website for 15 years, but it is the last seven to ten years that the new thinking with the customer experience came. During the corona pandemic, Mio has also developed new touchpoints, such as when customers pick up their delivery (Jobratt., 2021).

Thorén (2021) describes that the customer's expectations have changed enormously with the digital customer journey. For example, expectations within delivery times, availability and information at all times, and that the customer expects everything to go faster. Another aspect Thorén (2021) explains is "that the more opportunities that come, the more challenges it will be for companies to protect all technologies." Thorén (2021) describes a negative impact that technological touchpoints have caused: “negative customers spread their negative opinions faster and more intensively than positive”. There are also positive aspects with technological touchpoints. Thorén explains (2021) that the brand's website drives an enormous amount of traffic and has managed to create a billion business for them digitally. Thorén (2021) further describes that the website was started only by being available, but further became their largest store today.

Person 1 (2021) believes that technological touchpoints have changed the customer journey to the positive, as the customer has better control over what happens in the buying process today. It is further mentioned that the customer has a greater opportunity for more information and greater availability. Person 1 (2021), on the other hand, believes that there are problems with having many channels and touchpoints. Person 1 (2021) means that "it becomes more complex for the customer all the time if he or she makes many purchases". It is further mentioned that there may be too many emails and text messages from companies, which means that there will be too much information, which can lead to a poorer shopping experience. Person 1 (2021) describes a successful development of digital touchpoints in the company as the implementation of both automatic and manual chat. The chat allows the customer to get direct answers regarding your purchase or other questions (Person 1., 2021).

4.5 Customer engagement as interaction
Ekström (2021) describes that customer engagement has improved enormously thanks to digitalization. Ekström (2021) further explains that Ellos Group spends a relatively large part of its marketing budget on social media and that they work a lot with content-based marketing, which they consider a vital way of working to engage their customers in their brand. Through the use of social media, Ellos Group can therefore work with engagement rate, which Ekström (2021) further explains: "Facebook and Instagram work in that if you have a low level of commitment on your accounts, you
also get poorer marketing efficiency” Which Ekström (2021) further explain is important components for Ellos Group.

Winding (2021) describes that Möbelmästarna has a lot of development opportunities in customer engagement and in the near future, Möbelmästarna will launch tools that will provide the opportunity for defined answers and internal communication. Winding (2021) further explains that for the time being, they use the advertising of organic posts on their social media as an approach to reach out and engage their customers with the brand. By disseminating relevant information, Winding (2021) explains that the “commitment also becomes much higher when the customer perceives that they as a company understand and respect the customer”.

Andersson (2021) represents that IKEA has a dedicated function called attract and activate, that works with customer engagement, which is also a part of the work with customer experience. Andersson (2021) further describes that the rating-function of the products is something that brings a big interest among the customers. Andersson (2021) explains that IKEA will work more with workshops and videos on the website, with interior designers telling how to decorate a home, or designers telling the thoughts of a product. Andersson (2021) explains: “We have an incredible amount of knowledge about home furnishings and that is something we are happy to share, we will work more and more with communities”. Moreover Andersson (2021) describes that IKEA measures engagement, regarding what customers think in interactions. Further he presents that some negative experiences sometimes bring more engagement among customers while positive experiences do not engage customers as much: “So that it is quite interesting, there are a number of elements that, if they work, no problem, you do not think about it as a customer. But if it does not work, you react strongly negatively.”

Jobratt (2021) describes that due to social media and the company's website, the customer becomes much more involved with the brand when making a purchase. Jobratt (2021) emphasizes “I think customers visit us more times, and then I do not mean physically in store but a visit to us through the internet. Jobratt (2021) further explains that the customer spends much more time on finding information that they consider interesting within the brand and its products.

Thorén (2021) explains that Mio uses a model called the engagement pyramid to engage the customers in different levels. Moreover Thorén (2021) describes that Mio collaborates with influencers and further creates engagement through newsletters. Thorén (2021) presents that social media such as Facebook is a good channel to
engage the customers, since that type of channel is used by many customers with a purpose to be maintained. Thorén (2021) explains that Mio has several systems to follow and measure the engagement of the customers. Some of the systems measure how many people that click on the newsletters, how many people that participate in competitions in social media and where the engagement is high. Further the company measures key words that the customers use while searching in different channels. Thorén (2021) describes that Mio works with a loyalty program called Vojado. Moreover, the company uses type data metrics to measure which keywords that drive most purchases. Thorén (2021) also states that Mio uses a software that measures what is said about Mio in social media, such as influences in their blog posts or customers that mentions Mio on Facebook. Thorén (2021) also describes that the digitalization has contributed to more opportunities for creating engagement and a facilitation in measuring the customer engagement. Thorén (2021) concludes: “The more opportunities for commitment we have, the more commitment we need to pursue”.

Person 1 (2021) in company A presents that the main function that the company uses to engage the customers is the NPS evaluation and to ask customers to make reviews on products. Company A further engages their customers through social media, including competitions and collaborations with influencers. According to person 1 (2021), the customer is most engaged during the purchase, to get information about things you can't present online, such as textile and colors. Person 1 (2021) also describes that the customer becomes engaged regarding the delivery time of the product. This is not regarding how fast the company delivers the product, but rather to deliver products in time (person 1, 2021). Person 1 (2021) also explains that the engagement is changing depending on if the delivery is good or bad and the engagement increases when something negative occurs (person 1., 2021). To follow up the engagement the company uses NPS and moreover the numbers regarding social media, for instance how many people that are participating in a competition on Instagram. According to person 1 (2021) the digitalization has contributed to a higher level of engagement for the customers, since it is easier to contact the company. It is also easier for the company to spread information to the customer. Person 1 (2021) also emphasizes: “I believe that the brand, strong brands create engagement through the brand than, so to speak, the innovation of technological development.”

