Multimedia and Purchase Intentions:
Web Design for Fashion E-Tailers

Bachelor’s thesis within Business Administration

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Abstract

**Purpose**
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate attitude towards multimedia and whether it influences one’s online purchasing intentions for high-end fashion.

**Background**
Recently, many high-end fashion designers have established their own e-commerce site. However, due to the difficulties of replicating the brick and mortar environment and the increase of competition, it has become more difficult to convert visitors into buyers. In order to attract buyers, some retailers add a lot of multimedia content.

**Method**
Focus groups will be used to directly assess attitude towards multimedia. During the focus group sessions, participants will be shown four Swedish high-end fashion e-tailers. The responses towards these e-tailers will be grouped and analysed according to there themes.

**Conclusion**
Those who have a negative attitude towards multimedia will have decreased purchase intentions if the content is executed poorly. Content that is executed well will have no effect on their purchase intentions. Those who have a positive attitude towards multimedia will have slightly increased purchase intentions. However, these customers will not just buy from a site if the multimedia content is done well. Therefore, other web factors are equally important.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1  
1.1 Background ............................................................................................................... 1  
1.2 Problem Discussion ................................................................................................. 2  
1.3 Purpose ................................................................................................................... 3  
1.4 Definitions ............................................................................................................... 3  

2 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................... 4  
2.1 Fashion ...................................................................................................................... 4  
2.1.1 Online Fashion Consumer Behavior .................................................................... 4  
2.2 Fashion E-commerce ............................................................................................... 7  
2.2.1 E-Commerce Challenges for Fashion E-tailers ............................................... 8  
2.2.2 Key factors for Fashion E-Commerce ............................................................. 9  
2.3 The Fashion Consumers’ Attitude towards the Web Store .................................. 14  
2.4 Online Purchasing Intention .................................................................................. 14  
2.5 Model of Online Purchasing Behavior for Fashion ............................................. 15  

3 Methodology ............................................................................................................... 17  
3.1 Research Design ..................................................................................................... 17  
3.2 Focus Group ........................................................................................................... 17  
3.2.1 Phase 1: Planning the Focus Group Study .................................................... 18  
3.2.2 Phase 2: Discussion ......................................................................................... 21  
3.2.3 Phase 3: Analyzing Data ............................................................................... 22  
3.2.4 Phase 4: Conclusion Inferences .................................................................... 24  
3.3 Limitations ............................................................................................................. 24  
3.4 Validity and Reliability ......................................................................................... 24  
3.5 Generalizability ..................................................................................................... 25  
3.6 Credibility .............................................................................................................. 26  

4 Results of the Focus Groups ...................................................................................... 27  
4.1 Purchasing Fashion Online .................................................................................... 27  
4.1.1 Gant ................................................................................................................ 27  
4.2.3 Tiger of Sweden .............................................................................................. 29  
4.2.4 Julian Red ........................................................................................................ 31  
4.2.5 Minimarket ...................................................................................................... 33  

5 Analysis/Interpretation .............................................................................................. 36  
5.1 Online Fashion Consumer Behavior ..................................................................... 36  
5.2 Key Factors for Fashion E-Commerce ................................................................... 38  
5.2.1 Multimedia ...................................................................................................... 38  
5.2.2 Aesthetics ........................................................................................................ 40  
5.2.3 Functionality ................................................................................................... 41  
5.2.4 Brand ................................................................................................................ 42  
5.3 Attitude ................................................................................................................... 42  
5.3.1 Attitude towards Multimedia ......................................................................... 42  
5.4 Purchase Intentions ............................................................................................... 44  
5.5 Final Purchasing Decision Model for Fashion .................................................... 45  

6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 47
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.1 Recommendations to the Webstores Used in the Focus Group</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 Recommendations to Fashion E-Tailers in General</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.3 Critique of Method</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.4 Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>References</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix A: Yen’s Emotion Classification Scheme When Needs Are Not Met</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix B: Yen’s Emotion Classification Scheme When Need are Met</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix C: Moderator guide for focus group</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix D: Reasons for Choosing the Selected Webstores</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix E: Theme Dictionary</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

Years ago when you wanted a pair of jeans you had to go to a physical store to purchase them. Now, with the advent of e-commerce, not only are these jeans just a click away from purchase but you can also digitally enter the designer’s world – you can see runway footage, back stage scenes, interviews with the designer and even interact with the designer himself. Therefore, it is now not enough to simply provide fashion online; designers must also provide a compelling atmosphere. But how exciting should an online store really be? And does this exciting atmosphere actually induce online purchases?

1.1 Background

Currently, apparel is the largest online industry with an average yearly growth rate of 25 to 30% (Hines & Bruce, 2007). Due to this tremendous growth, it may be surprising to know that fashion e-commerce is a relatively new occurrence – it was not common until the global recession. The reasons for fashion’s late entry are due to technology and mind set.

Before the beginning of Web 2.0 \(^1\) technology was lacking. When shopping for fashion, customers want social interaction and experience. Yet low bandwidth and dial-up Internet made it impossible to replicate these requirements. Fashion webstores that attempted to replicate the physical store environment ended up failing. One of the most famous failures is Boo.com – a European retailer whose aim was to provide an online shopping experience that was never provided before. By providing technologically advanced content, this special experience crashed pages and took minutes before content could be loaded (Okonkwo, 2007).

When technology was finally appropriate for fashion e-commerce, it was the industry itself that was not ready to embrace the Internet. Fashion was all about exclusivity and e-commerce would defeat this purpose by allowing accessibility. Then when the recession hit and department stores began cutting prices, designers wanted to save their fashion labels from being devalued by establishing e-commerce shops (Donell, 2010).

Now with each year more and more designers are seeing the benefits of e-commerce. Due to the rise of e-commerce, it has become increasingly important to develop an effective web design. Designing a web environment that creates a positive effect in users is known as online atmospherics (Dailey, 2004). Research has shown that online atmospherics can influence intentions, purchase amounts, satisfaction, time spent online, loyalty and other shopping behaviors (Eroglu, Machleit & Davis, 2001).

Developing a webstore with appropriate atmospherics is especially pertinent for fashion retailers – and yet also difficult. In one spectrum, there are fashion retailers who extend the simple e-commerce process to provide an “interactive theater or an experience stager” (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon, 2001, cited in Eroglu, Machleit & Davis, 2003, p. 139). These retailers incorporate interactive, aesthetic and engaging elements into their web design (Galloway, 2009). For instance, click on American designer Ralph

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\(^1\) Technology that allows for user interaction, customization, personalization and community building (Laudon & Traver, 2010).
Lauren’s webstore and one will be greeted with a short video clip; a style guide; and downloadable Iphone applications (Ralph Lauren, 2011). Yet on the other side of the spectrum, there are designers whose websites are too simple or too overwhelming. For instance, Betsey Johnson’s webstore only features static images (Betsey Johnson, 2011) while Marc Jacobs’s heavy use of multimedia renders the site unusable (Marc Jacobs, 2011).

These examples show that designers do not understand which website content would offer the most value to the customers and thereby encourage purchases (Siddiqui, O’Malley, McColl & Birtwistle, 2003). Therefore, fashion e-tailers need to understand and utilize appropriate atmospherics – no one wants to become another Boo.com.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Many fashion designers do not know how to properly design their webstore. For instance, some designers focus too much on the multimedia aspects of their webstores and ignore usability. An overload of stimuli is known as crowding – a phenomenon that negatively affects customers’ attitude and shopping behavior (Eroglu & Harrell, 1986; Eroglu & Machleit, 1990; Hui & Bateson, 1991 cited in Eroglu et al., 2001). Other designers suffer from the opposite problem of crowding. Though their simple webstores have high usability, they do not provide stimulation or experience. Providing the right amount of usability and experience is important because the website image influences perception and purchase intentions (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010). For instance, if a customer wants to buy jeans online but is overloaded with multimedia, she will become dissatisfied and will not purchase from that webstore. Therefore, a poorly designed webstore is a problem because sales would be lost.

By studying this aspect, the designers will be benefited because they would know what website atmospherics customers prefer. Knowing these attributes will increase the designers’ online sales. Solving the problem would also benefit the customers because they will be provided with a pleasant online experience – but only if the fashion designers implement the necessary online design changes.

This problem is interesting to study because research has shown that customers value different features for different products (Burke, 2002). Therefore, online atmospherics for fashion differ from other industries. For instance, furniture retailers should set their webstore differently from fashion retailers. This difference is due to furniture’s higher product involvement – it is less frequently purchased and thus there is a longer decision process before the final purchase. Also, the problem is interesting because research has never focused on high end clothing labels. High-end labels are different from discount e-retailers and thus must provide a different atmosphere to increase customer purchases.

This topic is feasible because we can answer the following research questions:

- What features do Swedish customers expect from a fashion e-tailer in order to purchase from them?
- Do the multimedia features of the webstore inspire them to purchase from the store?
1.3  Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate attitude towards multimedia and whether it influences one’s online purchase intentions for high-end fashion.

1.4  Definitions
A list of vocabulary words is presented in order to understand the theory, analysis and results of this paper:


**Fashion e-tailers** – online fashion retail stores.

**Generation Y** – the age group that is born between the years 1977 to 1994 (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010).

**High-End** – describes a product that is priced below a luxury good and yet costs more than conventional products in the same product category. Other synonyms are premium, masstige and mass prestige (Silverstein & Fiske, 2003).

**Multimedia** – combines media of communication and presents an integration of texts, graphics, videos, sounds, images and such (Teow, 1998).

**Online atmospherics** – “the design of web environments to create positive effects in users in order to increase favorable consumer responses” (Dailey, 2004). Also known as web atmospherics and virtual atmospherics.

**Online purchase intentions** – the customer’s desire to purchase online after making positive website evaluation (Chen, Hsu & Lin, 2010).
2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes the authors’ own theoretical model based on the concepts of fashion and e-commerce. This model was created because there is a research gap between multimedia and fashion e-commerce.

2.1 Fashion

The definition of fashion varies among different people. Haute Couture designer Coco Chanel (n.d.) stated that: “Fashion is not simply a matter of clothes. Fashion is in the air, born upon the wind. One intuits it. It is in the sky and on the road” (cited in Vogue UK, n.d.). Her definition reflects how fashion has a complicated role in people’s lives since its purpose is not just functional – people do not buy fashion simply for warmth and covering (O’Cass, 2000). It is a form of self-expression and a reflection of one’s identity (Kinley, Josiam & Lockett, 2010). For instance, the choice of colors and styles of fashion can show one’s self confidence and personality (Alyssa, Peiyu & Chen, 2001).

Also because fashion is cyclical, many are absorbed by fashion and thus have an emotional attachment to clothing (O’Cass, 2000). Purchasing the latest fashion trends lets these people fantasize, dream and escape (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). There are even those who buy clothing just to experience stimulation – walking through the aisles, browsing the clothes and socializing with the sales personnel is considered exciting and entertaining.

Due to fashion’s role and strong emotional appeal, purchasing clothing involves a different purchasing process than for items such as books or electronics (Kapferer & Laurent, 1985 cited in Yoh, Damhorst, Sapp & Laczniak, 2003). This difference is especially prevalent in the online world. For instance, fashion consumers consider runway videos and designer interview clips as enhancements to the online shopping experience. However, people purchasing electronics would only want content relevant to their shopping task.

Because of the different purchasing process, it is important to understand attributes of the online fashion customer that can influence attitude and purchasing behavior.

2.1.1 Online Fashion Consumer Behavior

The variables that influence consumers towards forming an attitude to a fashion related webstore are demographics, product involvement, purchasing task, and psychological perceptions. All of these elements differ from person to person and thus cannot be controlled by the fashion e-tailer (Jayawardhena & Wright, 2009). There are other variables that can influence attitude. Yet the variables mentioned are the most commonly referred according to web design research and are most applicable to fashion e-commerce.

Demographics

Gender can influence attitude and behavior towards fashion e-commerce due to differences in shopping orientation (Zhou, Dai & Zhang, 2007). Male consumers consider e-commerce as a convenient way to skip long checkout lines, fitting rooms and
avoid social interaction (Speirs, 2011; Zhou et al., 2007). Thus whereas males purchase apparel online less often than females, they spend more on each purchase. Women, however, are the opposite of men. They do not find e-commerce as convenient as men do because of the lack of tactile cues. Women want to touch and try on clothing before buying and prefer social interaction. Thus there are fewer female online shoppers than men. Culture, age and income are other demographic factors that are influential (Zhou et al., 2007).

Product involvement

The same product can mean different things to different people. For instance, one can be highly attached to shoes while one’s friend could care less about shoes. In order to understand consumer attitude towards products the concept of involvement needs to be understood (O’Cass, 2000).

Involvement refers to the personal relevance of an object based on the shopper’s needs, interests and values (Zaichkowsky, 1985 cited Kinley et al., 2010, p. 342). More specifically, O’Cass (2000) states that involvement is the extent an object is deemed meaningful, important and engaging to a consumer. Thus the more the object is prominent in the consumer’s life, the more involved the consumer is towards the product.

There are two levels of involvement towards a product: low and high (O’Cass, 2000). Low level involvement purchases are not important for the customer. People who do not pay attention and have no interest or attachment towards fashion are considered low involved customers (O’Cass, 2000). On the other hand, high level involvement purchases are considered meaningful to the customer (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010). Those who are interested in fashion have a high level of involvement. These people have a high purchase intention for fashion, engage in problem solving, and tend to want an experience online (Zaichkowsky, 1985 cited Kinley et al., 2010, p. 342). One reason why fashion is considered high involvement is that its cyclicality makes it easier for people to become absorbed and involved in it than other products. Also, it has many symbolic and hedonic qualities (O’Cass, 2000).

