The Flying Frustration
A study of customer frustration within the SAS EuroBonus program

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Abstract

In today's competitive marketplace, relationship marketing has become an important factor. Companies want to achieve customer loyalty through sustainable long-term relationships with customers, especially in the service industry. Thus, companies implement loyalty programs, and conduct consumer research to evaluate the success of these programs. The customer satisfaction construct, is often used by companies to measure the level of satisfaction of their customers. However, previous literature argues that this construct conceal negative emotions. Therefore, the authors have chosen to investigate one type of negative emotion, namely frustration, within frequent flyer programs.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and identify what incidents cause frustration for members within the SAS EuroBonus program. The authors’ goal is to tap into customer frustration, as well as different types of sensations and the underlying incidents that create these sensations. This study will further investigate what impact customer frustrations can exert on program members’ behaviour towards the SAS EuroBonus program.

The research method chosen for this thesis was of qualitative nature; the primary data were collected using a single case study, with semi structured interviews, conducted with members of the SAS EuroBonus program of Silver level or higher.

The findings from this research reveal that even though individuals claim to be satisfied, negative emotions and concealed frustration is evident. The incidents found in this case study concern qualification barriers, inaccessibility, no additional value, additional costs and service. These incidents resulted in both strongly and weakly felt frustration sensations, which in turn led to three categories of frustration behaviours, namely avoidance, protest and passive behaviour.
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1 Introduction

The following chapter provides the reader with a background to the topic and presents the thesis' Problem, Purpose, Research Questions and Delimitations.

1.1 Background

In today's competitive marketplace, the most effective way to achieve customer loyalty is through sustainable long-term relationships with customers (Dowling, 2004). Therefore, relationship marketing has become an important factor, especially in service industries (Grönroos, 1998), such as the airline industry (Whyte, 2002). Long-term relationships may be established through marketing tools, one of which is loyalty programs. A loyalty program is invented to reward and encourage loyal customer behaviour (Stauss, Schmidt & Schoeler, 2005).

According to the CEO of the Swedish Aviation Industry Group and the Secretary General of the Swedish Air Transport Society (2015), the airline industry has faced numerous challenges in the world during the last decades. The previously largest and most powerful companies have now been challenged by low-cost airlines. This market pressure has made the airline industry more innovative and customer focused (Jeppsson & Wilson, 2015). One of the largest airline companies within the Nordic countries, which are affected by this pressure, is Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) (Flysas, 2016a). Because of the pressure, airline companies offer customers to be a part of their frequent flyer programs. The loyalty that companies gain from customers by frequent flyer programs has become an important factor, to reward and retain customers (O'Malley, 1998; Dolnicar, Grabler, Grün & Kulnig, 2011). Loyal customers are less price sensitive and do not require high effort to communicate with. Therefore, these types of customers are highly attractive for companies (Gomez, Arranz & Cillan, 2006).

Further, for an airline company to ensure that its frequent flyer program rewards and creates loyalty, companies often measure the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the program. However, according to Oliver (1997), using satisfaction and dissatisfaction as a measuring tool when conducting studies may not indicate the true emotions of a customer. For example, the fact that even though the majority of consumers answer satisfied or completely satisfied in consumer research, customers still break their brand relationships and switch brands (Stauss & Neuhaus, 1997). Because of this problem, negative emotions are a more sufficient term to use (Singh & Pandya, 1991), to investigate negative aspects of the program. Negative emotions are the most complex type of emotion and can take forms such as, irritation, anger, dissatisfaction and frustration (Tronvoll, 2011; Stauss et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2003; Wetzer, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007).

Frustration occurs when the satisfaction a person has imagined obtaining when reaching an objective, is not fulfilled (Berkowitz, 1989). Frustration includes three elements: frustration incident, frustration sensation and frustration behaviour (Stäcker, 1977; Stauss et al., 2005). These elements will be further discussed in the Frame of Reference, section 2.5. The construct of frustration is important to consider when discussing loyalty programs, since these programs are constructed in a way, which provides foundation for frustration to arise (Stauss et al., 2005). Thus, the authors of this thesis tentatively argue that frustration is evident in the SAS EuroBonus program.
SAS often measures the perceived relationship with their customers, using the customer satisfaction construct (see Appendix figure 1.1 & 1.2). Because of the competitive environment surrounding SAS (Jeppson & Wilson, 2015), the authors of this thesis tentatively argue the importance of detecting the frustrations that occur within the EuroBonus program and investigating why frustration occurs, to build strong customer relationships and enhance long-term loyalty in the SAS EuroBonus program.

1.2 Problem

Previous studies have investigated the customer satisfaction construct (Söderlund, 2003; Stauss & Neuhauss, 1997; Oliver, 1997), customer frustration linked with loyalty programs (Söderlund, 2003; Stauss et al., 2005), online negative word-of-mouth connected to frequent flyer programs (Tuzovic, 2010), as well as customer frustration tendencies and response in a retail setting (Van Steenburg, Spears & Fabrize, 2013). However, these studies have not dealt with what the customer frustrations in frequent flyer programs are and how to manage them.

The reason for choosing to focus on the airline sector in this thesis is because it is one of the most common industries where loyalty programs are implemented (Colloquy, 2015). In order to put the topic into context and enable the interviewees to relate to the subject, the authors have chosen the case of SAS EuroBonus, since the program is the largest loyalty program in the Nordic countries (Flysas, 2016a).