4.6 Technologies impact on customer experience quality
Ekström (2021) describes that the company's approach of creating a better quality of the customer experience is conducted by mapping the typical customer journey and collecting data in each touchpoint. Further Ekström (2021) describes that Ellos group
uses NPS to follow up and improve the quality and customer satisfaction of the customer journey. Which Ekström (2021) mentions is an easy way to measure and follow up with. The company divides NPS based on the pre- during and post purchase journey and presses the question on several occasions with a lot of sub-questions to understand what is the contribution to the higher or lower NPS. Further Ekström (2021) explains that the digitalization has highly contributed to an improvement of the quality of the touchpoints in the customer journey. Ekström (2021) presents “I think we have five doubled our customer satisfaction since we started with this type of approach of working and that is 5 years ago. The NPS we had then and what we have now, it is still five doubled and it is thanks to that way of working as well”. Moreover Ekström (2021) describes the deterioration of the quality in the digital customer journey as you do not have the opportunity to touch and try the product.

According to Winding (2021) it is hard to say that one touchpoint makes a larger function than another, because it is about reaching out to the right people and your target group, which is made in different ways. Further Winding (2021) presents that Möbelmästarna does not have any approach or system for follow up or measure the quality of the customer journey. On the other hand, according to Winding (2021), the quality of the touchpoints in the customer journey gets better with the use of technology. Winding (2021) continues: “But with that said, we have an extremely long way to go, there is a lot to do so we will get better at it”. Winding (2021) further explains, compared to a physical store, the biggest challenge is to mediate the feeling of the experience in a digital customer journey. Winding (2021) emphasizes that one deterioration of the quality in a digital customer journey as the risk of buying something online is that the product may not live up to the customers’ expectations: “As an e-retailer, you have a greater requirement to convey information directly on products so that the customer knows that they are buying the right thing”. According to Winding (2021), the digitalization also makes the communication more general and directed to a whole target group, compared to communication in a physical store, which is more personal.

Andersson (2021) mentions that IKEA is working with the quality of the customer experience because it is important for both the company and the customers. IKEA has invested an enormous amount of time in listening to customers, in order to constantly have access to what consumers think, further to be able to measure this in different ways. Andersson (2021) further mentions that he was involved in developing the new return policy, to be able to return for 365 days, to create a better customer experience with better offer and quality in the interactions in the customer journey. Andersson (2021) considers Ikea.com to be an important digital touchpoint that meets many
customers' needs because extensive information is there for the customer. However the personal interaction is and will always be important in the right situation. Andersson (2021) states that "every day, thanks to customers using our digital touchpoints, for example our digital technologies, we gain insights and know what works and does not work and then improves". Andersson (2021) explains that the quality of the digital customer journey is a deterioration in not being able to feel and smell the products. Andersson (2021) further mentions that "there are a number of natural limitations today, but they will disappear, I am completely convinced of that".

Thorén (2021) believes that Mio maps the purchase journey, what steps are available and gradually implements measuring points in the digital touchpoints to create better quality in the customer journey. According to Thorén (2021), e-commerce and newsletters meet customers' needs in the best way. To monitor the quality of the commitment, Mio measures key words, such as the relationship between opened and clicked-away emails. Customer surveys used by SurveyMonkey are sent out in connection with purchases, based on NPS surveys. Questions about the experience and quality of the product are asked, as well as whether the customer would recommend Mio to their contacts. Mio’s own developed data warehouse then collects the data into a data lake that models data into a data warehouse. Then Mio visualizes and distributes the data. Thorén (2021) mentions that by using digital touchpoints, it is easier to measure quality. Thorén (2021) believes that a common deterioration in the quality of the digital customer journey is that the human encounter disappears, but also that the product perception digitally does not live up to reality. Thorén (2021) further mentions that "the customer must solve everything by themselves with the equipment and technical power".

Person 1 (2021) explains that they try to map out what steps are available and then gradually implement measurement points for them different touchpoints. Person 1 (2021) further describes that based on the measurement of NPS, the company can create a higher quality in their touchpoints. Person 1 (2021) gives an example that they have noticed that tracking the delivery is extremely important for the service in the customer journey. Because the customer thinks it is clear and easy to understand, for example delivery confirmation and delivery precision, a strong customer experience is created. Person 1 (2021) mentions that the possibilities that exist today digitally did not exist five years ago, but that it also creates complexity. Person 1 (2021) further explains that "it is important to have the right information in all channels and always have all information updated, so it places a higher demand on the company" Furthermore, person 1 (2021) describes that as a physical store, you
think of the customer as a visitor while digital has created the mindset to think about the customer throughout the customer journey in a completely different way.