The level of product involvement is important to understand because it affects one’s attitude towards the features of a webstore. For example, when purchasing for high involvement products, customers are more interested with informational content (Eroglu et al., 2001) because they want to make a careful decision (Ha & Lennon, 2010). For instance, when purchasing a dress online, highly involved customers pay greater attention to product related information such as the fabric, color and fit descriptions (Ha & Lennon, 2010). Eroglu et al. (2001) stated that stimuli that are not relevant to the information processing goal would interfere with the shopping task. However Ha and Lennon (2010) stated a contrasting view – stimuli that are not relevant have no effect on consumer pleasure. On the other hand, both researchers agree that when purchasing for low involvement products, low task relevant cues influence the consumer’s purchase intentions, pleasure and arousal (Ha & Lennon, 2010). Low task relevant cues are those that do not aid in the shopper’s purchasing task (Eroglu et al. 2001). Examples of these cues are color, background and multimedia content (Zhou et al., 2007).

Another important difference between low and high involvement purchases is the level of emotional arousal. For instance, highly involved customers are more excited about
shopping because they enjoy it. On the contrary, low involved customers are not interested in fashion and thus are less excited about the shopping experience and environment (Jayawardhena & Wright, 2009).

**Shopping Motivation**

Consumers purchase clothes differently depending on whether their shopping motivation is hedonic or utilitarian (Zhou et al., 2007). Hedonic shopping is synonymous with experimental shopping – the consumer does not have a specific purchasing goal but merely shops as a means of curing boredom or loneliness; escaping from life or fulfilling fantasies. Hedonic shoppers perceive shopping as an enjoyable activity. This enjoyment creates positive attitude and increases shopping intention (Koufaris, Kambil & LaBarbera, 2001/2002).

When purchasing fashion online, hedonic shoppers are easily influenced by the web design (Zhou et al., 2007). For instance, they are more concerned with well-designed webstores that are ascetically pleasing and are not pure text (Childers et al., 2001 cited in Zhou et al., 2007). Additionally, they are interested in low task relevant cues because these cues create a pleasurable shopping experience, mood and image for the webstore.

In contrast, utilitarian shoppers are synonymous with goal oriented shoppers (Zhou et al., 2007). Utilitarian value occurs when a consumer accomplishes her predetermined shopping goal (Demangeot & Broderick, 2007). Thus, utilitarian oriented customers know exactly what they want – content that is not relevant to their purchase task is deemed as distracting and inappropriate. Purchasing a dress for a party is an example of a utilitarian purchase (Eroglu et al., 2001). These shoppers are more concerned with efficiency and time and thus want to achieve their task with minimum irritation. Thus high task relevant cues appeal to utilitarian customers (Zhou et al., 2007).

While each shopping motivation is different from one another, Demangeot and Broderick (2007) stated that shopping outcomes are a combination of both values; even though one value may outweigh the other. As a result, both utilitarian and hedonic values should all be incorporated to a site so that each group is appealed to (Mckinney, 2004).

**Psychological perceptions: trust and control**

Psychological perceptions are comprised of trust and control. Trust is defined as the consumer’s belief that the webstore is reliable (Chuchinprakarn, n.d.). Even experienced online shoppers view online purchasing as risky (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2006). Therefore, trust is very important online and is the key to create a successful e-commerce. Consumers are more inclined to purchase from a site that they believe is trustworthy, reliable and credible (Chuchinprakarn, n.d.). Credibility can be achieved through improved usability, fast downloads and real world feel (Fogg et al., 2002 cited in Elliot & Speck, 2005).

Even though the fashion e-tailer cannot influence the consumer’s psychological trust perception, the retailer can communicate trustworthiness through its web design. For instance, Schlosser et al. (2006) found that webstores that invest in their design are perceived to handle online transactions securely. The researchers defined investment as the time, money and effort put into the website design. This investment must be observable – indiscernible features such as firewall and security encryption can
influence trust beliefs but are less influential in converting visitors to buyers (Schlosser et al., 2006). To explain why this occurs, Schlosser et al. (2006) state that people tend to generalize; if the firm has a nice design, the firm is trustworthy.

Further, consumers want to be in control. Control is defined as “consumers’ feelings about the degree to which they have control over their own access, search and evaluation of the content of a website” (Rose, Hair & Clark, 2011, p. 29). Automatic music, video buffering, slow download times, complicated site navigation, or lack of retailer contact information decrease perceived control. This perception negatively affects attitude and purchase intentions (Eroglu et al., 2001). Control is important for consumers because of the limited time available to shop and the quick access to vast information on the internet (Koufaris et al., 2002/2002).

Prior Experience

Those who have had previous experience with online apparel purchases tend to have a more favorable attitude towards purchasing online. Thus, they have increased purchase intention than those who have never purchased online (Yoh et al., 2003). Further, prior purchasing experiences develop a website schema within a person – beliefs in which a website’s design should look like (Bellman & Rossiter, 2004).

2.2 Fashion E-commerce

Our customer has taught us that there are moments where she will want to spend hours in a store shopping and there are moments where it’s a quick impulsive purchase – Alex Bolen, the CEO of Oscar de la Renta (cited in Luxury Society Report, 2010)

E-commerce is defined as “digitally enabled commercial transactions between and among organizations and individuals” (Laudon & Traver, 2010, p.1-8). The first e-commerce site officially started in 1995. Simple and static, e-commerce’s only purpose was to present products. The lack of technology and the low bandwidth of computers made it impossible for e-commerce sites to provide a special online experience. This inability to present an experience made it impossible for fashion e-tailers to successfully establish an online presence.

Now fast forward to 2011 where technology has advanced so greatly that live streaming, zooming capabilities, and color switching have become “standard” e-commerce features. Due to this developed technology, e-tailers are changing their ways to sell their products. This change is reflected in sales director George Wright statement:

People buy and sell in different ways then they have before...They are making more online purchases all the time. Do things the old way and you will have a smaller and smaller audience online. ... [the customer] is not in a store kicking the tires, you have to build an experience [for them] (Roggio, 2008).

Fashion retailers are selling differently by incorporating personalization and customization – some e-commerce sites are even able to greet you by name and suggest items that you would enjoy. Other sites allow interactivity – a technology that provides a two way communication between merchant and consumer (Laudon & Traver, 2010). For instance, Mod Cloth, a vintage clothing company, allows users to “become the buyer”, in which they are allowed to vote on clothing that will be sold on the site (Mod Cloth, 2011). Other technological advances include social technology.
E-commerce is successful, not only because of today’s progressing technology, but also because of the many advantages it brings for both the retailer and consumer. Due to the low market entry costs, it is simple and relatively inexpensive to begin an e-commerce shop; the firm is able to respond quickly to customer tastes and demand; and personalization and customization can be easily done. Further, e-commerce expands the retailer’s market – one can sell to everyone, everywhere (Laudon & Traver, 2010).

Consumers are benefited due to the convenience, reduced price asymmetry and information cost. Also consumers are no longer bounded by geographical locations. A Swedish consumer is able to easily buy items from a Chinese seller and vice versa (Laudon & Traver, 2010).

Due to all of these advantages, it is no wonder that researchers predict that by 2013, consumers will be spending approximately 330 billion on online purchases (Laudon & Traver, 2010). However, having an e-commerce site does not guarantee profitability (Chuchinprakarn, n.d.). In fact there are equally as many challenges as there are benefits of starting an e-commerce site. It is these challenges that prevent even more consumers from making online purchases – especially for fashion related purchases.

### 2.2.1 E-Commerce Challenges for Fashion E-tailers

Due to the importance of the sensory experience of fashion, fashion e-tailers face many challenges when establishing an e-commerce shop.

First of all, it is difficult to translate the full experience of a brick and mortar store to the online store. In a physical clothing store, the customer can look, touch and try on the clothing; interact and socialize with the personnel; and walk around observing and experiencing the atmospherics of the store (Koufaris et al., 2001/2002). In online stores, however, the customer’s experience towards the retailers is confined to a small screen – shoppers cannot interact with the staff or touch or try on the clothing. This lack of sensory and social experience is the main reason that the fashion industry took such a long time to adopt e-commerce. To overcome this major obstacle, webstores must compensate by providing a web design that evokes a positive online customer experience (Koufaris et al., 2001/2002). If this online customer experience is negative, the customer may “return to the more enriching and enjoyable physical world” (Koufaris et al., 2001/2002, p. 118).

Furthermore, there are more competitors due to the low cost entry of starting a fashion e-commerce site. And these competitors are just a click away from one another – implying low switching costs for the customer (Laudon & Traver, 2010). For instance, type in “little black dress” on Google and you will find over 20 retailers selling this product. Within minutes, you can analyze each competitor to decide which dress to buy from. People only look at the website for a couple of seconds before forming an impression. Therefore the website design is essential in order to differentiate yourself among your competitors and to prevent customers from leaving your store (Koufaris et al., 2001/2002).

Lastly, successfully selling fashion online is difficult because fashion products are experience goods. Experience goods are products whose quality can not be assessed without touching the product (Farag, 2006). Therefore, there is a lot of risk involved when purchasing fashionable goods. For instance, the risk that the clothing’s quality
was not as expected. Fashion consumers thus use the web design as a means of analyzing the product’s quality. For instance, Schlosser et al. (2006) found that investment in web design affects perceived merchandise quality, thereby influencing purchasing intentions. Consumers can distinguish between an expensive and professional web design and a cheap, unprofessional web design. These inferences are used in the purchase decision process. One way to signal high webstore investment is through the use of multimedia.

Overall, to overcome these challenges, the importance of a good website atmosphere is even more crucial. For instance, Cho (2004) found that the amount of completed online transactions was four times less than the number of abandoned transactions (cited in Zhou et al., 2007). It is hypothesized that this statistic is due to the amount of poorly designed website and lack of online experience (Zhou et al., 2007). Yet knowing which atmospheric cues are suitable represents a challenge itself because there are no specific guidelines – the relevant atmospheric stimuli vary according to the company’s target market and product. For instance, a luxurious web store’s atmosphere should evoke exclusivity and escapism. However, a discount web store should evoke simplicity (Flavian, Gurrea & Orús, 2009).

2.2.2 Key factors for Fashion E-Commerce

The fashion retailer’s e-commerce site is the source which consumers use to form impressions and purchasing decisions (Flavian et al., 2009). A Media Metrix Jupiter report states that the average internet user spends less than one minute looking at the homepage (Mediametrix, 1999 cited in Falk, Sockel, Warren & Chen, 2006). If the consumer’s expectations are not met during that minute, she will exit from the webstore (Flavian et al., 2009). Due to the impact of the site on consumer behavior, the online shopping environment must evoke a desirable atmosphere (Demangeot & Broderick, 2007). According to Liu and Arnett (2000) a successful web store atmosphere is, “one that attracts customers, makes them feel the site is trustworthy, dependable, and reliable and generates customer satisfaction” (cited in Flavian et al., 2009, p.169). While this definition is suitable for most webstores, a successful fashion webstore must also provide experience. This experience is the most crucial element for fashion e-commerce – it is this aspect which differentiates fashion e-commerce from non-emotional online products (Okonkwo, 2010). There are different interpretations of what a great experience is considered to be. Gilmore and Pine (2002) describe a great experience as being engaging, memorable and appealing to the senses (cited in Chen, Ching, Luo & Liu, 2008). Okonkwo (2010) believes that the experience must appeal to the senses, arouse desire, evoke emotion and capture imagination. Regardless of how one defines a good experience, it is agreed that experience will create sales and loyalty (Okonkwo, 2010). Due to the importance of establishing this experience, the question that then forms is: how can one create a positive online experience? Multimedia can be one possible way.

Multimedia is defined as an integration of texts, graphics, videos, sounds or images (Teow, 1998). Examples of common multimedia used in fashion e-commerce are:

- Videos (e.g. webisodes, interviews, behind the scenes and live streaming)
• Flip Catalogue: An online catalogue featuring photographs of the retailer’s clothing. Readers can electronically flip through the pages and zoom into the pictures (Ecatalogcreator, 2011).

• Lookbook: Photographs featuring the retailer’s clothing. These photographs represent the designer’s image. Many designers use their runway collection looks for their lookbook. The difference between a lookbook and flip catalogue is the level of information — catalogues have more detailed product information (Fasanella, 2006).

• Flash animation: Pictures that change. Also known as kinetic images.

Multimedia is beneficial for the retailer and can help enhance the experience by providing memories and engagement — two characteristics that users search for when purchasing fashion online (Breitenback & Van Doren, 1998 cited in Siddiqui et al., 2003). Further, Ha and Lennon (2010) discovered that multimedia impacts mood and perceived risk. For instance, kinetic images elicit a more positive mood and decrease perceived risk for consumers than static images (Ha & Lennon, 2010).

Not only is multimedia beneficial, but research also shows that fashion shoppers want and like multimedia. For instance Siddiqui et al. (2003) found that shoppers were surprised and disappointed by the lack of multi-media features in apparel web stores. They said that without multimedia content, fashion trends and information, the incentive to shop online was lacking. During the same year, other researchers found that multimedia in e-commerce created a positive online experience and can increase purchase intentions of customers (Adelaar, Chang, Lancendorfer, Lee & Morimoto, 2003). Elliot and Speck (2005) supported these findings. They found that multimedia is considered entertaining to shoppers and thus helps form a positive attitude towards webstores (Elliot & Speck, 2005).

However, while multimedia can create a positive online experience, the fashion retailer must integrate multimedia into the webstore successfully and create good content. Good multimedia evokes intangible qualities such as desire, emotions, ambience, character, feelings and mood (Okonkwo, 2010). In order to create content that elicits these qualities, the following seven factors should be considered:

1. Relevance to the retailer’s brand: The content must be aligned with the brand’s identity. The multimedia content must enhance the brand and create value — it should not be added just for eye candy (Falk et al., 2006). After looking at multimedia, consumers should feel inspired and not wonder what they have just watched (Okonkwo, 2010).

2. An appropriate amount: It is easy to fill a webstore with flash animation, videos, music and flip catalogues. Yet too much multimedia content creates a negative customer experience; it devalues the product’s brand and reduces the symbolic attributes of the clothing (Okonkwo, 2010). This negative experience is reflected in Hostway’s survey (2007). The web hosting company set out to find the top 15 annoying features of webstores and overdone sites with unnecessary flash content were on the list (cited in Laudon & Traver, 2010)². Further, due to the

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² Other annoying features were slow loading sites, poor appearance and automatic music.
differences in shopping motivation and product involvement, not all consumers view multimedia the same way. Therefore too much multimedia may alienate potential customers who do not like multimedia (Eroglu et al., 2001; Oh, Fiorito, Cho & Hofacker, 2008). Due to these reasons, there should be an appropriate amount of multimedia content – not too much nor too little (Ha & Lennon, 2010).