Given the absence of literature on this topic, the authors believe that the concept of customer frustration and the customer satisfaction construct within a frequent flyer program setting, are worth an independent study. This study will attempt to examine and understand the concept of frustration linked with frequent flyer programs, to get more in-depth knowledge about the concept of frustration for members within the SAS EuroBonus program and provide implications for practitioners and researchers. Further, the authors also want to investigate if the previous assumptions about the customer satisfaction construct are true, using the case study of SAS EuroBonus.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and identify, what incidents cause frustration for members within the SAS EuroBonus program. The authors’ goal is to tap into customer frustration as well as different types of sensations and the underlying incidents that create these sensations. This study will further investigate, what impacts customer frustrations can exert on program members’ behaviour towards the SAS EuroBonus program. Further, this research will examine the customer satisfaction construct in regard to the SAS EuroBonus program.

This study will take a consumer perspective, since it is important to understand what customers are looking for and what they value in customer relations of service firms (Grönroos, 1984), in order to identify and manage frustration in SAS EuroBonus customer base.

Furthermore, by succeeding in delivering the purpose of this thesis, the authors wish to make theoretical contributions with insights related to customer frustration and the customer satisfaction construct, not only to the company SAS, but companies with frequent flyer programs constructed in the same manner.
1.4 Research Questions

- *Which are the frustration incidents within the SAS EuroBonus program?*
- *What are the customer frustration sensations within the SAS EuroBonus program?*
- *What responses do frustrations bring on program members’ behaviour towards the SAS EuroBonus program?*

1.5 Delimitations

This thesis is constrained by a number of delimitations. The authors merely chose to focus on customer frustration within frequent flyer programs, using the SAS EuroBonus program as a case study. Due to this decision, conclusions cannot be generalized to all frequent flyer programs, since the programs can differ a lot in regard to the construct. The conclusions regarding frustration theory might not be applicable to loyalty programs within other business sectors than the airline industry. The authors chose to conduct interviews with program members that have reached the tier-level of Silver or above. Thus, conclusions about members from the basic Member level cannot be made.

Further on, the emphasis of this thesis is on customer frustration and not other types of negative emotional responses, which may arise between a customer and a loyalty program. The decision to focus on what the frustrations incidents are, what the frustration sensations are and what these frustrations bring on program members’ behaviour toward the service provider, was made to narrow the scope of the research. Because of this scope, insights about other types of negative emotions cannot be obtained. The authors chose this course of study out of curiosity about the topic and an intention to help improve standards of the field, by revealing relevant and previously unknown findings.
2 Frame of Reference

This chapter starts by providing the reader with an overview and understanding of how the parts of the Theoretical Framework are connected. Furthermore, relevant existing literature related to the customer satisfaction construct, negative emotions, customer frustration, the general frustration model, loyalty programs and frequent flyer programs are presented. To conclude, the authors provide a motivation for the research.

2.1 Introduction to The Theoretical Framework

The research questions presented in this study are linked to theoretical concepts that can be found, which concern frustration incidents, what they are, and the behaviour arising as a result of these incidents. Thus, it is relevant to incorporate and review the academic literature about frustration to understand the context of this thesis.

The customer satisfaction construct is a measure used to explain customers’ emotions toward a brand. These emotions can be categorized either as positive or negative (Söderlund, 2003). However, in order to relate to the topic of frustration, negative emotions need to be further explained (Tronvoll, 2011). Moreover, the general frustration model is used in order to explain frustration incidents, sensations and behaviour. To place the topic of frustration into context, the authors believe that the concept of loyalty programs is a vital part of this study (Stauss et al., 2005). Lastly, since the topic of this thesis is related to the airline industry, it is important to provide information about the loyalty programs of this sector, namely frequent flyer programs (Terblanche, 2014).

The relevant parts of this thesis are reviewed in this theoretical frame of reference, an overview of the subjects that will be further discussed is provided below in figure 2.1.
2.2 Customer Satisfaction Construct

The importance of customer satisfaction, has been evident for companies for years. According to Yüksel and Rimmington (1998), customer satisfaction can be defined as “a post-consumption evaluative judgment concerning a product or a service” (p.61). Customer satisfaction is seen as a vital factor in order to gain retention and loyalty from customers, but also in achieving goals and revenue (Reichheld, 1996; Scheuing, 1995). Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) mention previous research, which indicates that satisfaction can be measured by only a single scale, ranging from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied. However, Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) argue the opposite and claim that satisfaction should be measured by different emotions, expectations and behaviours concerning the relationship with the company.

In marketing, marketers have been warned that it is important not to focus too much on the pre-purchase phases of the consumer’s decision-making process, but instead put more effort into consumption activities. The consumption activities may involve many different emotions, both positive and negative. Thus, it is problematic that the true emotions felt by a customer, when consuming a product or service may not be captured when using constructs such as customer satisfaction (Söderlund, 2003). Companies
often use the customer satisfaction construct when conducting research, to find out the level of satisfaction and loyalty within their customer base. What the companies often fail to acknowledge, is that even though a customer answer satisfied, on a scale from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied, the risk of customers defecting from a company’s service can still be high (Jones, 1996). Most companies conducting surveys using the customer satisfaction construct receive mainly positive responses. However, the fact is that even though the majority of the customers answer satisfied or even completely satisfied, many still switch brands and break up relationships with their current brand (Stauss & Neuhaus, 1997).