5 Analysis

In the following chapter, the authors will complete an analysis and draw connections between the empirical findings and the theories in the literature review. The section is structured in the order based on the theoretical framework and the primary data collection from the empirical collection. In the end of the chapter the research questions are answered followed by managerial and theoretical implications. Furthermore social, ethical and sustainable implications, limitations and suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1 Customer experience management

Abbott (1995) argues that the customer experience is more about satisfied experiences than products. Furthermore, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) believe that the customer experience is like a journey together with the company and / or the brand during the buying process, together with several touchpoints. Empirical findings strengthen that for the majority of those interviewed, the customer experience is all contact between company and customer. Andersson (2021) also mentions, among other things, that the customer experience is the result of all perceptions, feelings and all interactions directly and indirectly with the company. While person 1 (2021) also mentions that the experience for the customer is what the company does externally, how the company builds a brand and their digital touchpoints, as well as dialogues with customers. In addition, Manning and Parrish (2017) mention that companies with a dominant customer experience grow on average five times faster than companies with worse experiences.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), the customer experience is important in order to gain a competitive advantage, supported by Thorén (2021) and Ekström (2021). Most interviewees mention that the companies have worked with customer experience for a long time, but that it has changed over the years. The majority of the participants also have a department that works with the customer experience in the customer journey. All interviewees agreed that the customer experience permeates the entire company and therefore it is not just one department that works with the experience. Andersson (2021) and Jobratt (2021) also mention that it is of high importance to integrate the physical and digital channels to create an innovative customer experience.
The empirical findings confirmed that all interviewed companies agree that digitalization has improved the customer experience and customer journey to some extent, but the companies have slightly different opinions about what has improved. While reviewing the empirical findings, the digitalization has contributed to a range of improvements for the companies interviewed. The improvements mentioned by the companies are based on simplification, since companies nowadays can see where in the customer flow customers are more or less satisfied. Also, which products drive higher or lower customer satisfaction and this creates a better customer experience. Another thing mentioned is that digitalization has improved relationship building with customers and also points out that it is easier to follow the customer journey, supported by Winding (2021). Moreover, the digitalization has created opportunities to meet customers in different channels, supported by Andersson (2021). In addition, Jobratt (2021) and Thorén (2021) share the opinion that customers are more well-informed before the visit to the store, due to digitalization. According to Edelman and Singer (2015) the rapid growth of touchpoints and reduced control over the digital shopping experience contribute to a more complicated relationship where companies produce special and unique experiences for the customer, supported by person 1 (2021).

5.2 Technologies impact on customer journey
In order to create a satisfied customer journey, Grewal and Roggeveen (2020) suggests that it is important for retailers to understand the role of the customer experience at each stage of the customer journey, to be able to survive in this technology intensive environment. Correspondingly, the main part of the empirical findings indicates that it is important that the customer experience is considered in the customer journey. The majority of the empirical findings show that the customer experience is rather an overarching concept for the company to consider as a vision, than a detailed strategy to follow. In a few cases the findings indicated that the company did have a specific section or strategy working with the customer experience/digital experience, supported by Andersson (2021) and Ekström (2021).

According to Hoyer et al. (2020) the customer shopping journey includes “the complete stages a customer goes through from pre-transaction to transaction to post-transaction”. The empirical findings showed that there is not only one specific journey for the customers to go through. Very often, the customer journey is changed depending on what the customer wants, which channels the customer uses and the purpose of buying the product, leading to a lot of different customer journeys, supported by Andersson (2021) and Ekström (2021). Thus, some fundamental steps in the journey could be identified in the empirical findings. The first step in the journey
often begins with the customer visiting the company's website to search for and get information about the product, but also to see if it is available to purchase. The next identified step is that the customer visits the store to try, see and feel the product physically. In some cases, the customer orders from the store and in other cases the customer orders online at home. While reviewing the findings, a pattern can be identified as the customer uses the physical store to get to know the product with the senses. The empirical findings moreover show that it is easier to build a relationship for the company if some type of personal integration between customer and company is done through the customer journey. This pattern is in line with the Verhoef et al. (2009) perspective of that the customer journey is a multidimensional construct which moreover the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects consist of social and sensorial responses.

While reviewing the empirical findings, the major challenge of the digital customer journey is stated as to visualize the product and create a physical feeling of it online. With other words to create the same feeling for the customers of the products, by excluding some of the important senses. The challenge is further to explain and to get customers to know exactly what they will get while ordering online. Another challenge found in the empirical findings is to not be able to meet the customer in real and not be able to create a relationship and emotionally feel if the customer is satisfied. This view of the empirical findings distinguishes from the theory by Hoyer et al. (2020) who claims that the process of customer relationship management will be improved by new technologies (Hoyer et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) presented that an integration between online and offline channels can create opportunities, such as increasing perceived quality of the online channel and reducing perceived risk of the online store. This is something supported by the majority of the findings, presenting that the physical store is important and that the customer in many cases uses the physical store to ensure what type of product they will receive if they order online. On the other hand, some cases of empirical findings showed personal perspectives to the opposite, that the technology in the future will be able to make the digital journey achieve the same functions of the physical store in the future, supported by Andersson (2021) and Person 1 (2021). For instance, perspectives of feeling the texture and material of the products online, is something that was noted in the findings.