3. Level of control: People want control – they want the power to stop, play, fast forward and rewind. Therefore, if they are forced to watch or hear content upon entering a webstore, they would leave (Okonkwo, 2010). This result was also found by Falk et al. (2006) who studied consumers’ perception of background music. They found that background music is considered annoying and decreases satisfaction levels and ease of use perception. Therefore, the consumer should have control over the multimedia content. If the consumer wants to watch it, she can; and if she does not want to, she has the ability to skip it.

4. High quality: It is a challenge to create multimedia content with high quality. Anyone can create multimedia content – just look at the amount of videos uploaded on YouTube. High quality content can create a positive online experience and atmosphere by influencing the consumer’s merchandise quality perception. For instance, merchandise quality is perceived to be higher in webstores whose design and content reflect the brand’s image. Therefore, premium and luxury webstores should employ high quality multimedia content to reflect their brand (Oh, et al., 2008). Further, high quality multimedia is perceived as an expensive webstore investment cost. This investment affects online purchase intentions for high risk products such as apparel (Schlosser et al., 2006).

5. Fast Loading Speed: Nowadays time is as much as a constraint as money. This view is reflected in the adage “time is money” (Falk et al., 2006). Because of this constraint people are impatient – they do not like buffering nor do they like to wait for the content to begin (Roggio, 2008). This slow loading speed is considered annoying and will delay the completion of the consumer’s shopping task (Eroglu et al., 2001). Further, some retailers put so much multimedia content on their site or use bad servers that the system response time – how long one waits before the content loads – is increased. The standard system response time is 8 seconds (Falk, 2000 cited in Falk et al., 2006). However, premium retailers like Julian Red (2011) have webstores that takes at least 10 seconds to load. These problems aggravate consumers and cause them to leave the webstore. Thus, the multimedia content needs to load quickly.

6. Updated: In order to constantly capture the consumer’s attention, the retailer should update its multimedia content. Having the same content year after year would bore the consumer and thus create a negative online shopping experience. Also, updated multimedia can create excitement (Okonkwo, 2010). However, one should keep in mind that updating should be balanced. Although it is important to update, it is also equally essential to not exaggerate – updating too frequently may be expensive and decrease the amount of visits (Directoryone, 2011).
7. Thematic Homepage: An optional factor would be to place some multimedia content on the brand’s homepage. This content can help create a thematic web design. A thematic design means that the design reflects the lifestyle or brand identity of the retailer – thematic designs can also be the equivalent of a window display of a physical store. A non-thematic design, on the other hand, simply presents the brand name and product pictures. Thematic designs appeal to consumers by presenting the products in a lifestyle type atmosphere (Oh et al., 2008). For instance, Gant’s homepage features flash pictures of couples sailing on a boat (Gant, 2011). This picture reflects a nautical and sailor theme and is used to convey their prestigious store image. Further benefits of thematic web design are the formation of an entertaining store image and increased positive emotions (Oh et al., 2008).

Figure 1, which is seen below, summarizes the features of effective multimedia that will help create a positive online customer experience.

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Figure 1 Features of Effective Multimedia
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These above mentioned factors are extremely important because they can influence whether consumers intend to purchase from a site. This importance can be seen in Boo.com’s case. In the 1990’s, Boo.com featured flash animations, zoom features, avatars and style guides. However, in an era of low bandwidth and dialup internet access, these technological features overwhelmed customers. Shoppers struggled to shop on the site, pages either crashed or took a long time to load and extra downloads were needed (Okonkwo, 2007). Thus, the technology that was used to enhance the online experience ended up making the website’s ease of use, navigation and usability very poor. The company, who was hailed as “Europe’s coolest company”, ended up on

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3 However, the retailer must also keep in mind factor 3, controllability; and factor 5, speed. If the retailer has video, make sure the sound is off and that it loads quickly.
the list of “100 Dumbest Moments in e-Business History” (Okonkwo, 2007, p.286). The
firm liquidated within less than a year (Chaffey, 2008).

Aesthetics

Even though a web store may integrate multimedia successfully, this is not a guarantee
for success. The aesthetics of a webstore can also impact attitude and purchase
intentions by creating a desirable experience. For instance Fogg et al. (2002) found that
customers purchase more products in an aesthetically pleasing store (cited in
Tranctinsky & Lowengart, 2007) while Flavian et al. (2009) discovered that an
attractive design elicits pleasure and excitement. Researchers Tranctinsky and
Lowengart (2007) also studied the aesthetic qualities in apparel webstores. They found
that expressive aesthetics – creative and original aesthetic elements – should be used for
trendy e-tailers. These aesthetics convey “a special image and identity desired by
consumers of this type of apparel” (Scroeder, 2002 cited in Tranctinsky & Lowengart,
2007, p.12). Online stores selling work attire or formal wear will not be benefited by
expressive aesthetics – customers will regard these expressive stimuli as inappropriate
and thus will form negative attitude towards the store (Tranctinsky & Lowengart, 2007).

One important aesthetic element is color, which can affect user evaluation of a
webstore. For instance, cool background colors elicit a higher likelihood of purchase
intentions for expensive items (Biers & Richards, 2005 cited in Manganari, Siomkos &
Vrechopoulos, 2009). Further, multimedia can be used as an aesthetic element to
increases purchase intentions.

Functionality

Shoppers want experience but they also want to accomplish their shopping task.
Therefore, other online variables that can influence consumer behavior involve the
functional factors of a webstore: content and ease of use. Ease of use refers to the
simplicity of navigating the webstore. Cluttered screens, lack of organization, and
difficulty in navigation decreases perceived ease of use (Elliot & Speck, 2005). Ease of
use is important because previous research has found a positive correlation between
ease of use and attitude towards a web store. Further benefits of ease of use include:
increasing site credibility, shopping intention, satisfaction, and attitude towards online
shopping (Elliot & Speck, 2005). Even though ease of use is important, many retailers
forgo usability and concentrate on the visuals. Typically these retailers replace headlines
with visuals – a problem known as “mystery meat navigation (MMN)”. MMN is when
“users are faced with navigational choices with no clear explanation of where a link will
take” (Flanders & Willis, 1998 cited in Falk et al., 2006, p.10).

Content refers to product and visual information. Examples include product
descriptions, sizes, delivery policy, price, reviews. Pictures of the clothing sold, zoom
features and ability to turn clothing around are other examples (Eroglu et al., 2001).
Consumers tend not to shop online due to the inability to touch and try on clothing.
Content can overcome this obstacle (Siddiqui et al., 2003) by making customers feel
more comfortable with their purchasing decisions (Elliot & Speck, 2005).
2.3 The Fashion Consumers’ Attitude towards the Web Store

Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) stated that attitude represents one’s evaluation of a stimulus. This stimulus can include everything – people, issues, brands, product usage and other marketing or consumption related concepts (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010). In this study, the stimulus is multimedia used in fashion e-commerce.

Attitude consists of three components: affect, cognition and behavior. The affective component deals with feelings and emotions (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010)). When analyzing this component, researchers focused on web design often use the PAD emotion scheme. PAD – acronym for pleasure, arousal, dominance – is, however, not comprehensive enough. The scheme does not represent a wide range of emotions often exhibited in response to atmospherics. Therefore, Eroglu et al. (2001, 2003) suggest that a more comprehensive scheme should be used or to only focus on emotions that would be relevant to the specific research context. This report will focus on Duen Hsi Yen’s classification scheme. He divided emotions into two different categories: emotions when needs are met and emotions when needs are not met (Yen, 2006). Appendix A and B represents a modified version of Yen’s classification scheme – only emotions relevant to our study are listed.

The second component of attitude is cognition. This represents the consumer’s beliefs, knowledge and perception towards an object. For instance, online shoppers may purchase online due to increased convenience (Hair, Bush & Ortinau, 2008).

The third component – behavior – is the intention or actual behavior of the consumer. For instance, online shoppers who intend to buy clothes online.

An attitude towards the webstore is formed after the consumer has seen its homepage. This attitude will be based on the personal characteristics of the consumer as well as the webstore’s experience and functionality. If the visit to the webstore fulfilled the consumer’s expectations and has provided them with an online experience, a positive attitude will be formed. This attitude can lead to positive shopping behaviors such as purchase intentions, site loyalty and brand confidence (Elliot & Speck, 2005). Positive attitude also increases word of mouth towards the webstore. In fact, positive word of mouth for good webstores is more than 50% than physical stores (Okonkwo, 2007). On the other hand, if the consumer is faced with poor site design, a negative attitude would be formed. Thus the consumer would exit the site. Even more damaging to the webstore, 71 % of online shoppers would refuse to purchase from a poorly designed webstore and would view the company negatively (Hostway, 2007 cited in Laudon & Traver, 2010).

2.4 Online Purchasing Intention

Online purchase intention is defined as the consumer’s expectation or intent to make an online purchase (Chuchinprakarn, n.d.). This intention is the result of the consumer’s criteria assessment towards the webstore. For instance, a positive assessment will strengthen one’s likelihood of purchasing from a site while a negative assessment would decrease one’s purchase intentions. Because purchasing intention reflects desire to purchase through the webstore, it is a vital predictor of actual shopping behavior (Chen et al., 2010).
The relationship between intention and behavior was first analyzed by environmental psychologists Ajzen and Fishbein (1977). They stated that behavior is determined by the intention to perform the behavior. In turn, intention is determined by attitude (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

FIGURE 2 Ajzen and Fishbein’s (1977) modified model of their theory of reasoned action

Researchers have supported Ajzen & Fishbein’s results by finding that positive attitude formation leads to purchase intention, which then leads to purchasing behavior. For instance, according to Constantinides (2004), when a webstore evokes enjoyable and exciting emotions, consumers are inclined to purchase more. However, when the customer experiences a dull webstore, her satisfaction level will become low. This emotion has a negative impact on her purchase intentions. Thus a negative online experience instills a negative attitude which decreases one’s purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2008).

2.5 Model of Online Purchasing Behavior for Fashion

There is a lack of research focused specifically on fashion e-tailers and their atmospherics. Due to this lack, there are no theories or guidelines of how a fashion e-tailer should design a webstore in order to increase purchasing intentions. There are, however, global models and theories that can explain online purchasing behavior. Yet Yoh et al. (2003) stated that these models are not applicable for all products. Every product has unique characteristics that cannot be captured in a single universal model. For instance, fashion products are more symbolic and hedonic than other products. Zhang et al. (2001) agreed with Yoh stating that customers evaluate web design based on the product (cited in Tractinsky & Lowengart, 2007). Thus, the authors of this report have established our own theoretical framework. This framework is built on the following concepts and theories:

1. Environmental Psychology: Environmental psychologists posit that both the individual and the environment influence attitude which leads to a behavioral response. Translated to an online context, the consumer and the fashion webstore influence attitude which may lead to purchase intention (Koufaris et al., 2001/2002). This view is also agreed upon by professional web designers who state that the website user and the company of the site are vital for webstore success (Schaupp, Fan & Belanger, 2006).

2. The theory of reasoned action: Theory which states that attitude impacts intention. This theory is recommended for the analysis of purchase intentions for high-involvement products (Mowen & Minor, 1998 cited in Yoh et al., 2003).

3. Stimulus-Organism-Response Model: Model that states that customers form approach and avoidance behaviors after evaluating a stimulus (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982 cited in Eroglu et al., 2001). This model is often used to
understand emotional and behavioral responses in offline and online environments (Adelaar et al., 2003).

Based on these theories and our research, we created our own model:

![Online Purchasing Decision Model for Fashion](image)

Figure 3 Online Purchasing Decision Model for Fashion
3 Methodology

This chapter will discuss how we will conduct and analyze our data. The discussion will end by presenting the validity, reliability, generalizability and credibility of the method chosen.

3.1 Research Design

The research design represents the general plan of the methods used to fulfill the purpose. The three main types of research designs are exploratory, descriptive, and causal (Hair et al., 2009).

Exploratory research involves seeking information about a problem and then understanding consumer attitude, behavior and motivation. Typically this research is employed when little is known about the research problem and when the hypothesis is vague (Hair et al., 2009).

Descriptive research is used to answer who, what, when, where and how questions. It can also be used to describe characteristics of a population or a phenomenon (Zikmund, 2000, p. 50). This research usually involves quantitative methods. However, qualitative research can also be used when the aim is to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon (Zikmund, 2000; Hair et al., 2009).

Causal research involves identifying cause and effect relationships between two or more variables. Experiments are involved when doing causal research (Hair et al., 2009).

Our research is a combination of exploratory and descriptive research. During the first phase of the research process, exploratory research was used. In order to discover the importance of multimedia and the impact of the website atmosphere, we did a literature review – this review consisted of analyzing comments and articles by fashion news articles and empirical research on website design. Then when our problem statement and purpose was finalized, descriptive research was used in order to validate or refute the findings from the review (Hair et al., 2009).

3.2 Focus Group

The method used to fulfill the research purpose and questions is focus groups. A focus group is a qualitative method that involves eight to ten participants and a moderator. The moderator probes the participants into discussing their opinions, emotions, impressions and suggestions towards a topic (Sekaran, 2003). Thus focus groups provide in-depth understanding of a subject (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001).

Focus groups are commonly chosen when the researcher wants to understand consumer attitude (Greenbaum, 1997). By using focus groups, we want to understand consumer attitude towards multimedia used in fashion e-commerce and why consumers have formed this attitude. Knowing this information will help fulfill our purpose and will provide fashion designers with recommendations on how to design their webstore.

There are other qualitative methods besides focus groups that can assess attitude. For example, interviews. However, the focus group method was specifically chosen because
we can simultaneously receive information about website atmosphere and multimedia – thereby developing an overview of the participants’ responses. Interviews, on the other hand, are more difficult to conduct because the information is received sequentially. When information is received consecutively it is more difficult to compile and make sense of the data. Further, focus groups allow for group interaction – an advantageous point considered by many researchers (Greenbaum, 1997). Group interaction enables the formation of issues that may not have been emerged in an interview and it encourages ideas to be built (Greenbaum, 2000).