Furthermore, using satisfaction and dissatisfaction when conducting studies may not give proper responses to what the customers are actually feeling. One of the most common ways to explain customer complaint behaviour is to use the term dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1997). Dissatisfaction arises when the perceived expectation is higher than the actual customer experience and is built on disconfirmation theory. However, customer complaints do not always tend to be explained as a dissatisfaction and therefore, the term negative emotions is more sufficient to use (Singh & Pandya, 1991). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not uniform feelings. Satisfaction can be related with both resigned agreement and happy confidence; meanwhile dissatisfaction can be disappointment or angry protest. Even though satisfaction is seen as a positive feeling and dissatisfaction as a negative, a company cannot automatically assume that the customer is being only positive or negative towards the company (Stauss & Neuhaus, 1997).

2.3 Negative Emotions

An emotion is defined as “any short-term evaluative, affective, intentional, psychological state, including happiness, sadness, disgust, and other inner feelings” (Colman, 2008, p. 283). Emotions can be categorized as either positive or negative, as mentioned, this study focuses on the latter. Söderlund (2003), emphasize on the fact that customers encountering (frustration incidents) with a service may cause several emotions to arise (frustration sensation), which will ultimately result in customer responses (frustration behaviour) towards the service. Thus, when an incident takes place, customers will experience individual feelings and these individual emotions will cause individual responses to arise, which is how the customer actually behaves (Söderlund, 2003).

It is more likely for customers to establish loyal relationships to a provider of a service if they have a positive emotional response concerning employees of the service (Liljander & Strandvik, 1995). On the contrary, the assumption is that negative emotional responses concerning employees; will lead to unfavourable effects for the relation towards a service provider. It is concluded that there is evidence indicating that positive emotions does not have as strong effect on a service experience as negative emotions have (Liljander and Strandvik, 1997).

Negative emotions are the most complex type of emotions and can take form as for example: irritation, frustration, anger, dissatisfaction, fear, anxiety, worry, hate, rage, shame, sadness and unhappiness (Tronvoll, 2011; Stauss et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2003; Wetzer et al., 2007). As addressed by Stauss et al. (2005), Söderlund (2003) and Oliver (1997), previous studies has mainly focused on dissatisfaction, although there are a
number of other negative emotions that also needs to be taken into consideration, when evaluating the performance of loyalty programs. However most marketers have adopted the construct of satisfaction to evaluate customers’ emotional responses to products and services, which has lead to other emotions being bypassed (Söderlund, 2003).

Further on, it is important to understand that emotions and the actual outcomes of these emotions are individual, dependent on how a person perceives an incident. Therefore, the same situation may trigger different responses depending on the individual, which is exposed to the incident (Rosenzweig, 1938; Söderlund, 2003; Van Steenburg et al., 2013).

Since it is indicated that the construct of satisfaction conceal negative emotions (Stauss et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2003), it is suggested to focus more on customer frustration. It is of great importance for companies to get to the bottom of this problem, in order to manage types of negative emotions. Although there are several negative emotions that should be further studied in regard to customer feelings and responses, this study will focus on frustration.

2.4 Customer Frustration

In past research it has been argued that the construct of using and focusing on customer satisfaction to evaluate companies performance, and in this case loyalty programs, is concealing the fact that negative emotions exists (Söderlund, 2003; Stauss et. al., 2005). Therefore researchers as Söderlund (2003), Stauss et al. (2005), Tuzovic (2010) and Van Steenburg et al. (2013) have chosen to broaden their focus to various kinds of negative emotions that could give a deeper understanding to customer behaviour; one of them is customer frustration.

According to Colman (2008), frustration is defined as “The blocking or prevention of a potentially rewarding or satisfying act or sequence of behaviour; or the emotional response to such hindrance” (p. 345). It has previously been reviewed that frustration is a negative emotion where a person experience strongly felt dissatisfaction (Tuzovic, 2010; Stauss et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2003). Customer frustration includes three main elements, namely frustration incident, frustration sensation and frustration behaviour (Stäcker, 1977; Stauss et al., 2005), which will be explained thoroughly in the part “The General Frustration Model”. Guchait and Namasivayam (2012) put further emphasis on frustration as a consequence of obstacles that people face through the process of obtaining a goal. Therefore, frustration occurs not only due to failure of reaching a goal, thus, it is more probable to experience frustration for individuals who feel that a situation is out of their control or unjust.

The construct of frustration is of certain importance when discussing the subject of loyalty programs, since these programs are constructed in a way where customers are promised benefits or rewards if behaving loyal towards the company. Consequently, frustration might occur if the promised benefits and rewards are not obtained or proved worthless (Stauss et al., 2005).
2.5 The General Frustration Model

To further understand the process of customer frustration, one need to explain the general frustration model developed by Stauss et al. (2005). *Frustration incident, frustration sensation* and *frustration behaviour* are the three elements of frustration that can be distinguished (Britt and Janus, 1940; Stäcker, 1977).