Rewal and Roggeveen (2020) describes that to have an integrated and systematic customer journey management system in place is of paramount importance for service providers and retailers. The empirical findings show that the companies interviewed
have different strategies and systems to improve and follow up the digital customer journey. The findings also indicate that the different companies have developed different levels of strategies of improvement of the customer journey. The main approach used is NPS to measure customer satisfaction, supported by Ekström (2021), person 1 (2021), Jobratt (2021) and Thorén (2021). Remarketing is something the retailers work with to capture the interest of the customer in the early stage of the customer journey, supported by Ekström (2021). Marketing and process by email and customer service after a purchase is something Winding (2021) presents that the company does. To reach the customers that do not make a purchase an improvement is suggested to send out newsletters. To develop a CRM tool is also something that the company does to improve the customer journey, supported by Winding (2021). According to Hollebeek et al. (2021) it will in the future be the technology that connects the company and the customers instead of using human touchpoints. AI automation is a new chapter in the development and part of industry 4.0, which is characterized by the merging of technologies that strengthen the boundaries between the digital, biological and physical areas (Hollebeek et al., 2021). Nowadays AR is increasing regarding overall improving the customer experience in the retail industry, supported by Andersson (2021). According to Andersson (2021) Happy customer is further a tool used to measure customer satisfaction to be able to improve the customer journey.

5.3 Touchpoints and interactions in customer journey

The empirical findings confirm that the technological touchpoints have changed the customer journey and create new opportunities for companies to integrate with their customers. This is supported by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) where they state that in today's society, companies and customers interact with each other through touchpoints in several channels and that the experience for the customer is more social than before. De Keyser et al. (2020) also emphasizes in their research that the customer journey also improves the experience for the customer if the company creates added value by using technology and connecting different virtual-physical touchpoints. As presented by the majority of the participating companies, the digital touchpoints have changed the customer journey in a way that provides new opportunities compared to the physical. For example, the digital touchpoints provide a completely different availability of information than before, supported by person 1 (2021) and Thorén (2021). Lemon and Verhoef (2016), mention that it is important for companies to obtain many touchpoints in order to be able to integrate with customers in many different ways. This is in line with the empirical findings of Andersson (2021), Jobratt (2021) and Thorén (2021).
Pöyry et al. (2020) mention that it is important to know which touchpoints customers prefer to use. Depending on what the companies' background and purpose is, the customers are differently inclined to integrate with the companies in different ways. The keyser et al. (2020) also describes three things that contribute to a good customer experience, such as touchpoints, context and quality. The empirical findings show great contrasts when it comes to the development of the various researched companies in how they provide digital touchpoints. Winding (2021) and Thorén (2021), who work for companies that focus most on the physical store, share the same opinion of what they consider to be the most successful digital touchpoints, which is their e-commerce. While Company A, where 75 percent of sales take place digitally and 25 percent takes place in stores, believes that their most successful touchpoint is their implementation of both automatic and manual chat. While Ellos Group, which is a purely digital e-commerce company, has a more and stronger focus on constantly developing its touchpoints in several channels in order to be able to integrate more with its customers for instance through customer service page or FAQ. IKEA has a strong focus on developing new technological touchpoints, where they create new app experiences such as AR. These differences in the companies are in line with Dekeyser et al. (2020) that mention that customers experience touchpoints differently.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) state that it is important that multi-channel retailers create a seamless experience across channels, as stronger sales growth tends to be achieved among retailers with better integration between channels. Brewers and Holmes (2020) also describe that customer service levels have increased along with the need to manage a larger number of channels under the company's control. The empirical findings show that companies aim to constantly develop the digital touchpoints throughout the customer journey because the customer's expectations change enormously with the digital customer journey. This constantly creates new technological challenges for the company on how they can make the experience as good as possible. The empirical findings support Lemon and Verhoef (2016) and Brewers and Holmes (2020) research, as the majority of companies experience that customer satisfaction constantly increases the more service the technological touchpoints provide.

5.4 Customer engagement in customer journey

The empirical findings state that all interviewed companies engage their customers in several ways, which support Vivek et al. (2012) theory. Vivek et al. (2012) mention that it is important for companies to engage customers, as customer engagement builds long-term relationships with the brand and improves the customer experience. The empirical findings indicate that the majority of the companies did work with
engagement, but rather overall in the company than specific in a section. Only in one case the empirical findings showed that one company had a specific section working with engagement, supported by Andersson (2021). Blasco-Acra’s (2016) definition of engagement platform enables customer-to-customer interaction that improves customers' relationship with the company. This theory is in line with Ekström (2021), Andersson (2021) and person 1 (2021) that use product reviews to increase engagement of the customers but also to make customers help each other.

According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), manifestations such as co-creation, customer references and social influence from word of mouth are included in the behavioral dimension “beyond purchase” in customer engagement. This development makes it easier for customers to engage positively or negatively with the company. The empirical findings discovered that negative experiences often lead to more engagement among customers, compared to positive experiences. Customers react strongly negatively if problems arise, supported by Andersson (2021) and person 1 (2021).

In addition, Sharma and Singh (2021) present that customer engagement has expanded due to the successful technological development with, among other things, social media. In the empirical findings, all of the companies use social media to engage customers. The reason why is because social media such as Facebook is a positive channel for engaging customers because it is a social channel that has the purpose of entertaining, supported by Thorén (2021). Social media is also used for competitions and collaborations with influencers in several cases, supported by the majority of the companies interviewed.

Empirical findings present similar systems for measuring or following up on customer engagement, but also certain differences. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) describe that different types of programs are introduced to engage customers to a greater extent. The empirical results show that participating companies have different systems for following up customer engagement. The main system that is used is the engagement rate to measure low or high engagement on social media and how many people participate in competitions, which are supported by Ekström (2021), Andersson (2021), Thorén (2021) and person 1 (2021). System that measures how many people click on newsletters and which keywords lead to the most purchases, with the support of Thorén (2021). NPS is also an important system used to measure customer engagement, which is supported by person 1 (2021).
In empirical findings, all interviewed companies agree that digitalization is important for increasing customer engagement, which is supported by Pöyry et al. (2020). Saunila et al. (2019) further mention that digital customer engagement is crucial for the increasing digitalization. In addition, Sharafi et al. (2006) that there are significant links between customer experiences and technical platforms that generate customer engagement. Overall the empirical findings show that the customer engagement has increased in relation to the increased digitalization. Customers spend more time and get more involved in a purchase thanks to the internet, supported by Jobratt (2021). On the other hand, Thorén (2021) states that digitalization has generated new opportunities to create and measure engagement.