Further, focus groups were chosen as opposed to quantitative methods because statistical measurements would not answer our research questions. Instead, focus groups are more appropriate because they explain how and why attitude and behavior towards a topic occurs (Carson et al., 2001).

Overall, even though there are many positive aspects of focus groups, a poorly conducted focus group can lead to misleading results (Aaker, Kumar, Day & Leone, 2009). Therefore it is vital that one prepares efficiently. Focus groups involve four phases: planning the focus group session, conducting the discussions, analyzing the results and drawing conclusions from them (Hair et al., 2009).

3.2.1 Phase 1: Planning the Focus Group Study

The preparation stage is considered the most vital phase. During this phase, the researcher must plan and prepare for the focus group. Most of the decisions in this stage involve the participants (Hair et al., 2009).

Focus group participants

First the relevant criteria of the participants must be identified. Although these criteria depend on the purpose, the most basic participant criteria are familiarity with the topic and homogeneity (Hair et al., 2009). Participants must be familiar with the topic in order to discuss and give valuable information (Greenbaum, 1997). For instance, because our topic involves fashion and e-commerce, participants must have prior experience purchasing clothing online in the past year. Experienced online clothing shoppers have already formed perceptions about atmospherics of a webstore. Therefore they have formed an attitude towards which webstore atmospherics they like and dislike (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Also, we want participants who have purchased clothing recently because they are more likely to remember what web design features they like as opposed to those who have shopped two or three years ago.

Further, a focus group must be as homogeneous as possible. A focus group with many similarities will feel less intimidated and more likely to offer their opinions (Hair et al., 2009). This homogeneity can be based on demographics, attitude or behaviour. The criteria in our focus group will be those living in Sweden and are in the generation Y group. The age group population was narrowed down because older customers may perceive the use of multimedia integration differently than younger customers. The generation Y segment was chosen because they have grown up in a media environment and is conscious of “marketing hype” (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010, p. 410). They spend most of their time on the internet and they respond differently to marketing techniques than their parents (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010). Further, even though this segment may be considered too young to shop for high-end products, they influence 81% of family
apparel purchases (O’Donnell, 2006 cited in Kinley et al., 2010) and in fact are deemed to have the means to purchase higher priced clothing (Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001 cited in Kinley et al., 2010).

The nationality group was chosen because the authors live in Sweden and thus have easier access to those who live in Sweden.

The last criteria will only be applicable to some of the groups – two of the groups will have a sincere interest of fashion while the other group does not. In essence, this non-fashion interested group can be viewed as the control group. We would like to compare whether being interested in fashion influences attitude towards multimedia.

Represented below is a list of our requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria 1</th>
<th>Criteria 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living in Sweden</td>
<td>Living in Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has purchased clothing online in the last year</td>
<td>Has purchased clothing online in the last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Generation Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in Fashion(^4)</td>
<td>Not Interested in Fashion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Selection and Recruitment of Participants**

After the criteria for the participants are finalized, the researcher must select and recruit those fulfilling the criteria. In order to select suitable participants, screening methods are employed. Typically, the screening process involves a questionnaire (Hair et al., 2009). However, we will use judgment sampling in order to select participants. Judgment sampling is used when the researcher selects people based on a certain criteria (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008). As students, we have a large contact network and thus personally know those who fulfill the required criteria. Therefore participants will be obtained via personal contacts. For instance, we will conduct two focus groups in Jönköping and one in Stockholm. One group in Jönköping will need to fulfill criteria 2 and the other group will fulfill criteria 1. The group in Stockholm will fulfill criteria 1 – they are interested in fashion. Based on these requirements, we will contact our friends and ask whether they can participate in the focus group.

Further, we will also use the convenience sampling method to select university students. Convenience sampling is the process of obtaining people that are considered to be appropriately available for the research (Zikmund, 2000). For instance, it is more

\(^4\) Interested in fashion means that people have high fashion awareness and are studying or involved in the fashion industry.
convenient, efficient, less time consuming and economical to gather data by using focus groups from our home towns.

Judgment and convenience sampling are non-probability sampling methods. Non-probability excludes random selection. These non-probability sampling methods were chosen because it is inexpensive and takes a short time to implement (Blumberg et al., 2008). Further, while randomization is an important factor in quantitative research, it is not essential in qualitative research (Hair et al., 2009). Randomization is not important because statistical inferences about the characteristics of the population are not needed when conducting focus groups (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

Size of the Focus Group and Number of Sessions

Most researchers agree that a focus group should have 8 to 12 participants. Having fewer than eight can cause one or two people to dominate the conversation. Conversely, having too many participants will limit the amount of information each person can say (Hair et al., 2009). Each of our focus groups had eight participants.

The number of sessions needed for valid results varies among researcher to researcher. Hair et al. (2009) stated that there should be four to eight focus group sessions. Aaker et al. (2009) believed that three or four will be enough. Despite this difference in opinion, it is agreed that there should be at least two sessions. However, if each focus group has extremely different attitudes then more focus groups must be needed (Hair et al., 2009). We chose to have three different focus groups sessions. The two groups who were interested in fashion had similar attitude to one another. Thus more sessions were not added.

Creating a Guide

Before leading a focus group, a moderator guide should be developed. A guide is a detailed outline of the topics, questions and sub questions used by the moderator (Hair et al., 2009, p. 172). Its role is to facilitate the flow of the focus group session. For instance, by reading the guide the moderator knows what topics to talk about and the time assigned for each topic (Greenbaum, 2000). Further, the moderator guide is used to probe the participants into discussion (Greenbaum, 1997).

The content of the guide depends on the research objective. Therefore there are no guidelines for creating the right guide (Greenbaum, 2000). Our research objective is to explore Swedish consumers’ attitude towards multimedia of fashion e-tailers. Using this objective as a framework, we developed our own guide (see Appendix C).

The questions and issues brought up in our guide are based on previous research focused on website design and analyzing popular high-end fashion retailer’s webstores.

In order to ensure that the questions of the guide were clear, we asked students who were not participating to look over the questions. Questions that were deemed unnecessary were deleted and those that were considered confusing were reworded.

Finding a Moderator

The last step in the preparation phase is to find a moderator. The quality of the focus group depends on the moderator because “the moderator is the instrument in the focus group” (Carson et al., 2001, p. 121).
Litosseliti (2003) stated that the researcher should always carry out the role of the moderator. The researchers are familiar with the topic and understand when to probe into different issues. Due to this reason the authors of this report will take turns becoming the moderator. When one person is the moderator, the other author will become the assistant moderator. The assistant moderator’s role is to ensure that the moderator sticks to the moderator guide and time limit.

3.2.2 Phase 2: Discussion

The focus group’s session will be split into four phases: the introduction and warm-up phase, a details phase and a summary phase. Before the session starts, we will provide the participants with Swedish-English dictionaries in case anyone needs one. Also, the moderator and observer who speak both English and Swedish will be helping the participants with the language whenever they face difficulties translating words into English. Throughout these sessions, the focus group sessions will be audio recorded. Further, there will be a computer with a projector that will be utilized during the session.

Introduction and warm-up: This section involves discussing a general topic related to the topic of interest. This discussion will set the stage for the main topic (University of Toronto, 2002). The participants will be asked general issues related to purchasing apparel online. This warm up is used to gain an overview of why they shop online and what webstores they purchase from.

Detail section: The participants will be asked to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of online apparel shopping, what website features they like or dislike, and what an online fashion retailer could do to make the online shopping experience more enjoyable. This discussion is intended to identify vital information about the attitude towards fashion e-commerce and its atmospherics.

Key content section: This section of the discussion becomes more specified towards the main topic (University of Toronto, 2002). Therefore the participants will be exposed to four different webstores in order to directly seek their reactions and attitude towards the multimedia content. Showing external stimuli is important because participants are more helpful in a discussion when faced with stimuli (Greenbaum, 2000). Further, when conducting attitude research, participants should be faced with the attitude stimuli (Kanuk & Schiffman, 2010).

Choosing these four webstores is important because it affects our focus group results. In order to see how participants viewed unsuccessful multimedia integration, two of the webstores did not employ multimedia well. The other two webstores did employ multimedia well according to the authors of this report. In order to determine which webstores would be included in the focus group, the following criteria for successful multimedia content was created:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Download Speed</td>
<td>The content must load quickly without buffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>The content must be of high resolution quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>The content must be easily controlled – one can stop or play the content at any time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability</td>
<td>The multimedia does not overwhelm the consumer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>The content must be relevant to the brand and enhance its premium image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These requirements were created based on research and books and comments on web design (e.g. Okonkwo, 2010; Elliot & Speck, 2005; Eroglu et al., 2001). Another requirement was that the webstores should have at least one type of multimedia content on the homepage. According to our theory, the homepage is where the user first establishes an image of the retailer. Thus, we want to determine what impact multimedia has on the perception of the retailer. Based on these criteria, Gant and Tiger of Sweden are chosen as webstores that successfully integrate multimedia into their online store. On the other hand, Minimarket and Julian Red are webstores that do not (see Appendix D for a detailed analysis of why these e-tailers were chosen).

During this section, we will show each webstore’s homepage respectively. Each of their homepages displays flash animation and therefore, the participants will be asked their impressions of the homepage. Afterwards, the moderator will briefly show the webstore’s flip catalogue and lookbook and ask questions regarding the multimedia.

**Summary:** The participants can say anything related to the topic that they have forgotten to say or that they would like to bring up. One frequent method used to obtain this information is for participants to give advice to the president or other officials about the topic (Greenabaum, 1997). In our case, we will have participants give advice to their favorite fashion retailer on how to improve the online shopping experience; as well as giving advice to the fashion e-tailers that were presented in the focus group.

### 3.2.3 Phase 3: Analyzing Data

Analyzing qualitative material is crucial for validity and reliability – without sound analysis, the results may not be accurate. Therefore, this phase must be detailed. The two main goals of focus group analysis are to discover significant and reoccurring themes and to compare these themes across the different groups (Hair et al., 2009). To accomplish this theme, we used University of Toronto’s seven step focus group analysis (2002).
Step 1: Conduct a Debriefing Analysis

This analysis involves having the moderator and the researcher discuss the subjects’ responses immediately after the focus group session. This method is beneficial because the perceptions and insights are fresh in one’s mind (Hair et al., 2009).

Step 2: Transcribe Focus Group Session

The authors will listen to the audio tapes and write the participants responses

Step 3: Find Emerging Themes

The authors will read the transcript and scan for themes. Themes infers to grouping sections of the transcript into similar groups based on their content (Hair et al., 2009). This step is important for validity because it is this categorization that allows for conclusion making and inferences (Blumberg et al., 2008). There are two ways to find themes – open analysis and prescriptive analysis. Open analysis is when the researchers extract the most important themes from the text while in a prescriptive analysis the words and phrases that one searches for are pre-defined (Blumberg et al., 2008). We will use a combination of these two methods – this combination allows flexibility.

First, when doing the open analysis we will highlight repeated words or phrases. Then we will assign these words to appropriate themes. When doing the prescriptive analysis, we will scan the transcript for the words written in our perceptive analysis guide. The themes that were found will be written in a theme dictionary. This dictionary consists of an alphabetized listing of the themes with definitions and explanations of the themes and representative quotes. This dictionary is useful for visualization and interpretation (Stockdale, 2002). Appendix E represents our formulated theme dictionary.

Step 4: Assign a theme to each comment

The authors will read each comment again in detail and assign a theme for each.

Step 5: Organize Themes

The themes will be organized according to their correspondence to the questions asked.

Step 6: Tabulate Themes

Even though some researchers feel that counting the frequency of themes are misleading because each focus group is different, tabulation can provide guidance. Tabulation can also compel the researcher to be honest. For instance, if researchers believe that a category is important but then sees that it was rarely mentioned in the focus group, she will not discuss about it (Hair et al., 2009). (See Appendix E for our tabulated themes)

Step 7: Compare Themes

The authors will compare and contrast different themes. For example, one of our sessions will contain those who are interested in fashion and one who is not interested. Comparing the themes that occurs between these two groups can be important.
3.2.4 Phase 4: Conclusion Inferences

After the themes have been analyzed, one must make conclusions based on them. Quotations are an excellent means of supporting the conclusions – quotes can be used to reveal patterns in the data and to underscore important points (Hair et al., 2009).

However, it is impossible to use all of the quotations. Therefore, it is important to carefully select the quotes. This selection should be based on clarity, explicitness and intensity of the quotation. Further, the researcher should not select quotes that merely confirm expectations and presuppositions; rather the quotations should represent a balanced view. Also the quotes should be connected to the hypothesis and should lead to ideas for further research, recommendations and actions (Litosseliti, 2003).

3.3 Limitations

One of the limitations is that a focus group is less structured than quantitative methods (Blumberg et al., 2008). Therefore, there is no statistical format to analyze the data (Hair et al., 2009). Because there are many ways to analyze this data, subjective interpretation may be a problem. For instance, some researchers have a predisposed belief of the focus group outcomes and searches for data that supports this belief (Hair et al., 2009). On the other hand, due to the less rigidness of the focus groups, focus groups can reveal surprising and unexpected information (Blumberg et al., 2008).

Further, the moderator’s controllability of the focus group conversation is weaker than individual interview where the interviewer and the interviewee has more organized and structured discussions. In focus groups, it is easy that the discussions lead to unrelated topics to the study. Therefore, it is vital that the moderator is prepared and have previous experience from interacting with people in order to prevent this uncontrollability (Krueger, 1994).

Moreover, moderator interaction bias may occur. Therefore, the moderator must avoid acting in ways that would prejudice the participant’s responses (Hair et al., 2009). For instance, a moderator must remain neutral during all times – she cannot be too supportive or too aggressive.

Lastly, a problem called groupthink may occur. Groupthink is when people are influenced by others’ comments. Thereby they change their original thoughts to conform to what others feel (Chioncel, Van der Veen, Wildermeersh & Jarvis, 2003).