A frustration incident can be seen as a withdrawal of a positive confirmation or as a confirmation that happened recently and that is followed by a non-confirmation (Stäcker, 1977; Smith and Ellsworth, 1985). Thus, frustration develops from having an expectation of a certain reward or goal being blocked, hence resulting in frustration. Different frustration incidents have been distinguished in frustration research (Stäcker, 1977). In a business context three types of arrangements of frustration can be noticed: *postponement of reward, refusal of reward* and *reduction of reward*. Postponement of reward refers to the reward being offered later than promised, refusal of reward refers to the reward being completely withheld from the consumer and reduction of reward refers to the reward being withdrawn to some extent (Stauss et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the frustration-aggression hypothesis states that frustrating incidents, automatically lead to aggressive behaviour, in that customers take action (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowerr & Sears, 1939). Berkowitz (1989) however, argues the opposite and claims that frustrating incidents not necessarily leads to aggressive behaviour, but evokes frustration sensation. The frustration sensation is a negative emotion that can be portrayed as very unpleasant. This negative emotion causes high arousal and attention towards the incident causing the emotion (Smith and Ellsworth, 1985).

After frustration sensation follows frustration behaviour, which involves the actions of the frustration sensation. This behaviour aims to eliminate or lessen the negative feeling (Berkowitz, 1989). Most common is that frustration behaviour is directed towards the object that is considered responsible for causing the frustration (Harriman, 1961). However, people or objects that is not responsible for the problem can be targeted by this behaviour (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

*Protest, intensification of effort* and *avoidance* are three ways these actions can be presented in. Protest is one form of aggressive behaviour and has been a vital topic of psychological frustration research for a long time (Dollard et al., 1939; Miller, Sears, Mowerr, Doob & Dollard, 1941; Alcock, 1994). According to this theory, a consequence of the aversive emotion could be an aggressive activity that is formed to eliminate or to break through the frustrating barrier. Activities like these include a lot of things such as physical violence, verbal punishment, protests and thoughts of revenge. Another action could be an intensification of managing with the problem. Energy is produced as a result of the emotional activation, which is later used to overcome the frustrating barrier. In this case, compensatory reactions are created to be able to achieve the goals possible, when the expected performance fails (Stäcker, 1977). The last action is avoidance and works as a collective term for different withdrawal behaviour. It is common that individuals use avoidance in order to escape situations, which consequently leads to frustration. This behaviour can be seen as both passive and active. When passive, the character withdraws or refuses and when active the individual develops a strategy to achieve the goal and reduce or eliminate the frustrating conditions (Stäcker, 1977).
The intensity of frustration sensation depends on four different factors: the extent of the reward, the time of the withdrawal, the expectation of the reward withdrawal and the perceived deliberateness of the reward withdrawal (Stäcker 1977; Stauss et al., 2005).

**The General Frustration Model, Stauss et al., 2005 p. 236**

### 2.6 Loyalty Programs

Customer relationship management (CRM), is an approach for managing marketing efforts, which is based on the principle that loyal customers are more profitable than non-loyal customers. In accordance with this principle, the most effective way to achieve customer loyalty is through customer relationships (Dowling, 2004). Companies are using several marketing tactics to reach out to customers. When competition increases, relationship marketing becomes of utmost importance to develop sustainable long-term relationships with customers. Relationship marketing has been implemented in various industries and is especially important in the service industry (Grönroos, 1998; Dowling, 2004).

Loyalty programs are often a part of a company’s CRM strategy. It is a marketing tool, invented to reward purchasing behaviour in various forms (Uncles, Dowling & Hammond, 2003; Kievetz & Simonson, 2002). The goal of a loyalty program is as the name indicates, to increase the customer’s willingness to stay loyal towards a company by offering financial and relationship based rewards to members (Uncles et al., 2003). The loyalty program strategy has been widely adopted by companies in various business sectors (Uncles et al., 2003; Kievetz & Simonson, 2002; Stauss et al., 2005; Yi & Jeon, 2003).

The objective of loyalty programs implemented by companies is to encourage consumer spending, thus increasing sales revenues (Uncles et al., 2003). Further on, a business hopes to develop a strong connection between customers and the brand, to retain current customers but also grow the size of the customer base. Companies invest in these kinds of programs with the belief that it will have a positive outcome, namely raising profit (Uncles et al., 2003; Yi & Jeon, 2003). Loyalty programs can also be used to raise the switching costs for customers. This is effective for companies since previous studies indicate that it is less expensive to retain customers than to acquire new ones (Kievetz & Simonson, 2002; Grönroos, 1998; Söderlund, 2001).
The first modern type of loyalty program was launched by American Airlines (AA) in 1981. The program’s goal was to grow the repeat purchase rate by using a reward structure. This launch led to a number of similar loyalty programs being established within several sectors (McCall & Voorhees, 2009). One of these sectors was the airline industry, where frequent flyer programs almost became a prerequisite for being able to stay competitive (O’Malley, 1998).

The structure of loyalty programs is often based on tier-levels, where members of the program are segmented into different groups, depending on members’ frequency of purchasing (McCall & Voorhees, 2009). Marketers are fully aware of human behaviour, therefore the structure of the loyalty programs with different tier-levels make use of members’ desire for status, recognition and feeling of being superior. It has been concluded that it is more effective for a loyalty program to have at least three tier-levels, to encourage customers to strive for reaching higher levels (Drèze & Nunes, 2009). The tiers of many loyalty programs can be connected to the Pareto principle, the 80:20 rule, which propose that a small proportion of the customers accounts for a large proportion of a business’ revenue (Pareto, 1897; Peppers & Rogers, 1999).