5.5 Technologies impact on customer experience quality
Mohd Rais, Musa and Muda (2016) state that Customer experience quality is an emerging priority concept within the customer orientation philosophy. This is something that is supported by the majority of the empirical results. The companies have similar strategies and work actively to improve the quality of the customer experience and the interactions in the customer journey. The common denominator of the strategy for the various companies was to map the typical customer journey and collect data in each touchpoint. To then gradually implement the measuring points in the digital touchpoints to create better quality on the customer journey. To measure the quality of the digital customer journey, the majority of the companies use NPS surveys. By breaking down NPS into different stages of the customer journey and following up on these touchpoints, Ekström (2021) claims that customer satisfaction is improved. Which is also supported by Andersson (2021) and person 1 (2021).

Lu, Chi, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2019) further describe that the emergence of the technical era has facilitated customer journeys. Through digital services, companies can create positive attitudes and behaviors, which will generate satisfactory purchasing loyalty. The empirical findings support this to some extent, Thorén (2021), Ekström (2021), Winding (2021) and person 1 (2021) believe that the digital touchpoints have created an opportunity to be able to measure the quality of touchpoints to create a better customer journey and further create customer loyalty. On the other hand, some cases of empirical results showed the opposite, that the use of digital touchpoints also has negative aspects. As the human encounter disappears, customers must solve everything themselves with equipment and technical force. This means that companies must always have the right information available to their customers.
6 Conclusion

In the following chapter, the conclusion of the thesis is presented by answering the research questions. Further the theoretical, managerial, ethical, sustainable and social implications of the thesis is written. Lastly the limitations followed by the authors suggestions for future research is presented.

6.1 Answering the research questions

The customer journey has changed during the recent years and at the same time the market has developed and has become unrestricted and global. Simultaneously, digitalization and technological development have contributed to a change in the customer journey, resulting in challenges and a stricter competition among retailers (svensk handel., 2019). The physical and digital ways of buying are integrated with each other and the trade is in a midst of transformation, in which services linked to goods sold emerge. Because of this, the experience of the customer journey has become a competitive advantage for retailers. The digitalization and globalization have contributed to an increase of complexity of customer touchpoints, which in turn have created a belief of a customer journey with strong, positive experiences. Therefore, the customer experience is viewed as one of the most important research challenges in the coming years (Marketing Science institute., 2014). At the same time the focus of the customer increases, which places higher requirements for the retailers to know what the customer wants. Retailers have no guarantees for survival or success in the trade of today. On the other hand, creative entrepreneurs instead have new opportunities (Svensk handel., 2019). The corona pandemic has also increased the development of the digital customer journey, leading to retailers trying new approaches to reach their customers online, since the restrictions have complicated the physical shopping approach. Therefore, to offer the customer technological touchpoints in the customer journey have never been more important than what it is right now (svensk handel., 2021). Since the level of engagement is changing while the customer uses technological touchpoints instead of physical, this is an important factor for retailers to review to be able to manage innovative digital customer journeys (Pöyry et al., 2020). Moreover, the digital customer journey has increased a lot during recent years, which places higher requirements for the retailers to deliver a customer journey with quality.
The purpose of this thesis is to understand how Swedish retailers (B2C) can manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector, as well as to investigate how retailers can use technological touchpoints to change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey. The purpose in turn leads to answering the research questions: How can retailers manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector? and How can retailers use technological touchpoints to change the quality & customer engagement in customer journeys?

6.1.1 How can retailers manage technological touchpoints in customer journeys in the furniture sector?

By examining how retailers can handle technological touchpoints in the customer journey in the furniture sector, the management of digital touchpoints has been different depending on whether it concerns companies using physical stores or e-commerce. There has also been a difference in the customer journey whether there is a specific department that works with the customer experience. This thesis has identified that retailers in the furniture sector manage technological touchpoints to create a seamless customer experience, increase customer satisfaction, more easily engage customers and to be able to integrate with customers in several ways. At the same time, this thesis identified that the interviewed companies work with technological touchpoints differently depending on the size of the company and how far they have come in technological development. It emerged in the thesis that retailers use a number of technological touchpoints such as websites, FAQs, apps, social media, chats and marketing in various channels.

In the empirical findings, two perspectives of the future customer journey could be identified. The thesis showed that some participating companies saw a future with only technological touchpoints that could become a reality. Since everything physical will be able to happen digitally in the future, the companies can meet more customers and build relationships easier in more channels digitally. However, the thesis also identified that some companies believe that the customer experience needs to be delivered together through both physical stores and digital channels and therefore these companies believe that omni channels are important to be competitive on the market in the future. Participating companies further mentioned that the challenges with digital touchpoints also exist. The significant challenges that were identified are to visualize and create a physical feeling of the products digitally, to be able to feel and smell the products and that customers do not know what they are getting. Other challenges identified in the empirical findings was the customers' availability to easily spread bad reputation about companies and further that completely digital companies are never allowed to meet customers physically.
It has also been identified that technological touchpoints are used by retailers in the furniture sector to create greater opportunity and availability for customers to make different choices. Furthermore, to easily create an innovative experience and faster produce communication. In summary, the basic reason for why furniture companies manage technological touchpoints is to create a good, accomplished experience for the customer and to be competitive on the market. By using digital touchpoints, this thesis has shown that the customer experience has improved in several ways, including the relationship between company and customer. Digital touchpoints have made it easier for companies to measure results and to be able to improve the customer journey. The thesis also shows that technological touchpoints create opportunities to meet customers in different channels, channels that may be completely digital in the future.