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Some researchers do not believe that the concepts of validity and reliability comply to quantitative research (e.g. Byrne, 2001). Other researchers believe that qualitative research in itself guarantees reliability and validity (Kvale, 1993 cited in Brock-Utne, 1996). However, validity and reliability are just as important in qualitative research as in quantitative research. The only difference is that the terms have to be redefined for qualitative research (Hair et al., 2009).

Validity is defined as the ability to measure what one is intended to measure (Zikmund, 2000). In qualitative research validity refers to the responses. According to Maxwell (1992) there are three types of validity that are related to qualitative research: descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity (cited in Chioncel et al., 2003).
Descriptive validity refers to the factual precision of the participants’ responses (Chioncel et al., 2003). For instance, whether there was an omission of important issues or transcribing wrongly. In order to increase this validity, we will audio record and transcribe the focus group. Then both of us will analyse and interpret the important themes of the transcriptions.

Interpretative validity refers to the responses as well – it deals with how accurate the researchers interpret the responses (Validity Issues in Qualitative Research, 2011). In order to promote this validity, low inference descriptors will be used – i.e. direct quotations from the participants (Johnson, 1997). One of the most common problems that negatively influence interpretive validity is when the moderator focuses on one or two participants’ comments and presumes that these comments are the consensus of the group. In order to effectively analyze a focus group, we must develop an overview of the entire group (Greenbaum, 1997).

Theoretical validity refers to the extent the theories used fit and support the responses (Validity Issues in Qualitative Research, 2011). We will collect data over a long period of time and we will use multiple theories to interpret the data.

In order to further test the validity of the findings, a quantitative study can be completed (Blumberg et al., 2008).

Reliability occurs when replicating the method leads to the same results (Chioncel et al., 2003). Our results are reliable because we will use and create a moderator guide – if there is no guide then the research cannot be replicated. Further, having a small group of eight people increases reliability because people have time to talk; the participants will be competent enough to answer the questions; the focus group’s questions will be clear (Chioncel et al., 2003).

Lastly, another problem that affects reliability is the subjectivity of the focus group – it is the observer and moderator that interpret the comments during the group. In order to have reliable results, the observer will remain as objective as possible so that the report will be an accurate representation (Greenbaum, 1997).

### 3.5 Generalizability

Many critics assert that focus group results cannot be generalized to the population due to the small sample size (Hair et al., 2009). These critics typically do not understand that qualitative generalizations differ from quantitative generalizations. Quantitative analysis deals with statistical or probabilistic generalizations (Horsburgh, 2003). On the other hand, qualitative generalization refers to “the extent to which theory developed in the study may be exported to provide explanatory theory for the experiences of other individuals who are in comparable situations” (Horsburgh, 2003, p. 311). This generalization is known as theoretical generalization. Other words synonymous with theoretical generalizations are applicability, transferability and fittingness. In order for qualitative results to be theoretically generalized, thick descriptions should be used. These descriptions describe data elaborately so that the reader can understand the categories or themes of the study; thereby giving the reader enough information to decide whether the data can be applicable to other settings (Byrne, 2001). We will provide thick descriptions in our analysis by integrating quotes of the participants;
displaying our theme list; and describing as in-depth as possible our interpretations of the focus groups’ responses and explanations for our interpretations.

3.6 Credibility

Due to the limitations of using focus groups, the crucial question is “how can a researcher persuade his or her audiences that the research findings are worth paying attention to” (Hair et al., 2009, p. 218). Credibility can help answer this question. Credibility is defined as the rigor and believability in qualitative research (Hair et al., 2009). To obtain credibility, triangulation was used. Triangulation is a technique that uses multiple methods to study a phenomenon (Byrne, 2001). We collected the data in multiple time periods and we selected different participants so that different types of groups – who many have different but relevant attitudes – are included (Hair et al., 2009). Further, non-probability sampling methods can ensure credibility – participants are chosen because of criteria and relevance to the topic rather because they were representative (Carson et al., 2001). Credibility can also be achieved through peer reviews. However, as students, we do not have access to those who would have previous research on this field (Hair et al., 2009).
4  Results of the Focus Groups

This section will summarize all of the focus groups’ responses about purchasing fashion online and their thoughts and comments towards the four chosen webstores.

4.1  Purchasing Fashion Online

Group 1 included those who were not interested in fashion. They preferred to purchase from sites that had product information and were fast and easy to navigate. These three requirements are related to utilitarian values. When asked if they liked to watch videos when purchasing clothes online, everyone said that videos are useless to them. They also said that they do not look at online catalogues or lookbooks.

Focus group 2 was interested in fashion. They also had utilitarian reasons for shopping apparel online: it saves them time and it is convenient. However, unlike group 1, they discussed the negative aspects of online shopping as well. They said that online stores lack tactile experience – one cannot “walk into the store, feel the material and then go into the dressing room”; it is too much hassle and expensive to return products when they do not appear as they did online and there is no free return shipping. Further, only two people liked to watch videos when purchasing apparel. Everyone stated that lookbook and catalogues were better.

Group 3 was also interested in fashion and had utilitarian webstore requirements as well – they purchased from sites that are fast, trustworthy and user-friendly. They also expressed hedonic value when they said that webstores should also be entertaining, memorable, inspiring and enjoyable. Therefore, they loved webstores that had videos, catalogues and lookbooks.

4.1.1  Gant

Figure 4 Gant's homepage (Gant, 2011). The flash animation is located at the top of the site
When group 1 first saw Gant’s homepage (see Figure 4), they thought it was “too simple”. However, they liked the “hot models” in the flash animation. Group 2 had mixed reaction: half of the group liked it while the other half did not. Those who liked it stated that Gant successfully achieved a nautical theme on its site. The simple white color, clean design, flash pictures of a couple sailing on a boat, and visuals of sailor inspired clothing made them fantasize about summer. “When people see this homepage they would want to wear Gant’s clothes for the summer” said one while another said “it makes me long for summer and sailing.” Those who did not like it, however, said the website was too simple and thus did not make them feel any excitement. When asked why the web design was simple, the participants explained that it is due to the mature age group Gant is targeting: the models featured on the homepage are older and the clothes shown are conservative and “less trendy”. These feelings were similarly expressed by group 1.

Group 3 had a more positive initial impression of Gant’s web design – they did not believe the homepage was too simple. Adjectives such as neat, clean, bright, professional, calming and fresh were frequently mentioned. When asked why the homepage appeared professional, they explained it was due to the technology used in the webstore. For instance, the beautiful and inspiring flash pictures enhanced the webstore’s professionalism. They also commented on how the clean design made them feel calm and that the brightness of the webstore was “eye-opening”.

The next question asked whether Gant appeared high-end based on its web design. Everyone in all three groups had similar responses. The webstore appeared high-end because of the models’ appearance and the high quality flash animation. This investment can be translated into good quality clothing. Further, these investments made them feel “secure” – implying that they trust the webstore.

The last question asked whether the participants would purchase from Gant based only on its homepage design. Almost everyone in group 1 wanted to purchase from the site. However, only three responded positively in group 2. These people stated that they liked the “summer” and “Pripps Blå commercial” feelings that the homepage evoked. However, the rest said that the simplicity of the homepage did not inspire them to explore further. Other negatives comments were that “there are too many images that don’t deal directly with the clothes on the front page” and “that the clothes on the front page are not appealing”. This view contrasted heavily to group 3 who everyone – but one – indicated purchase intentions. This person agreed with group 2 stating that there is a lack of entertainment. Thus she wished the webstore would provide more videos and other entertaining factors.
4.2.3 Tiger of Sweden

Figure 5 Tiger of Sweden's homepage (Tiger of Sweden, 2011). All three pictures are flash.

Group 1 reacted positively to the Tiger of Sweden (Tiger) homepage (see Figure 5). The webstore was considered to be trendy, neat and clean. The participants liked the layout, navigation, professionalism, colors, flash pictures, simplicity and how reliable the webstore appeared. Also, they said that compared to Gant, the webstore looked more exciting; although less elegant. The only negative comment towards the homepage was directed towards the models in the flash animation – half of the group thought they looked like “aliens” while the other half considered them to be “impressive”.

Group 2 had an equally positive reaction towards the homepage. Everyone liked the “sleek”, “trendy”, and “inspirational” homepage. Also, many of the comments were directed towards the models in the flash pictures. “I want to look like them when I go to a club”, and “look at her makeup…her strong makeup conveys a lot of attitude” are some examples of the statements directed towards the models.

Group 3 also had a unanimous positive attitude towards the homepage. Seven out of eight associated the dark background colors to a “professional”, “classical”, “usable”, “fashionable” and “flawless” webstore. However, one person pointed out that the background color was depressing and not appropriate for this time of year. Although she liked the brand and its clothing, she wished the webstore would be updated to have a spring theme.
The second question was about Tiger’s collection of video content (see Figure 6). Both group 1 and group 2 had mostly negative comments. Their reasons for not liking the video collection varied. One stated that it was simply a question of time: “I shop online only to save time. Watching videos would just waste my time”. One said that they did not understand how some of the videos were related to the brand; another stated that they would only watch videos for a brand that they really liked; and one stated that street fashion or catalogues are a better source of inspiration than videos. Those who liked it said that videos give inspiration to people and evokes a “trendy feeling”.

Group 3 was more positive – all of the participants, except for one, appreciated the content and agreed that this was a good method of interaction. One person said: “it feels like I’m physically there and watching the runway show. I find it very enjoyable and inspiring. I love this kind of interaction”. Others appreciated that Tiger had other videos than its runway shows, stating that this diverse collection of videos were fun to watch. In addition, watching the runway videos gave them a great opportunity to have the chance to pause anytime needed and watch the full show in peace. The one person that did not watch these videos, thought it was more pleasant to look at the pictures instead where one can see the details in peace as well – a view similar to those who disliked videos in group 2.
When asked about Tiger’s lookbook (see Figure 7), groups 2 and 3 agreed that it was appealing and inspiring, while group 1 was not enthused – they wished that the photographs were simpler. For instance many stated that “the background looks too messy” and “a simple background would be enough”.

The fourth question was whether the homepage evoked high-end appeal for the brand. Everyone in all of the three focus groups agreed that Tiger’s homepage made the brand seem high-end due to the secure feel of the web design, the colors and its professionalism.

The last question, again, dealt with purchase intentions. Mostly everyone in all three groups said they would purchase from the site.

**4.2.4 Julian Red**

Julian Red’s homepage had a video. When the video was shown, the slow loading speed caused people in group 1 to become bored and annoyed. Group 2 also had a similar reaction. When the movie finished loading, majority did not like it. “The colors are too dark” stated one while another said “it looks depressing”. The few who did like it said that the movie was unique and artistic – albeit very slow. After seeing the video, group 2 wanted to see how Julian Red’s clothes looked like. However, when shown the video...

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Julian Red’s homepage was the only webstore that featured a video. This video took up the whole homepage and thus there is no screenshot of the homepage.
clothes (see Figure 8), the participants were surprised – according to them, the “dark” and “gloomy” introduction did not match the “colorful clothes”.

Group 3 had mixed reactions: half of the focus group was positive towards the webstore explaining that they enjoyed the unique and exclusive feel. The other half disagreed and pointed out that the webstore was odd and made them feel stressed and uncomfortable. One of them said: “It’s too much going on visually”. They also complained about the presentation of the brand, wishing that there were more information and more pictures of clothes on the front page. One of the disagreeing participants also commented on the dull background color. These negative attitudes were similarly presented in group 1 and 2.
Then when the lookbook was presented (see Figure 9), group 1 became surprised, shocked and bored – they did not like the models and questioned why clothes were not shown. Group 2 had a similar reaction, also asking where the clothes were. Majority agreed that the photos would be appropriate for a photography exhibit but not for a website. The lack of clothes was considered annoying and frustrating. This can be reflected in one person’s comment: “You want to see things that you want to buy...a lookbook should inspire and not annoy.” Group 3 had mixed responses. Five people said that they liked it because it was inspirational and aesthetic. They said they could have a better look at the professional make-up and styling of the models. The rest of the group agreed with groups 1 and 2. One said: “I visit the lookbook to look at the clothes, not the models. What a pity.”

When asked if Julian Red was high end, group 1 mostly agreed that it was due to the brand’s website investment. Half of the participants in group 2, agreed with group 1 stating that “a lot of work has been put into the site and so it appears high-end.” The rest classified Julian Red differently. One stated that Julian should be considered “artistic” rather than high end, another called the brand “refined edgy street wear” and the two others said it should be somewhere in the middle. In group 3, six participants considered the webstores as high-end.

The last question asked whether the participants would intend to purchase. Both groups 1 and 2 had only one person who would buy while Group 3 had four people who would buy.

4.2.5 Minimarket

![Minimarket's homepage](Minimarket, 2011). The largest photo is the flash animation.

Group 1 all agreed that Minimarket’s webstore looked messy, boring and unprofessional and lacked customization and information (see Figure 10). The webstore leaves the customer with no information about the brand, webstore or their products.
This lack of information made it difficult to navigate the website. They also said there was a lack of color, the models were too strange and the font used in the headlines seemed unprofessional. Group 2 and 3 agreed with group 1 stating that the webstore was too “plain”, “simple”, “boring” and “mysterious”. The only positive comments about the homepage were directed towards the large flash animation.

Figure 11 Minimarket’s Lookbook (Minimarket, 2011). Allows users to zoom into each picture.

When shown the lookbook (see Figure 11 and 12), group 1 thought the styling was “too crazy” and “odd”. Group 2 had mixed reactions. The half of the group that did not like it said that the styling and make-up attracted attention to the model instead of the clothes. Therefore they agreed with group 1. Those who liked it said the opposite – the styling
made the clothes the center of the focus. This attitude was also found in group 3 – the only group that everyone reacted positively. Common adjectives describing the lookbook were “inspiring”, “different”, “unique”, “rich”, “surprising”, and “aesthetic.” To reflect these positive attitudes one said: “I like art, this looks like art to me.”

Mostly everyone in all three groups agreed that Minimarket looked high-end because of the styling and the simplicity of the homepage.