Even though loyalty programs are perceived to generate benefits for both customers and companies, it has been argued that when loyalty programs become a commodity within a sector they are not as effective, and some authors such as Sharp and Sharp (1997) and Shugan (2005) have questioned the use of loyalty programs.

2.7 Frequent Flyer Program

A frequent flyer program is a loyalty program connected to an airline. The program is constructed in a way where customers spend money to earn points, miles or discounts (Terblanche, 2014). A frequent flyer program’s goal is to increase consumer demand for airline companies that offer such programs, but also enhance the value of the products and services the airline offers (Kopalle & Neslin, 2003; Nako, 1992). Due to the airline industry’s competitive market, a loyalty program is a common offer since it creates a competitive equilibrium. The most common benefit of a loyalty program for a company is that it results in profitable customers and an ability to encourage repurchase behaviour (Liu, 2007). Furthermore, the program increases the switching costs for customers that are members, since changing to another program will result in loss of points, levels and discounts (Gómez et al., 2006; Kim, Shi, & Srinivasan, 2001; Palmer & Beggs, 1998).

The construct of the program is simple. Members of the program are rewarded for their loyalty to the company by receiving points that can later be used. How many points that are collected is mainly dependent on the distance and class of the travel. Further on, free miles and points can be collected through global partners to the company by using their services, for example car rentals and hotels (Terblanche, 2014). A way of collecting points that have become a major source in the frequent flyer programs, are the use of co-branded credit and debit cards. The member collects points every time the card is used. This promote more frequent travelling but also customer loyalty (Liu & Brock, 2009). All these points can be redeemed for class upgrades, free air travel and other benefits such as priority boarding, priority baggage handling and other goods and services (Terblanche, 2014).
According to O’Brien and Jones (1995), there are five aspects that create benefits for a member of a frequent flyer program. The first one is the cash value of a reward, which is the relation between the cost of the flight ticket and the points collected from that purchase. The second benefit is the multiple options of rewards, for example; class upgrades and flight options. The third benefit is the possibility to travel for free and the fourth benefit concerns the likelihood of attaining a reward. The fifth benefit is the user friendliness of the program.

Mimouni-Chaabane and Volle (2010) have divided benefits the customers gain from loyalty programs into three categories; utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits and symbolic benefits. Utilitarian benefits concern convenience and monetary savings, which concerns how much money the customer saves (Bolton, Lemon & Verhoef, 2004), but also the reduction of searching for other alternatives (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Hedonic benefits include exploration and entertainment aspects, which can concern the possibility to experience new places and the hope for future events to be positive (Terblanche, 2014). The last benefits are the symbolic benefits, which concern recognition and social aspects. This is mainly shown by the higher service that members gain than non-members (Beatty, Mayer, Coleman, Reynolds & Lee, 1996; Csikszentmmihalyi, 2000), but also the feeling of being a part of a more exclusive group of people (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001).

2.8 Motivation for Research

The academic literature on customer satisfaction and customer dissatisfaction is vast. However, available literature is limited, when the scope is narrowed down to customer frustration. Available literature related to the subject, is mostly focused on the established customer satisfaction construct, which is mainly because this construct conceals negative emotions. Therefore, the construct is not providing proper insights in regard to customer response, towards services and products (Söderlund, 2003).

Despite the lack of quantitative data in the field of research connected to this thesis, some qualitative studies still examined parts of this topic. Stauss et al. (2005) and Söderlund (2003), discuss that there are several frustration incidents, which lead to individual feelings, experienced by customers (frustration sensation) and ultimately cause different customer responses. Thus, the importance of not only focusing on dissatisfaction is emphasized by referring to the general frustration model. In order to apply these theoretical concepts and make them more comprehensible, the means of researching about the frequent flyer program SAS EuroBonus, is incorporated throughout the study. The concept of emotions is very complex, since feelings and response to incidents are individual (Tronvoll, 2011). The academic body on the subject of loyalty programs studied from various perspectives is also extensive, yet the chosen frequent flyer program has not been directly investigated from the viewpoint of customer frustration.

Finally, the authors are provided with a lens to interpret and analyse the empirical findings through the studied theories and literature. To be more specific, previous literature on the general frustration model was the benchmark for formulating both research questions and interview questions. Further on, the literature was used to distinguish between empirical findings and previous research, which was done to bring
clarity and find similarities and dissimilarities between the collected empirical data and previous literature.
3 Industry Information

In this chapter, the authors provide relevant industry information, to provide the reader with necessary understanding of the company and frequent flyer bonus program chosen for this study.

3.1 SAS

Scandinavian Airlines is a part of the Star Alliance and is the largest Nordic airline company, which has mostly focused their business offer toward business travellers. SAS went through a crisis, where threats of bankruptcy lead to cut-downs within the company. Therefore a repositioning of the brand was needed to turn the situation around (BLINK, 2016). The new target group of SAS is internally referred to as the travel class, which consist of consumers who travel more frequently than others (at least ten one-way trips per year) and value time efficient and easy travel (BLINK, 2016; SAS Group, 2016; Björnström, 2013). The core strength of SAS business model is that the company offer more departures and destinations than any other Nordic airline (SAS Group, 2016).