6.1.2 How can retailers use technological touchpoints to change the quality & customer engagement in customer journeys?

From empirical findings, it was identified that digitalization has made customers more involved in their own customer journey. Customers have been given more choice and flexibility as there are several different channels involved in the customer journey. The new technology has changed the customer's expectations, which means that the companies must find new innovative ways to be able to integrate with the customer. It also provides opportunities for retailers to meet the customer's needs and expectations. It was also identified that digitalization has enabled companies to engage the customer in several channels. One identification was that customer engagement has increased in relation to the increased digitalization, but also that the researched companies believe that digitization is vital for increasing customer engagement. All companies engage their customers in some way, but depending on the size, physical or digital channels they have different approaches to engaging their customers. It was also identified that the researched companies have many similarities when it comes to the philosophy with customer engagement, but that there are many aspects that affect their work and strategies around engagement. An identification that was a common denominator is that all companies use social media where the majority use competitions and influencers for engaging purposes. It was also identified that all companies work in some way with different systems for follow-up of customer engagement. Which means that all companies have a digitalization philosophy and focus on developing their technological touchpoints. Several companies also found that the level of engagement was higher when something negatively occurred in the customer journey, compared to if everything went well. This may be connected to the
higher contrast between expectations and experience that comes with the digital touchpoints in the customer journey.

Further it was identified that the majority of companies have the same mindset that digitalization has helped the researched companies create a better quality of the customer journey. Due to the technology, opportunities are created to be able to develop the quality of the customer journey. By being able to measure the customer journey, the companies gain an insight into what should be constantly improved. All companies work with quality improvement, in different ways, which has resulted in the customer's satisfaction also being increased. It was also identified that the technological touchpoints create complexity as the customer's expectations increase, which places higher demands on the companies regarding product perception but also providing all information available. The technological touchpoints also place higher requirements on the customers ‘to be able to make things by themselves. This creates a different perception of quality level for each individual customer.

6.2 Theoretical implications
From a theoretical perspective, the finding of the thesis presented that the concept of customer experience management is relatively explored in the companies, but in different levels depending on the size of the company and depending on the integration of physical and online channels or only online or physical channels. By conducting this research, the results can bring value for further research and help retailers to facilitate their work with creating and enhancing the quality and engagement of the customer journey.

This thesis has contributed to an understanding that it is difficult to use only technological touchpoints throughout the customer journey for furniture companies. Including, the last step in the customer journey usually ends in a physical store when customers want to activate several different senses. Several interviewed companies in the furniture sector state that their online and physical store delivers together. In this thesis, quality and engagement have also been included to gain an understanding of how companies use technology to increase customer engagement and quality in touchpoints.

By conducting this research, the conceptual framework developed from previous literature reviews have been updated. By studying the research area more in-depth and interpretively, this will generate a theoretical contribution in the form of a new understanding of the investigated areas. New perspectives have been developed.
through this thesis. For instance, the authors found that the physical store still has an important part of the customer journey and therefore a mix of physical and digital touchpoints is still important. Another theoretical implication of this research is that the different concepts of technological touchpoints, customer journey, customer engagement and experience quality is working as an integrated concept in the companies and in the actual customer journey, rather than divided concepts. Instead of having a specific strategy for customer engagement or for quality, several of the companies included these parts in their typical customer journey. So, by improving the customer journey, the engagement and quality also become improved. This has contributed to a new, updated conceptual framework resulting in a circular and integrated framework rather than a linear and separated framework.

**Figure 2: Updated conceptual framework**

6.3 Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, this thesis will contribute to an awareness regarding how swedish retailers (B2C) in the furniture sector can manage their technological touchpoints in the customer journey. This has become extra relevant since the covid-19 have contributed to a change in the customer journey. Some of the strategies used by the participating companies in this thesis can therefore be relevant as new approaches for reaching the customer online in the future. To create a loyal customer, the company needs to have a competitive advantage on the market. Nowadays a memorable experience is a priority among retailers to get loyal customers. This research aims to renew companies' thinking and improve their strategies of how to manage the technological touchpoints in the customer journey. From a long-term
perspective, this research hopefully will help retailers in the furniture sector, by creating an understanding of how different companies in the furniture sector work with the customer experience and customer journey. Further this research can create an awareness for companies regarding how qualities and customer engagement can be improved. Moreover, how the two concepts are connected to each other in digital touchpoints in the customer journey.

By conducting this research, the authors expect to open up for new perspectives regarding retailing and strategies about how to conduct an innovative digital customer journey. This research will also provide the possibility to meet real problems in the retail-era based on company perspective. Moreover, by making this study the authors will be able to understand the strategies used to improve the customer journey. Moreover, this research contributes to an understanding in how theory can be connected to reality. The project has merit because it is necessary for retailers to find strategies to be able to integrate with customers in a new innovative way. This is a challenge that must be met to be at the forefront of technological innovation to satisfy the entire customer's journey.