Lastly, group 1 did not have anyone who wanted to purchase from Minimarket. In group 2, four people stated that they would purchase from Minimarket because “all the focus is on the beautiful clothes”. The other half was not attracted to the too simple web design or the awkward styling of the models. When group 3 was asked if they would purchase, three said they would, three were not sure and two said they would not. The main reason for not purchasing from the web store was because it made them feel confused, nervous and stressed. Therefore they did not trust the webstore entirely. For instance, one said: “The lookbook does not go well with the rest of the webstore. I mean the webstore looks incomplete and when you go further on it, you find these incredible pictures. It gives me mixed feelings.”
5 Analysis/Interpretation

In this section, the focus group results are analyzed according to our own purchasing model.

5.1 Online Fashion Consumer Behavior

As mentioned in our model, the variables that influence consumer attitude towards fashion e-tailers are demographics, product involvement, purchasing task, and psychological perceptions. Prior experience will not be included in the analysis as everyone in the focus group has recently purchased clothing online.

Demographics

Zhou et al. (2007) stated that men prefer online shopping because of its convenience, while women prefer the brick and mortar store. Yet our results were not similar. Even though the females outnumbered the men in our study, their views on e-tailers were the same. Both genders stated that purchasing in the brick and mortar store is preferred due to the experience of touching and trying the clothes. However, the online store provides more “convenience” than its brick and mortar counterpart. Therefore, after regularly purchasing from the physical store, they would begin purchasing at the brand’s online clothing store. This way they already know the sizes and quality of the clothing.

Product Involvement

Focus group 1 was not interested in fashion and thus is considered low involvement shoppers for fashion. Because of their low involvement, Eroglu et al. (2001) hypothesized that low task relevant cues would be more appealing than high task cues. Multimedia does not aid in the purchasing task and thus is considered a low task relevant cue. Therefore according to Eroglu et al.’s theory (2001), focus group 1 would like multimedia. However, our results found that they did not like it. Out of the eight participants, six did not like to watch videos. They also did not care about perusing through lookbooks and catalogues. Common reasons for their negative attitude towards multimedia are that, “it is useless” and that, “people know what they want to buy…they skip [multimedia content] and go directly to the products”.

Eroglu et al. (2001) further stated that informational content is more important for high involvement shoppers. Again, our results proved otherwise. One common theme during the low involvement focus group was the importance of product information. Comments relating to the importance of product information came up a total of 13 times. Overall, the group agreed that “you need to know as much as possible before you buy.” This view can be seen in their negative attitude towards Minimarket. Majority wished that there were more product information and understandable headlines.

Focus group 2 and 3 were interested in fashion and thus are deemed high involvement shoppers. Both Eroglu et al. (2001) and Ha and Lennon (2010) agreed that high involvement customers are highly interested in informational content. This is true because the importance of product information came up a total of 20 times in the discussion. Their views were similar to the low involvement shoppers. Thus all the groups admitted that webstores that lack information make it difficult to purchase from. For instance, Minimarket’s lack of clear headlines confused the participants who agreed
that it made it difficult to navigate. Also, Julian Red did not have any company information or information in their lookbook – information that participants want to read before making a purchasing decision.

However, Ha and Lennon (2010) stated that low task relevant cues do not affect high involvement consumers while Eroglu et al. (2001) stated that these cues would cause displeasure. Yet neither finding was supported by our results. If multimedia is executed well, then high involvement shoppers like multimedia stating that the content is good for “inspiration”, “seeing an overview of the look” and “looking closely at the details of the fabric.” Their positive view contrasts with the low involvement shoppers who did not like multimedia at all.

**Shopping Motivation**

Zhou et al. (2007) stated that shopping motivations are hedonic, utilitarian or a combination of both. Our results found that both low and high involvement shoppers had primarily utilitarian shopping motivation when shopping online: they shop online with a product in mind. This result can be seen in our theme guide – there are no themes related to hedonic shopping. However, we can hypothesize that the high involvement group has a slightly more hedonic purchasing motivation as they see shopping as an enjoyable activity.

Zhou et al. (2007) further stated that utilitarian shoppers are more interested in high relevant cues while hedonic shoppers are more appealed by low relevant cues. However, we found that product involvement – not shopping motivation – determines which cues are appealing. For instance, all of our participants said they purchased online for utilitarian reasons. Therefore, according to Zhou et al. (2007), everyone would be more interested in high relevant cues. However, this is only true for the low involvement group. The high involvement groups expressed that both high and low relevant cues are equally important. For instance common comments in the discussion were about colors, pictures and simplicity – all low relevant cues. These groups also discussed the importance of functional elements such as product information, usability and ease of navigation – all high relevant cues.

Lastly, Eroglu et al. (2001) found that utilitarian customers disregard content that is not relevant to their purchasing task. Their findings correlate with the responses of the low involvement focus group. People who are not interested in fashion want to purchase their clothes as quickly as possible. Thus similarly to what previous research has discovered (Zhou et al., 2007), they are more concerned with efficiency and time. Multimedia content does not aid in their purchasing task and thus are considered irrelevant. On the other hand, majority of the high involvement customers liked multimedia. However, this attitude depends on what that type of multimedia and how well it is executed.

**Psychological Perceptions: Trust and Control**

The low involvement shoppers did not mention trust many times during the discussions – comments related to trust came up only seven times. The high involvement shoppers also commented on trust a few times. Perhaps the trust theme did not appear many times because all the participants were experienced online shoppers. According to Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), trust is not as important for these shoppers; instead information is more vital (cited in Elliot & Speck, 2005).
However, when trust was mentioned in the discussion, both groups said that their trust is based on the web design. For instance, an unprofessional or cluttered web design would be considered untrustworthy. This result was also found by Schlosser et al. (2006) who said that people generalize web design to perceived trustworthiness. For instance, some participants did not want to purchase from Julian Red because the web design made them feel “insecure” and “nervous”. On the other hand, participants would purchase from Gant because the web design seemed “reliable” and “secure”.

Also, Koufaris et al. (2001/2002) and Eroglu et al. (2001) agreed that all consumers need to feel in control or else they would form negative attitude and purchase intentions – there is no relationship between the level of involvement and perceived control. Their findings were similar to ours. For the low involvement participants, the theme of control was mentioned 10 times, while the high involvement groups mentioned control 15 times. For instance, in the low involvement group, participants agreed that “webstores can have video but just do not force [us] to watch it”. Julian Red’s website did not give consumers control. Therefore majority of the low and high involvement groups said they would not want to purchase from the site. The other webstores – Gant, Tiger and Minimarket – gives consumers a sense of control. Therefore, majority would purchase from them.

5.2 Key Factors for Fashion E-Commerce

According to our theory, the most important factor to create an enjoyable online experience is through multimedia. Other factors include aesthetics and functionality.

5.2.1 Multimedia

We originally came up with seven factors that are important in creating successful multimedia. Each factor is important to elicit desire, emotions, ambience, character, feelings and mood when viewing the multimedia (Okonkwo, 2010).

Relevance to the retailer’s brand: Falk et al. (2006) asserted that multimedia must have a purpose – it should be related to the brand and enhance it. Gant’s flash animation enhanced the nautical and mature theme of the homepage. Tiger’s various multimedia content enhanced the brand’s trendiness and youthfulness. However, Julian Red’s multimedia was not relevant to the brand. After watching the video introduction and seeing the lookbook, majority of the participants had a certain image of Julian Red’s clothing. They thought the clothes would be dark and artistic. However, this image did not correspond to the clothing. Thus the participants were “disappointed”. One even stated that: “I would have thought I entered a new store when I looked at the clothes”. The low involvement group did not make any comments about the lack of cohesion among Julian Red’s video, lookbook and clothing. Perhaps this lack of comments reflects their poor fashion knowledge.

An appropriate amount: According to Okonkwo (2010) fashion retailers should not overwhelm the customers with multimedia because it devalues the brand. This was found in our results as well. Both involvement groups loved Tiger’s web store because it visually did not overwhelm them. It provided the right amount of multimedia content while still evoking luxury and style. On the other hand, Julian Red’s large video was “too much visually” and thus the participants did not like it. Thus, many did not feel inspired to purchase from the site.
Level of control: Control was a theme that was constantly brought up in the discussion (see Appendix E). The low involvement shoppers did not like video, catalogue, lookbook and therefore did not want to be forced to watch, hear or read them. The only webstore that forced customers to immediately watch their content was Julian Red – therefore the low involvement shoppers viewed the webstore negatively. This negative response is similar to Okonkwo’s belief (2010) that shoppers will leave a webstore if they do not have a level of control. The high involvement shoppers also agreed that websites should not force shoppers to watch or hear content. For instance, they shared the same negative view as the low involvement group towards Julian Red’s video. Further, the participants did not like the “gloomy” and “annoying” music – proving Falk et al.’s theory (2006) that background music causes dissatisfaction.

High quality: Oh et al. (2008) stated that high quality multimedia can influence merchandise quality perception. Schlosser et al. (2006) pointed out that high quality multimedia is seen as a high investment cost, which can be generalized to merchandise quality. Our results were similar. Participants saw e-stores with high investment costs as reliable, trustworthy and had good quality. The importance of investment in creating a secure and high-end image can be seen in our theme guide – it came up a total of 12 times for the high involvement shoppers.

Fast Loading Speed: Roggio (2008) stated that people do not like buffering or loading – a view that was also supported by our results. For instance, Julian Red’s webstore featured a slow movie that buffered occasionally. When these problems occurred, both the low and high involvement participants stated that they would have left the webstore immediately. The slow loading speed also made the participants annoyed and bored.

Updated: Most of the participants saw the fashion webstores’ homepage for the first time. Therefore we were unable to test whether Okonkwo’s belief (2010) that updated multimedia is an important factor for customers.

Multimedia content on the homepage: According to our theory, multimedia content can help create a thematic web design. This theme can attract people to explore further, convey trustworthiness and create purchase intentions (Oh et al., 2008). Tiger’s theme was trendiness and attitude. According to the low and the high involvement participants, the models of the flash animation and colors “screamed fashion” and “trends.” The high involvement shoppers had mixed feelings about Julian Red’s theme. Some said it was an artistic theme while others said it was a “gloomy” theme. Most of the low involvement participants agreed that the theme was depressing. Then when seeing Minimarket’s homepage, the participant remarked that it did not have any theme because it was too simple – which did not appeal to them. Therefore, our results correspond with Oh et al. (2008).

Model: After conducting the three focus groups, we noticed a new theme – the importance of the models in the multimedia. This importance is evident for both levels of involvement shoppers. For instance, when Tiger’s homepage was shown, participants immediately commented on the model’s appearance and clothing. The low involvement participants said that the models looked like “aliens”. The high involvement groups had more positive comments. They commented on the colors that the models were wearing – stating that the colors are traditionally associated with luxury. Also, they said that the models successfully represented the brand. Tiger is a trendy brand and thus needs to have trendy models – which they did have on their flash animation. “It makes me want
to be like them” said one. When shown Julian Red’s homepage, the low involvement group said more negative comments such as “they are creepy” and “they are depressing”. The high involvement group had mixed reactions about the models. Some said that the models looked “gloomy” and “depressed”, “I wouldn’t want to be that model” said one. Others said that the models and the black and grey colors made them look “artistic” and “appealing”. Therefore, when creating multimedia, the model, her styling, makeup, and clothes must be taken into consideration. Further, the model should be representative of the brand – if not this will cause confusion.

**Figure 10** Revised figure that reflects multimedia features that can create a positive online customer experience.

### 5.2.2 Aesthetics

Aesthetics is also an important factor influencing attitude and purchase intention. The aesthetic cues that were mentioned most in the low involvement discussion group were colors and design. For instance, Gant’s homepage was white, “bright”, “elegant” and “simple”. Though these adjectives may sound positive, the group said the design was “not impressive” because it was “too simple”. However Tranctinsky and Lowengart (2007) found that expressive aesthetics should only be used for trendy retailers. Gant is considered to be classic – not trendy. Therefore the simple design is appropriate and probably appeals to its target market. Yet it does not appeal to our group because they are young – a market that Gant is not targeting. For instance, within seconds of looking at the homepage everyone immediately agreed that “it’s not for the hip people” and instead “it’s for middle aged people”. One also said, “[the homepage] is good because it’s more for the classy people”. For instance, street wear websites are so flashy flashy. But this is simple and elegant.” Therefore if Gant became more “flashy flashy” with music and videos, younger people would associate it with street wear – an image that Gant probably does not want to portray.
The high involvement groups also said similar comments about Gant’s homepage. They said it was “clean”, “professional”, “bright” and “calm”. However, there was some disagreement – some people liked the simplicity of the site while others thought it was boring.

Tiger’s aesthetics appealed to both the low and high involvement groups. The “dark colors” and the “appealing pictures” were considered appropriate for the brand. Upon looking at the site, one person said, “wow, it just screams fashion” – a comment agreed upon on all of the groups. Other common comments were that the webstore was “flawlessly designed”, “the black color is attractive” and “looks professional”. Further, the runway and backstage videos – content not featured in Gant’s site – also were considered to enhance the brand’s trendiness.

The only difference among the comments made by the three groups was that the low involvement group said: “Tiger is simple, but so is Gant…yet I like Tiger better and I do not know why.” Perhaps by simple, the group meant that Tiger’s layout was not cluttered with pictures and headlines.

Julian Red’s aesthetics faced mixed reactions. Majority of the low involvement group disliked the “creepy” and “gothic” mood of the site. Only two out of the eight participants had positive remarks. They stated that the site was “memorable”, “unique” and “different”. One also said that, “people who are brand loyal would like the brand because the aesthetics enhances [it]”. The high involvement group also said that Julian Red’ site was “aesthetic”, “different” and “unique”. Some people liked the aesthetics while others found it to be “boring”, “messy” and “too much visually”.

Lastly, the high involvement participants did not like Minimarket’s site. It was “too simple”, seemed like “there [was] something missing” and that there was “nothing special about it.” However, as mentioned before, majority of the group loved the lookbook’s aesthetics commenting on how “the lookbook does not match the boring webstore.” The low involvement participants also agreed with these statements towards the boring website design. They said that the font of the text did not appear professional and that the homepage was too simple and boring.