3.2 SAS EuroBonus

SAS EuroBonus is Scandinavian Airlines frequent flyer bonus program, which was launched in 1992 (Flysas, 2008). The EuroBonus program is developed for the company’s customers, which are frequent travellers with SAS and their cooperation partners. EuroBonus is the largest loyalty program in the Nordic countries. By being a part of the EuroBonus program; members can collect bonus points on flights, hotel stays, car rentals and everyday purchases. A membership in EuroBonus is free of charge and gives the member’s access to various offers and benefits (Flysas, 2016a). In the latest year-end report from SAS Group (2015), it was stated that half of SAS’s passenger revenue originates from the 4.2 million members of the EuroBonus program and the number of members rose by 14 per cent during 2015.

Members of the program can collect two different types of points, basic and extra. Both types can be used to redeem various offers and are valid up to five years (Flysas, 2016b). There is also the possibility of combining the EuroBonus card with a credit card, MasterCard or American Express (AMEX). By doing so, members can collect extra points on purchases made with their card (Flysas, 2016c). The basic points collected by the member is later the foundation for the different membership levels within the program. If a member have earned the required number of basic points or travelled the required number of one-way flights within a 12-month period they are automatically upgraded to the next level of the program.

The EuroBonus program consists of four tier-levels; Member, Silver, Gold and Diamond. Some benefits are mutual no matter which tier-level a member has, nevertheless all of the different tier-levels come with various privileges such as special offers and discounts from SAS and other partners. Some of these benefits are; business check-in, fast track security checks, access to lounges, free extra baggage and extended point validity (Flysas, 2016d). All information of the EuroBonus levels benefits and offers can be found in Appendix (Figure 3.1).
Furthermore, there are two membership levels of the EuroBonus program that are not mentioned on SAS website, namely Pandion and Lifetime Gold. This is done to create more exclusivity and secrecy around the program. The only way to attain the Pandion level is by receiving a personal invitation from the company’s CEO, which is only sent out to the Gold members, who have the highest contribution to SAS turnover (Augustsson, 2013). The Lifetime Gold membership is awarded to SAS most loyal customers. The criteria to achieve Lifetime Gold is that the member should have been at the Gold tier-level of the program for at least ten years and should have turned 60 years old (Hermele, 2009).
4 Method

The following chapter presents the reader with the methodology chosen for this thesis. The authors argue for the choices made and why the chosen approaches are appropriate for this specific study.

4.1 Scientific Philosophy

When it comes to research methods there are several philosophies concerning research such as, interpretivism, positivism, realism and pragmatism (Saunders, Thornhill & Lewis, 2009). The research for this thesis was guided using the interpretivist philosophy.

4.1.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a philosophy, which stress the importance of understanding humans and their differences and uses them as a foundation in theory (Goldkuhl, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). The interpretivist view does not focus on conducting research on objects, but rather on people. Context repetitively changes and people are always interpreting them, this is the main distinctive factor for using the interpretivist view. This philosophy cannot, in the same way as natural science, be investigated using only data (Saunders et al., 2009). When implementing the interpretive philosophy, empirical data are gathered in a natural setting and a qualitative method, such as interviews, is often used. However, quantitative techniques can still be used as a base for the study. Due to the uniqueness and complexity of human and marketing resource management, interpretivism is a recommended approach (Saunders et al., 2009).

This study is viewed from a consumer perspective, meaning it involves people, thus this study concerns social science. The authors tried to understand the reality of members of the SAS EuroBonus program and analyse it using the lens of some theoretical constructs. Furthermore, the authors used interviews as a qualitative data gathering approach in order to gather in-depth data. The abductive approach was used in order to bring understanding and discover patterns (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Because of this, the interpretivist philosophy was deemed appropriate to be used to interpret the data collected from the interviews. The information gained from the interviews was interpreted and not simply accepted by the authors, which made interpretivism an appropriate approach for this research. Moreover, because of the interpretivist view, the authors gained insights of frustration from the members’ point of view, which resulted in deeper understanding of customer frustration in a frequent flyer program setting.

4.2 Scientific Approach

Deductive, inductive and abductive are three research approaches that describe how a research assignment relates to theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). The research approach chosen for this thesis was abductive.

4.2.1 Abductive Approach

Abduction is commonly used in research processes based on case studies. The abductive approach focuses on gaining understanding of a single case by using proposed overall patterns. The data is collected in order to explore and analyse possible patterns, thus resulting in new theory or modification of existing theory. After collecting the empirical
data, the interpretation should further be supported by new case observations to be fully abductive. The abductive approach possesses characteristics from both the inductive and deductive approach. The data is collected before the theory is formed, just like the inductive approach. However, the abductive approach does not reject theoretical preconceptions, which calls for a deductive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

This research used prior theoretical building blocks, such as the general frustration model (Stauss et al., 2005) and the satisfaction construct (Söderlund, 2003), and applied these theoretical constructs to the understanding about the members of the SAS EuroBonus program. The authors collected and analysed information and empirical data from a single case study, before drawing conclusions. This provided insights to this research and added knowledge to existing theories, which calls for an abductive approach. In order to allow for a full abductive approach, further research on this specific topic needs to be completed. The authors made assumptions after collecting data and investigating and concluding the research. Lastly, since the authors showed understanding for previous theories, this calls for an abductive approach.

4.3 Research Method

As for research methods, there are two different approaches to choose from, qualitative and quantitative. The main difference between these two methods is that the quantitative one deals with data in a numerical format and qualitative deals with data in a word format (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The method chosen for this thesis was qualitative.