6.4 Social and ethical implications
The perspectives of social and ethical implications is something that has high relevance while considering the digital customer journey. Above all technological development leads to a higher amount of ethical implications from the customers perspective. This created a range of advantages for the company from a marketing perspective but at the same time it became a question for the customer about integrity. The digitalization of the customer journey further reduces the human touchpoints, which makes it harder for the company to match the customers’ expectations with the actual experience of the product. Further, it becomes harder to create a genuine relationship with the customer without any physical touchpoints.

6.5 Limitations
Some limitations have been identified for this thesis in order to improve the research and be able to answer the research questions. The first limitation is that this thesis is conducted from a retail perspective including companies directed at customers (B2C). This thesis examines the retailers’ perspective on how technological touchpoints are managed in the customer journey in the retail furniture sector. Furthermore, how retailers can use technological touchpoints to change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey. The reason for not including the customer perspective in this thesis is because it would cover a longer period of time. Moreover, the authors would get a complex range of answering, which would be very complex
for the authors to analyse. If both perspectives would be taken into consideration in this thesis, it would either not give the authors the same ability to focus in one perspective, contributing to less in-depth answers. A further limitation that was identified is that the research was conducted as a cross-sectional study by being conducted during a specific period of time.

The last limitation is that covid-19 made the customer journey look different today than it did a few years ago. If the pandemic had not existed, the results might have looked different and probably not been as limited as they become in this research. Despite this limitation in the research, all participating companies have had the same conditions and moreover been conscious to develop the digital customer journey. Therefore, it is believed that the research has nevertheless gained a broad perspective from the furniture companies.

6.6 Suggestions for future research
After collecting data and information in this thesis from the retailer’s perspective, the authors realize that more research from the customer's perspective would have been interesting to gain an insight from both parties' perspectives. Research on the customer's perspective had therefore been interesting and created opportunities for future research in the field. Furthermore, it would be of value to research the customer's perspective instead of the company's point of view, to discern how the customer uses digital touchpoints and what their typical customer journey looks like. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to know how the customer engages in the company / brand and gain knowledge about what the customer perceives as quality in touchpoints.

Another proposal for further research could be to investigate how the customer journey and digital touchpoints look like for customers in different corporate industries. A suggestion for future research could moreover be to make a similar study from a longitudinal perspective to get a deeper understanding of the changes in the digital customer journey over time. Finally, a suggestion for future research could be conduct this research in a couple of years with the same participating companies when covid-19 is over, to see if changes have taken place in the work with the customer journey and digital touchpoints.
References

Literature:


**Online sources:**


Ingka (2021) “This is Ingka group” [Online]. Available at:https://www.ingka.com/this-is-ingka-group/ (Accessed 2021-05-04)


## Appendix A - Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Company and interview profile</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>These questions were asked to get an overall view of the interviewee as well as the company. Further to connect the question to the specific context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer experience management</td>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>These questions are asked to get a deeper understanding about how the company internally works with customer experience, since this is the overarching theory for the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies impact on customer journey</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>To get a wider a information about how the customer journey looks like in the company, and to get further knowledge of what the biggest challenges and improvements questions were asked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Touchpoints and interactions in customer journey</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>The questions were asked to gain information about how technological touchpoints change the quality and customer engagement in the customer journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer engagement as interaction</td>
<td>13-16</td>
<td>Questions asked to get detailed information about how the company integrates with the customers and how they work with engaging customers and improving customer engagement in the customer journey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies impact on customer experience quality</td>
<td>17-21</td>
<td>Questions asked to get detailed information about how the company works with creating quality in the digital customer journey and how the company works with improving quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1, 22-24</td>
<td>These questions were asked to consider ethical considerations and to allow the</td>
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**Linnaeus University**

**Sweden**
| participant to add other thoughts and opinions about the subject. |
Appendix B - Interview guide - English version

General questions

1. Do you agree to be recorded during this interview?

Questions related to interviewee and interviewing company

2. Can you give a brief introduction about yourself and your role in the company?

3. For how long have you been working at this company?

Questions related to customer experience management (CEM)

4. How would you define customer experience? What does customer experience mean to you?

5. Is customer experience a concept that has been implemented in the company for a long time or introduced lately?
   a. Long time: How has the company's work process regarding digital customer experience changed over time?
   b. Lately: What’s the reason for the company to implement digital customer experience in the work process?

6. Is there any specific section in the company that is responsible for the customer experience initiatives?
   a. If yes, what's the name of this section? How many employees work there?
   b. If no, why?

7. Does the company have any strategy to follow regarding digital customer experience?
   a. If yes: How would you describe your company's strategy towards creating an innovative digital customer experience for the customer?
   b. If no: Why?

8. In what way do you perceive that digitalization has changed the conditions for creating a good customer experience and customer journey?
   a. Do you believe that it is easier or harder to create an innovative customer experience online compared to physically?
   b. If you find it easier, why?
c. If you find it harder, why?

Questions related to technologies impact on customer journey

9. Can you briefly describe the digital customer journey for a typical customer at the company?
   
a. What do you think are the differences of the digital compared to the physical customer journey?
   
b. What do you consider to be the biggest challenge with the digital customer journey?