5.2.3 Functionality

Functional elements of a webstore are those that aid in accomplishing one’s purchasing task. These elements include ease of use, content and layout. These factors are considered important for the high involvement groups. For instance the theme of ease of use was discussed 17 times while product information was discussed 20 times. Participants said that Gant’s homepage “looked easy to navigate”; Tiger’s webstore looked clean and usable; and Julian Red’s homepage appeared “too messy” and had “no clear headlines”. Due to Julian Red’s cluttered and disorganized homepage, participants thought the website was “difficult to navigate” – a similar response was found by Elliot and Speck (2005). Further, participants wished that Julian Red would have more informational content to their site – no one was familiar with the brand and thus having more information would make them feel more comfortable buying from the retailer.

The low involvement shoppers only commented on Tiger and Minimarket’s navigation. Tiger’s site was considered “clean” and “user-friendly” while Minimarket was perceived to have low usability. They said that the unclear headlines make it difficult to understand the site. For instance, during one part of the discussion participants pointed
to the “ss11” headline and asked us what ss11 means. Then they pointed to the “save the rainforest” headline and questioned what that headline had to do with the brand. Further, they said that there are too many headlines and therefore did not understand where the focus was placed.

5.2.4 Brand

This factor was not mentioned in our theory. However, brand was a re-occurring theme for the high involvement shoppers. These consumers usually bought online from webstores that they either purchased from before, are well-known, or ones that bloggers or friends have recommended. For the low involvement shoppers, brand was only mentioned a few times when a participant stated that the brand is more important than the web design.

5.3 Attitude

One section of our purpose deals with analyzing consumer attitude towards multimedia. To reiterate again, attitude is the evaluation of an object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Depending on the consumer’s level of involvement, the type of multimedia and its execution, attitude will vary.

5.3.1 Attitude towards Multimedia

During the focus group sessions we showed participants videos, flip catalogues and lookbooks, and flash animations.

Videos

Low Involvement:

The low involvement shoppers disliked video content: six of the eight focus group members stated that they do not watch videos when purchasing clothes online. As they do not regularly watch videos, most of the emotions described and mentioned towards video content were negative. Thus they fell under Yen’s classification of emotions when needs are not met. The most common emotions described were: bored, unimpressed and uninterested. The only period which the participants expressed positive attitude was when webstores – such as Gant, Tiger, and Minimarket – did not force them to watch or hear video content, or if the content does not interfere with the shopping goal. Then they were happy.

Therefore, overall low involvement shoppers have a negative attitude towards video. This negative attitude is formed because these type of shoppers wants to purchase their desired clothing as quickly and efficiently as possible. Watching these “useless” videos would simply impede their online purchases.

High Involvement:

The high involvement shoppers, however, had mixed feelings about videos. Out of the 16 participants, 9 people had a positive attitude towards video. For these people common emotions expressed were inspiration and interest. They said they liked video because, “it gives a more realistic idea of what the object looks like” and that, “they are more appealing than a simple photo.” The rest had a negative attitude towards video, stating that videos are “boring.” When asked why they had a negative attitude,
participants stated that it was only a matter of saving time. “When I go to a webstore I want to go directly to the clothes,” was a shared statement. Others said if they were not familiar with the brand, then they might watch the videos.

*Similarities:*

Both groups formed an overall positive attitude towards webstores that did not force them to watch or hear it. For instance, Tiger was rated positively because even though it had numerous videos, the retailer did not force them to watch it. Further, everyone agreed that videos should load quickly and not buffer. If videos fail this requirement, everyone in the high and low involvement groups would be bored, disinterested and unimpressed. For instance, all of these emotions were mentioned when Julian’s Red slow video was shown.

**Flip Catalogues and Lookbooks**

*Low Involvement:*

Low involvement shoppers agreed that flip catalogues and lookbooks are good for product specifications. However, they do not read them before purchasing clothing online. Therefore, they generally have a neutral attitude towards catalogues and lookbooks. Perhaps they feel this way because they do not care about styling tips or inspiration. This attitude was explicitly made again when Tiger’s lookbook was shown – participants said they were not interested by it. However, their neutral attitude changed once they saw Minimarket’s lookbook – they became confused and surprised. They did not like the extreme makeup and posing of the models. “Are they targeting crazy people” and “the makeup is odd and scary” were common comments towards the lookbook.

Therefore, even though low involvement shoppers would not even look at them, they would like catalogues or lookbooks if they were more simple and easy to look at. This means that the models should pose regularly, have “normal” makeup, the background should be plain and there should be more product information.

*High Involvement:*

The high involvement groups had a positive attitude towards catalogues and lookbooks. For instance, when shown Tiger’s lookbook, participants liked the zoom feature which enabled them to look closely at the fabric’s details. They also liked how the photos made the clothes seem wearable. The high involvement group also expressed positive attitude towards Minimarket’s lookbook because the focus was on the clothes. For instance, some said, “a lot of lookbooks are more concentrated on the model…but here the focus is all on the clothes” and, “the lookbook lets the design speak for itself.” The groups stated that they were “inspired” and “interested” by both lookbooks.

Overall, for high involvement consumers to have a positive attitude towards catalogues and lookbooks, the content must feature photographs of the clothing and is more focused on the clothes than the model.
**Similarities:**

Both groups believed that it was important to properly see the clothes featured in catalogues and lookbooks. For instance, Julian Red’s lookbook highlighted the models rather than the clothes. “It’s different but I wish I could see the whole photograph” said one while another said, “she has nice eye makeup but where are the clothes?” Other people expressed frustration stating that “it is annoying to not see things that you would possibly want to buy.” Also, both groups agreed that controlling the pages is important. They were frustrated that Julian Red’s lookbook automatically changed pages.

**Flash animation**

**Low Involvement:**

Majority of the participants felt positive emotions towards flash animation. They said that they were “interested” in big flash pictures and that the models featured in the flash were “appealing”. The few who expressed a negative affective attitude said they are annoyed when the pictures transit too quickly and if there are only two pictures – as in the case of Tiger’s webstore. One possible theory for the positive attitude is that flash loads quickly and lacks music.

**High Involvement:**

The high involvement shoppers had a positive attitude towards flash. The high involvement shoppers related the good quality of the flash animation to the webstore’s investment. When Gant and Tiger’s homepage was shown, people stated that the, “animation makes the website seem professional…like they have spent a lot of money”. These responses support Ha and Lennon’s (2010) discovery as they also found that kinetic images positively impact mood and perceived risk. For instance, the animation used in Gant and Tiger’s homepage made the retailer appear more professional, trustworthy and reliable. Further people said that Tiger’s picture helped convey the trendiness of the brand and it: “Highlights the clothes as well as the concept”. However, one important factor that was brought up was the transition of the flash animation. Participants stated that Tiger’s flash changed to quickly and seemed blurry. They preferred Minimarket’s flash because it was bigger, had more pictures, slower and had a better transition.

Therefore, high involvement consumers will form positive attitude towards flash animation if the animation has a good transition and features models that embody the brand.

**Similarities:**

Both the high and low involvement groups had positive attitude towards flash animations. However, the high involvement group were more enthusiastic.

**5.4 Purchase Intentions**

The second section of our purpose is to analyze whether attitude towards multimedia can either strengthen or lessen purchase intentions. We found that purchase intentions depend primarily on involvement and the multimedia’s level of execution.
The low involvement group had an overall negative attitude towards multimedia. They did not like videos and had neutrals feelings towards flash, catalogues and lookbooks. Despite this attitude, almost everyone said that they still purchase from webstores that have these features; they just avoid looking at the multimedia. Therefore, their attitude towards multimedia neither strengthens nor lessens their purchase intention. However, if the multimedia is executed poorly, their negative attitude towards multimedia is strengthened. Thus their overall impression of the site becomes negative and eliminates their incentive to purchase from the site. For instance, everyone said they would leave Julian Red’s site because the brand was forcing them to watch video. However, everyone liked Tiger’s site because the video content was separated, therefore they did not have to watch it.

In order to strengthen purchase intentions for low involvement shoppers, retailers should concentrate on product information and ease of use. These shoppers are not concerned about being provided with experience – all they want is to purchase their product as quickly as possible.

The high involvement group had an overall positive attitude towards multimedia. Many of the participants like to look at videos, catalogues or lookbooks for inspiration. However, it varies among person to person which multimedia content is more preferred. For instance, some had a favourable attitude towards video while others did not. Due to their positive attitude, multimedia can increase purchase intentions. However, multimedia is only one of the many factors these shoppers considered vital when making online purchasing decisions – aesthetics and functionality are also important. These findings do not correspond to Siddiqui et al. (2003) who found that apparel shoppers do not like to shop at sites that lack multimedia. For instance, many agreed that Minimarket executed their lookbook and flash animation well. Yet despite this positive attitude, they did not like Minimarket’s simplistic design and thought the webstore had low ease of use. Therefore, many did not want to purchase from the site.

### 5.5 Final Purchasing Decision Model for Fashion

Before pursuing our empirical methodology, we created our own online purchasing decision model for fashion. Our focus groups’ responses corresponded with the model. For instance, the different variables of consumers – demographics, product involvement, purchasing task, prior experience and psychological perceptions – do impact their attitude towards a webstore. However, we found that the most influential consumer variable was product involvement. This occurs because involvement can dictate which online cues the shopper likes, dislikes, ignores or searches for.

Together with the fashion consumer variables, the online experience and functionality elements also influence attitude. However, one minor addition to the model is the importance of brands in forming the online experience.

The next stage of the model is attitude formation. If the webstore does not fulfill most of the consumers’ expectations, then a negative attitude will be formed. This negative attitude will cause one to form avoidance behaviors. For instance, Julian Red’s website did not fulfill the functionality expectations and online experience expectations for most of the participants. As a result, a negative attitude was formed, making participants want to leave from the site. Minimarket also failed to meet customer expectations – it only
fulfilled the multimedia criteria for the high involvement shoppers. Thus the participants had a negative attitude and wanted to leave the site.

On the other hand, Tiger’s webstore met everyone’s online experience and functionality expectations. Thus, a positive attitude was formed causing people to form purchase intentions.
6 Conclusion

This section will discuss whether the research purpose was fulfilled. This brief discussion will be followed by answers to the research questions that were presented in the introduction.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate attitude towards multimedia and whether this attitude impacts one’s online purchase intentions for high-end fashion. This purpose was fulfilled because we were able to successfully answer the follow research questions:

**Research Question #1:** What features do Swedish customers expect from a fashion e-tailer in order to purchase from them?

Fashion e-tailers need to have a fast site so that consumers do not waste time during their purchasing task; must have an appropriate amount of information; be user-friendly so that consumers can navigate the site easily; feature inspirational and entertaining visuals or content; and have a unique and memorable web design.

**Research Question #2:** Do the multimedia features of the webstore inspire them to purchase from the store?

It depends on the level of involvement of the consumer, the type of multimedia and its execution whether multimedia can inspire purchase intentions. Those who are highly interested in fashion have a more favorable attitude towards multimedia than those who do not like fashion. Further, some customers prefer videos while others prefer multimedia content without sound such as flash pictures, flip catalogues and lookbooks. In order for videos to create purchase intentions, consumers must have the power to control it. Also the content should be fast loading, unique, memorable and relevant to the brand. In order for flash pictures to inspire purchases, they must be high quality, feature models that embody the brand, have a slow and good quality transition, and evoke the brand’s image. Lastly, in order for flip catalogues and lookbooks to stimulate purchase intentions they must focus on the clothes and not the models, be inspirational and unique, look professional and be relevant to the brand’s image. However, if fashion retailers want to appeal to those who are not interested in fashion, then the flip catalogues and lookbooks should be as simple as possible and should also focus on the clothes.

Yet, it is important to note that good multimedia alone will not induce purchase intentions – multimedia is only one factor that can help increase purchase intentions. This can be seen in Minimarket’s case where even though majority of the high involvement customers had a positive attitude towards the multimedia content, they had low purchase intentions due to the site’s simplicity and low usability.
7 Discussion

In this section, recommendations to the webstores used in the focus group and general recommendations for all high-end fashion retailers will be discussed. A critique of our study and ideas for future research will follow.

7.1 Recommendations to the Webstores Used in the Focus Group

Based on our model and the focus group’s answer, the following recommendations to each webstore are given:

Gant

Some of the participants did not like Gant’s web design stating that it was too simple. However, the design is relevant to Gant’s mature target market. Perhaps if Gant added more creative elements, their current customers may stop purchasing from them. Therefore, Gant should retain its simple and clean web design.

Tiger of Sweden

Everyone, including the authors of this report, loved Tiger’s web design. The multimedia content fulfilled all eight of our multimedia factors, the web design was aesthetically appealing and reflected the brand’s image. Due to these appealing atmospherics, Tiger successfully created purchase intentions within all of the focus groups. The only minor recommendation is to add more product information to the lookbook. People like to see details so there should be a better zoom feature where they can inspect the clothes even more closely. Further, each picture should have an embedded link to each piece of clothing. Once people see clothes in the lookbook that they want to buy, they can simply click on the link and purchase the clothes.

Julian Red

Julian Red’s webstore had several problems:

1. While the majority liked Julian Red’s artistic and unique video introduction, they did not like being forced to watch and hear the content. Julian Red needs to relinquish control to the consumers in order to prevent them from leaving the webstore. One suggestion would be to create a smaller video without sound. Customers who do not like videos will not be annoyed by the video because its size is not considered distracting or annoying. Customers who do like videos will be able to watch it and thus be content. This idea has been implemented successfully by other Swedish high-end retailers such as Filippa K (2011) and Acne (2011).

2. All of the participants disliked the slow video introduction. Again, this problem will prevent potential customers from further exploring the site. By decreasing the size of the video, it will load faster and not buffer as much. According to Falk (2006), the video must upload within eight seconds.

3. The lookbook needs to be changed so that the clothes are the predominate focus. This way, customers are presented with styling tips and inspiration.
4. The webstore lacks information. Therefore, those who do not know about the brand will feel insecure purchasing from it. Company information, designer information and links to their social media accounts should be added to the homepage.