4.3.1 Qualitative Research

As previously discussed, qualitative research can be connected to the interpretivist philosophy and the abductive approach. The goal of qualitative research is to understand factors such as values, actions, incentives, thoughts, and what oversees these. Further on, qualitative research has the goal of understanding the society as a whole. Qualitative research samples are often of a smaller size than those of quantitative research, since qualitative research discovers the what, when, how, who, and why in a certain study. The fact that the samples are smaller in qualitative studies leads to findings that are usually stated as suggestions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The researcher further attempts to contextualize the perspective of the subjects chosen for the study, which connects with social science (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

The authors believed that a qualitative approach would be the most suitable option for this thesis, since qualitative research aims to dig deeply to uncover some patterns or insights, rather than testing hypotheses. The content of this qualitative research is presented in a word format, opposed to the quantitative approach that is presented in a numerical format. Interviews was the most suitable and effective option for gathering data for this research since the authors were able to collect more insightful data on the topic of customer frustration. Further, it allowed the subjects to speak more freely and openly in contrast to quantitative methods, which was important to be able to answer the research questions of this thesis. The sample of the study was small in order for the answers to be insightful and since the authors aimed for uncovering deep insights and qualitative patterns of the researched subject. Furthermore, a qualitative approach was most suitable in order to answer the research questions of this thesis since it was in a “what and which” format.
4.4 Research Strategy

The conclusion of choosing a methodological approach is preceded by selecting a certain strategy. The most common research strategies comprise case study and survey (Saunders et al., 2009). When conducting research for this thesis, the authors utilized a case study to yield interesting results.

4.4.1 Case Study

To investigate and understand a social phenomenon, a case study is a useful tool since it addresses multiple sources of evidence. A case study can be achieved by both either qualitative or quantitative research approaches. The most common approach is a qualitative way, which is used to gain deeper understanding of the subject matter being investigated. However, quantitative methods can be used to achieve a broader view (Williamson & Bow, 2002). As stated by Williamson & Bow (2002), the case study strategy is most preferable when there is little information about how a phenomenon occurs, and is less useful when there is a lot of information about it. Some well-known techniques for case studies are questionnaires, observations and interviews. Case studies are suitable within different scientific philosophies, namely positivism and interpretivism (Williamson & Bow, 2002). A case study is a good way to gain a deeper understanding of a situation (Morris & Wood, 1991) and it is important to choose a relevant industry where the research can take place in (Williamson & Bow, 2002). Questions that can be answered with a case study are usually of a “why” character; however, “how” and “what” can also be connected with this strategy (Yin, 2009).

In order to answer the research questions, which are all of “what” and “which” natures, the authors decided to choose a single case study. The case study focused on investigating members of SAS EuroBonus program that had reached the tier-level of Silver member or higher. The aim of the study was to investigate what kinds of frustrations customers dealt with and what the preceding behaviour was. Furthermore, the authors wanted to make contribution in the knowledge about consumer behaviour and marketing to airline companies with similar programs, with a special focus on the case of SAS and how frustrations can be handled.

The reason for choosing a loyalty program within the airline sector is mainly because it is a well-established industry and the frequent flyer programs have been adopted in the industry for a very long time (Colloquy, 2015). Furthermore, indications have shown that some kind of negative emotion towards these frequent flyer programs do exist (Söderlund, 2003; Tuzovic, 2013). The environment for airline companies is very competitive and there is a constant need for gaining customer loyalty (Jeppsson & Wilson, 2015). SAS EuroBonus program is the largest frequent flyer program in the Nordic countries (Flysas, 2016b). Since the authors wanted to gain valuable insights from customers, the authors found it appropriate to choose a single case study, to help subjects relate and get the specific topic of this thesis into context. Therefore, the SAS EuroBonus program was a suitable case to consider for this study.

4.5 Sample Selection

When utilizing research there are several different approaches for selecting a sample, which are categorized either as probability or non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling does not have to be statistically grounded, to allow for some
generalizations of the conclusion. Non-probability methods can be quota, judgmental, convenience and snowball sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). This thesis used judgmental and snowball sampling.

4.5.1 Judgmental and Snowball Sampling

The process of choosing the subjects that are most suitable for the specific research is called judgmental sampling and is generally used in small samples, for example case studies (Saunders et al., 2009). Snowball sampling is where subjects are found through asking previous subjects for suggestions of suitable candidates. It is used when it is of utmost importance to reach out to candidates who have experience of the phenomenon, which is being researched (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

The reason for choosing judgmental sampling in this thesis was because the authors’ criteria for this study was to find customers that were a Silver member or higher of SAS EuroBonus program. This was done to make sure that the customer was to some extent loyal towards the brand. Moreover, the subjects needed to have travelled by air during the past 12 months. Only subjects qualified for these criteria were chosen.

One of the most important criteria when choosing candidates to interview was that they had to be members of the EuroBonus program. Therefore the authors used snowball sampling to further extend and reach out to subjects who fulfilled this criterion. This was done through asking previous subjects for recommendations of suitable candidates. Thus, two subjects were contacted by the help from previous subjects and therefore fell under the snowball sampling method.