10. How do you work with improving the digital customer journey? (through statistics? through surveys?)

Questions related to technological touchpoints and interactions in customer journey

11. How do you think technological touchpoints change the customer journey? (compared to physical contact points)
   
a. If technological touchpoints give positive impact, how and why?
   
b. If technological touchpoints give a negative impact, how and why?

12. Can you give any examples when your company successfully has developed technological touchpoints in customer journey?

Questions related to customer engagement as interaction (CE)

13. Do you have an approach for engaging your customers in the digital customer journey?
   
a. If yes, how?
   
b. If no, why?

14. In which touchpoints do you perceive that the customers are most engaged? What do you think this depends on?

15. Do you have any system of measuring or following up the customer engagement in the customer journey?
   
a. If yes, how?
   
b. If no, why?

16. How do you perceive that the relation/level of engagement with the customers have changed by the use of technologies?
Questions related to technologies impact on customer experience quality (CEQ)

17. Do you have an approach for creating quality in the touchpoints in the digital customer journey?
   
   a. If yes, how?
   b. If no, why?

18. Which technological touchpoints do you think meet the customers' needs in the best way? What do you think this depends on?

19. Do you have any system of measuring or following up the quality in the customer journey?

   a. If yes, how?
   b. If no, why?

20. How do you perceive that the level of quality in the touchpoints has changed by the use of technologies?

21. What do you perceive as a common quality-disruption for customers in the digital customer journey versus the physical?

Concluding questions

22. Do you want to say anything further about the subject?

23. Do you want to be anonymous? (Regarding your name or company)

24. Do you know someone in this area that we can contact for further interviews?
Appendix C - Interview guide - Swedish version

Generella frågor

1. Godkänner du att bli inspelad under denna intervju?

Frågor relaterade till informanter och företag

2. Kan du ge en kort introduktion om dig själv och din roll i företaget?

3. Hur länge har du arbetat på det här företaget?

Frågor relaterade till kundupplevelse (CEM)


5. Är kundupplevelse ett koncept som har implementerats i företaget länge eller introducerats nyligen?
   a. Lång tid: Hur har företagets arbetsprocess avseende digital kundupplevelse förändrats över tiden?
   b. På senare tid: Vad är anledningen till att företaget implementerat digital kundupplevelse i arbetsprocessen?

6. Finns det någon specifik sektion i företaget som är ansvarig för just kundupplevelse?
   a. Om ja, vad heter den här avdelningen? Hur många anställda arbetar där?
   b. Om nej, varför?

7. Har företaget någon strategi att följa när det gäller digital kundupplevelse?
   a. Om ja: Hur skulle du beskriva ditt företags strategi för att skapa en innovativ digital kundupplevelse för kunden?
   b. Om nej: Varför?

8. På vilket sätt uppfattar du att digitaliseringen har förändrat förutsättningarna för att skapa en bra kundupplevelse och kundresa?
   a. Tror du att det är lättare eller svårare att skapa en innovativ kundupplevelse online jämfört med fysiskt?
   b. Om du upplever det lättare, varför?
   c. Om du upplever det svårare, varför?

Frågor relaterade till digitaliseringens/teknikens påverkan av kundresan

9. Kan du kort beskriva den digitala kundresan för en typisk kund på ert företag?
1. Vad tror du är skillnaderna i det digitala jämfört med den fysiska kundresan?
2. Vad anser du vara den största utmaningen med den digitala kundresan?


**Frågor relaterade till teknologiska touchpoints och interaktioner i kundresan**

11. Hur anser du att teknologiska touchpoints förändrar kundresan? (jämfört med fysiska kontaktpunkter)
   a. Om teknologiska kontaktpunkter ger positiv inverkan, hur och varför?
   b. Om teknologiska kontaktpunkter ger en negativ inverkan, hur och varför?

12. Kan du ge några exempel när ditt företag framgångsrikt har utvecklat teknologiska/digitala kontaktpunkter i kundresan?

**Frågor relaterade till kundengagemang som interaktion (CE)**

13. Har ni ett tillvägagångssätt för att engagera era kunder i den digitala kundresan?
   a. Om ja, hur?
   b. Om nej, varför?


15. Har ni något system för att mäta eller följa upp kund engagemanget i kundresan?
   a. Om ja, hur?
   b. Om nej, varför?

16. Hur uppfattar du att relationen / nivån av kundengagemang har förändrats genom användning av teknologier?

**Frågor relaterade till teknologins påverkan på kvaliteten av kundupplevelsen (CEQ)**

17. Har ni ett tillvägagångssätt för att skapa kvalitet i touchpoints i den digitala kundresan?
   a. Om ja, hur?
   b. Om nej, varför?

18. Vilka teknologiska touchpoints tror du uppfyller kundernas behov på bästa sätt? Vad tror du detta beror på?
19. Har ni något system för att mäta eller följa upp kvaliteten på kundresan?
   a. Om ja, hur?
   b. Om nej, varför?

20. Hur uppfattar du att kvalitetsnivån i era touchpoints har förändrats genom användning av teknologier?

21. Vad uppfattar du som en vanlig försämring av kvalitet (kvalitetsrubbning) för kunderna i den digitala kundresan kontra de fysiska?

Avslutande frågor
22. Vill du tillägga något mer om ämnet?

23. Vill du vara anonym? (angående namn på deltagare & företag)

24. Känner du någon inom detta område som vi kan kontakta för vidare intervju?
## Appendix D - Authors Individual Contribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Wilma Övringe %</th>
<th>Julia Edström %</th>
<th>Elin Adolfsson %</th>
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<tr>
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