5. The webstore is not user-friendly – participants did not know how to navigate around the site. Thus, the fashion retailer needs to present clear and distinct headlines so that the shoppers know what they are clicking on – there should be no mystery meat navigation.

6. The multimedia content needs to be cohesive with the brand image. When customers look at the homepage they should have an image in their mind, and the clothes should fit the image. The high involvement focus groups’ expectations of the clothes did not match reality. Therefore there were conflicting images among the video, lookbook and clothes. Julian Red should design the video and lookbook to something that is more relevant to the brand’s image. However, when changing their video, the firm should still create a memorable film. Unique and unforgettable videos can instill inspiration which can lead to purchase intentions.

**Minimarket**

Minimarket suffers from two problems – ease of use and simplicity. The ambiguous, disorganized and cluttered headlines decrease the site’s ease of use. Therefore, the fashion retailer needs to improve its usability. If customers are unable to use the site, how can they purchase from Minimarket?

Also, their design is too minimal and bland. Their web design should be changed to reflect their brand and evoke a certain theme. This change would elicit excitement and inspiration within the customers. One possible idea is to design the webstore based on the styling of the models in the lookbook and flash photography. Having a theme similar to the styling would make the styling seem more cohesive and understandable – people would understand the relationship between the styling and the clothes. One last minor issue is that the lookbook should have more product information on each photograph – perhaps the names of the clothes could be presented so that the customers have enough information to buy the piece.

### 7.2 Recommendations to Fashion E-Tailers in General

It is impossible to create a webstore that appeals to everyone. For instance, some people like music and others do not; some people like video while others are annoyed by them; and some may prefer light background colors and others may prefer dark background colors. Due to the inability to please everyone, high-end fashion retailers need to understand their store image and target market before designing their website. They need to ask themselves: who typically purchases from our store, what is their average lifestyle like and how do these customers perceive us? After answering these questions, the retailer can create an appropriate and enjoyable environment and experience (Sirgy, Grewal & Mangleburg, 2000). For instance, if the fashion retailer is classic, elegant and targets a mature audience, the web design can not feature trendy aesthetics and multimedia features. These inappropriate elements would simply alienate the retailer’s customers. This recommendation extends to fashionable retailers as well. Simple and
lackluster websites will drive their target market away because they desire entertainment and inspiration when visiting the webshop. When used correctly, multimedia is an excellent way to provide these sought feelings.

Regardless of the image of the fashion retailer, all retailers need to understand the importance of usability. A website may have a beautiful design and integrate multimedia correctly; however these positive features will not aid the customer if she is unable to navigate the site. Therefore, retailers need to make their web store user friendly. Yet the challenge is to create a site that is both user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing.

Finally, after finalizing the design decisions the retailer should look at the webstore through the eyes of their customers. They should ask: as a customer, would I like this or would I be annoyed by this? By pretending to become the customer, the retailer can refine the web design and correct the imperfections.

7.3 Critique of Method

Although our study helped fulfilled our purpose, there are a few limitations. These issues should be rectified in case other researchers would like to replicate our study.

First of all, all of the participants were already familiar with Gant and Tiger of Sweden and the high involvement groups knew about Minimarket. However, being familiar with a brand can influence perception and attitude. For instance, when asked if Gant appeared to be a high end brand, the participants automatically said yes. To counter this effect, we told the participants to base their answers solely on the web design. Some changed their answers, some stated that they were still influenced by the brand name and others were convinced that the high end brand was reflected in the web design. Researchers doing further studies on web design should focus on webstores that are unfamiliar, cover the brand name or create a fictitious webstore (Oh et al., 2008).

Further, our study relied only on focus groups. However, focus groups are qualitative and thus cannot test a theory across populations. Therefore, generalizations beyond the data would have to involve quantitative data (Carson et al., 2001). Future studies into this topic can involve qualitative methods such as surveys.

Lastly, every focus group was shown Gant and Tiger’s webstore, then Julian Red and Minimarket. Gant and Tiger’s webstore integrated multimedia successfully while the other two webstores did not. However, we should not have consecutively presented webstores that have successful multimedia content. Rather, it would have been better to change the order of the webstores shown. For instance, Tiger, Minimarket, Gant and then Julian Red could be shown.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Web atmospherics has become an increasingly popular topic with many research possibilities. First, this study only focused on purchase intentions. Future studies can focus on actual purchase behavior or post-purchase behavior. For instance, what atmospheric cues cause customers to repeatedly purchase from the web store? What cues cause customer loyalty? What cues increase impulse purchase behavior?
Also, our study focused exclusively on high-end fashion. Other studies can focus either on discount retailers or luxury fashion. When it comes to e-commerce, luxury fashion has been the slowest industry to create e-shops. Therefore, research may help designers understand how to successfully establish a web shop. Or if researchers would like to narrow their research further, they can concentrate on two specific fashion styles and compare and contrast relevant atmospheric cues for each style. For instance, are the web atmospherics the same for a vintage fashion e-tailer and a casual, sporty fashion e-tailer? How do both of these customers define a good online experience?

Lastly, other studies can focus on how shoppers use both the internet and brick and mortar store to make purchase decisions. For instance, Siddiqui et al. (2003) stated that fashion retailers do not understand how to integrate their online and offline channels to increase purchases. This lack of integration is a problem because sales can be decreased. According to Levy and Weitz (2008) multi-channel retailers earn a larger profit than single channel retailers. In fact, multi-channel shoppers spend two to four times more than single channel purchasers (McKinsey Marketing Practice, 2000 cited in Seock & Norton, 2007).
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Yen’s Emotion Classification Scheme When Needs Are Not Met

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Feelings/Emotions</th>
<th>Secondary Feelings/Emotions</th>
<th>Tertiary Feelings/Emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>Ambivalent, disinterested, dissatisfied, distracted, dull, nothing, neutral, oblivious, passive, uninspired, unimpressed, unmotivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>dismayed, unsatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>displeased, gloomy, glum, grave, grim, heavy, melancholy, moody, negative, pensive, pessimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>Annoyed, bothered, distressed, fed-up, impatient, irked, perturbed, upset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12 (Yen, 2006)
### Appendix B: Yen’s Emotion Classification Scheme When Need are Met

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Feelings/Emotions</th>
<th>Secondary Feelings/Emotions</th>
<th>Tertiary Feelings/Emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Thrilled, charged, dazzled, exhilarated, ecstatic, elated, enthused, euphoric, electrified, exultant, fabulous, intoxicated, jubilant, overjoyed, overwhelmed, pumped, psyched, radiant, stirred up, sublime,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glad</td>
<td>Joyful, amused, cheerful, cheery, cool, delighted, enthusiastic, festive, jolly, merry, glorious, gleeful, positive, wonderful, upbeat, young,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clean, at ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprised</td>
<td>Amazed</td>
<td>Astonished, astounded, awed, breathless, captivated, dazzled, impressed, inspired, mesmerized, stimulated, transfixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>Involved</td>
<td>Absorbed, concerned, eager, engrossed, engaged, entranced, enthralled, enraptured, hooked, intense,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrigued</td>
<td></td>
<td>curious, enticed, fascinated, inclined, inquisitive,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13 (Yen, 2006)
Appendix C: Moderator guide for focus group

Before the focus group begins
- Set up the computer
- Prepare the projector
- Prepare the voice recorder
- Set up the free drinks and cookies
- Move chairs to a circle format
- Have whiteboard pens
- Have an attendance list

Introduction and warm-up (10 minutes)
Moderator introduces herself and welcomes everyone to the focus group

- Welcome and thank you for participating in the focus group session. The purpose of this session is to find out what online fashion shoppers think about multimedia. We will be asking all of you a series of questions and then will show you some webstores. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions and your responses are highly important to us. Therefore please feel free to answer whenever possible.
- Further, it is ok to disagree with someone else’s’ opinion as long as you state it in a polite manner. And if you do, please voice your opinion to us.
- The only rule that we have is that one person should speak at a time. This is needed so that we can properly transcribe this session without difficulty. This is also due to our strict time schedule that we would like to stick to.
- The last point will refer to confidentiality. This discussion will be confidential and anonymous – we will not quote you using your name. Even though this discussion will be audio taped, no one but us and the teacher will hear the content of the tape.
- Now can everyone state your first name only, your age and what you think about purchasing fashion online? This is just so that we can briefly get to know everyone.

Details Section: 15 minutes
1. What would you consider as a good online shopping experience?
2. We will now write a list of emotions. Please indicate which emotions you experience when you encounter a good fashion webstore? And which emotions do you experience when you are faced with a bad website design?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excitement</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>Regret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Insecurity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Content Section: 80 minutes
1. Do you like to watch video clips when you purchase clothing online?
2. Do you like to look at flip catalogues or lookbooks in fashion webstores?
   (This should be 15 minute discussion)
Now we will be showing you some webstores that we have chosen for this session

Gant (10 minutes)
1. Please take a couple of seconds to look at Gant’s home page. What are your immediate thoughts?
2. Judging by what you have just seen, do you think Gant is a high end store?
3. Judging by appearance, would you like to purchase from this webstore?

Tiger of Sweden (20min)
1. Please take a couple of seconds to look at Tiger of Sweden’s home page. What are your immediate thoughts?
2. What do you think about Tiger’s collection of video content?
3. Does the runway footage inspire you to purchase from the webstore?
4. Do you like that Tiger lets you click and zoom into their runway looks?
5. Judging by what you have just seen, do you think Tiger is a high end brand?
6. After visiting Tiger’s website, would you like to purchase from the webstore?

Julian Red (15 minutes)
1. What is your immediate impression of Julian Red’s webstore?
2. What do you think of the lookbook?
3. Would you purchase from this webstore?
4. Judging by what you have just seen, do you think Julian Red is a high end webstore?

Mini market (15minutes)
1. What is your immediate impression?
2. Do you like the lookbook?
3. Judging by what you have just seen, do you think Minimarket is a high end store?
4. Would you purchase from this webstore?

Summary and ending (15 minutes)
1. Is there any web design advice you would like to give to any of the fashion labels that you have just seen?
2. Is there any advice you would like to give to your favourite fashion retailer?

Total time: 120 minutes
## Appendix D: Reasons for Choosing the Selected Webstores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Webstore</th>
<th>Download Speed</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Suitability</th>
<th>Relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gant</td>
<td>Quick, no buffering</td>
<td>Crisp quality</td>
<td>Has control over the multimedia content</td>
<td>There could be more multimedia content – yet the amount is still sufficient</td>
<td>Reflects the brand’s classic image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger of Sweden</td>
<td>Quick, no buffering</td>
<td>Crisp quality</td>
<td>Has control</td>
<td>Just enough</td>
<td>Evokes luxury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Red</td>
<td>Long time to load – at least 10 seconds</td>
<td>Buffers a lot</td>
<td>Has no control – opening video and music start automatically</td>
<td>Not enough – content is at the wrong place. Overwhelming</td>
<td>Does not reflect the brand’s image and does not present the clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Market</td>
<td>Quick, no buffering</td>
<td>Good quality</td>
<td>Has control</td>
<td>Not enough multimedia – website seems cheap</td>
<td>Should use more to reflect the brand’s image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14 Reasons why we selected the webstores
### Appendix E: Theme Dictionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Related Words</th>
<th>Tabulation</th>
<th>Passage Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brands</td>
<td>A retailer’s name</td>
<td>Brand, famous, well-known</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>I buy from the brands that I am familiar with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>I only go to the famous sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I think the webstore looks exclusive and I associate it to expensive brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>N/A (the definition is obvious)</td>
<td>The word color or any specific colors mentioned</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The colors makes [the website] seem expensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>“Consumers’ feelings about the degree to which they have control over their own access, search and evaluation of the content of a website” (Rose, Hair &amp; Clark, 2011, p. 29).</td>
<td>Want to stop it, ability to choose what I want to see</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I hate it when I suddenly hear music…where is the button to stop it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Keep it optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t make me watch it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of use</td>
<td>Simplicity of navigating the webstore (Elliot &amp; Speck, 2005).</td>
<td>Understandable, navigation, usability, clutter, disorganized, messy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I would like to see more of the categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>The categories are disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashionable</td>
<td>Popular style</td>
<td>Popular, trendy, fashion, so in</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>It screams fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of model</td>
<td>How people perceive the models featured</td>
<td>Any comment referring to the model’s visual</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>…it’s not focused on the clothes, it’s focused on the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 How many times the theme was mentioned by the participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in the multimedia content</td>
<td>appearance</td>
<td></td>
<td>The models are good looking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time, money and effort put into</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The flash animation makes it look like they spent money on the website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the website design</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A (the definition is obvious)</td>
<td>Buffering, slow, tolerance, load, quick, fast</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>I can’t tolerate the buffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings/ emotions when needs</td>
<td>Boredom, uninspired, unimpressed, distracted, annoyance, or any other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>It's a waste of time to watch videos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are not met</td>
<td>negative emotional state</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>It is boring, I would leave this site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings when needs are met</td>
<td>Inspired, interested, excited, happy or any other positive emotional state</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Videos give you inspiration for what to wear for the upcoming season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals and text that help</td>
<td>Zoom, information, description, presentation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>I would like to see more pictures of the clothes and information about the brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieve the shopping goal</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I have no idea what I can buy here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal design – not complex</td>
<td>Clean, fresh, minimal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very minimalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust is defined as the</td>
<td>Professional, non-risky</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Less is more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumer’s belief that the</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>I immediately know that I can trust it, because it has managed to mediate the brand to the visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique and original designs</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>I find the webstore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rable</td>
<td>(Tranctinsky &amp; Lowengart, 2007).</td>
<td>unusual, artistic, developed aesthetic, odd</td>
<td>aesthetical. I think it would be more suitable for musicians, actresses and any kind of artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilitarian value</td>
<td>Consumer has a predetermined shopping task (Demangeot &amp; Broderick 2007).</td>
<td>Convenience, task, time</td>
<td>I wouldn’t visit a site unless I had a vague idea of what I am after People know what they want to buy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Focus Group 1’s answers, Focus Group 2 and 3’s answers