The authors’ decision to choose subjects that were members of the EuroBonus program but also on the Silver level or higher, anchored in two arguments. Firstly, in order for the authors to obtain thorough and useful responses, the subjects needed to understand the process of the program and also had encountered some kind of problems that had resulted in negative emotions. It was evident that a subject would not give clear responses if he or she were not a member of the program, which this thesis is investigating. The second argument, for choosing Silver members or higher lied in the fact that the purpose of this thesis was to tap into what kind of frustrations that were present within the EuroBonus program. In order for the authors to achieve a deeper level of understanding of the frustrations that occur, it was important that the members had been in the program for a while and were aware of the benefits that the program could bring.

All of above mentioned criteria were important in order for the authors to collect rich and reliable empirical data. The criteria can be seen below:

- Member level - Silver or higher
- Travelled by air during the past 12 months

4.6 Data Collection

Data collection consists of the gathering of both secondary and primary data. Secondary data collection refers to the re-analysis of previous research and primary data concerns data collection of an empirical nature (Saunders et al., 2009). Primary data are those collected using strategies such as interviews and focus groups (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Secondary data help answer the research questions partially meanwhile primary data
support these findings to conclude the purpose of the research (Saunders et al., 2009). Analysis of secondary data can generate background type of information, and pave the way for research based on primary data. Interviews were the strategy of primary data gathering chosen for this study. Further on, a description will follow, to explain how the authors collected information for this thesis.

4.6.1 Primary Data

The primary data of this thesis was collected by undertaking interviews conducted with twelve members of the SAS EuroBonus program. At this point the authors had enough empirical data, to achieve a respectable analysis. The subjects were all Silver members or higher in the program in order to acknowledge new frustration from a more loyal customer base, but also someone that is an active member and flies on a regular basis. These criteria were important to be fulfilled in order to collect the most representative and reliable empirical data. Due to limitation of time, a cross sectional study was constructed, which means that all the subjects were compared and observed at the same point in time (Saunders et al., 2009).

A large amount of the interviews were conducted over a phone call or Skype due to the distance between the authors and the subjects. The interviews were each approximately 30-45 minutes long. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed in order for the authors to analyse them in the most effective way. Although the authors are fluent in English, Swedish is the native language of them and the subjects. Therefore the interviews were held in Swedish in order for the subjects to feel comfortable and be able to express themselves properly. Further on, the data presented in this thesis is in English as all information and quotes from the interviews were translated directly to minimize misinterpretations.

4.6.1.1 Interview List

All of the interviews were conducted in April and May 2016. In order for anonymity to be provided for the subjects, their real names were not revealed in the thesis. The subjects and information regarding their SAS EuroBonus membership are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Length of Membership</th>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Member other FFP</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 1</td>
<td>SM1</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16-04-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 2</td>
<td>SM2</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16-04-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 3</td>
<td>SM3</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16-04-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 4</td>
<td>SM4</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16-04-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 5</td>
<td>SM5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Completely Satisfied</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16-04-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Member 6</td>
<td>SM6</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16-04-24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.2 Literature Search

The main literature sources that were used to research the topic of this thesis and address various aspects of the frustration process and the satisfaction construct, were Stauss et al. (2005) and Söderlund (2003). To elaborate on the subjects’ perceived benefits of the frequent flyer program, the main source used were Terblanche (2014). The journal articles were found using search phrases such as “customer frustration within loyalty programs”, “customer frustration” and “customer satisfaction”. The articles were found using electronic search engines such as Google Scholar, Scopus and Jönköping University library’s search engine, Primo. Another useful source when finding articles were the reference list from the main articles that were already found. Further on, an approach the authors found useful was to discover which articles that had cited the main literature sources used in this thesis. By using these sources, the authors knew that the topic would be similar to the already known articles and also discover new relevant articles. The authors read and analysed the articles found in order to categorize which articles that were most useful and pertinent to the subject. The theory chapter was focused around customer satisfaction, customer frustration, the general frustration model, and loyalty programs in order to provide a broader view of the topic and further on narrow it down to the problem found.

Examples of search phrases were: *Customer frustration within loyalty programs*, *customer frustration, customer satisfaction, customer dissatisfaction, loyalty programs, general frustration model, frustration, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, customer frustration within loyalty schemes, loyalty schemes, frustration theory and frequent flyer program.*

Furthermore, it is important to mention that the authors needed to use information, which could not be found in previous literature. Therefore industry sources, such as the SAS website, was used to gain insights and to collect information about SAS frequent flyer program but also the company in general.

### 4.7 Interviews

When conducting interviews there are three different types to choose from and these are structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Semi-structured interview was chosen in order to conduct the interviews for this research.
4.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

In semi-structured interviews it is important to let the subjects have the freedom to answer freely. The questions are not all prepared beforehand, some are, and follow no specific order. Furthermore there is room for improvised questioning if necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2005).

For this research, the authors chose to construct semi-structured interviews in order for the questions to cover the main topics, but still encourage discussions. When using semi-structured interviews, the data collected were easier analysed and compared, but still allowed for new findings. Furthermore, since the subjects were allowed to answer more openly and freely, new material and findings were found, which added more in-depth knowledge to the research. The authors did not conduct structured interviews, since it would not allow for new findings. Moreover, unstructured interviews were not chosen, in order to keep the focus of the topic. The questions were formed by the help from the general frustration model, to ensure that all steps from incidents to behaviour were covered. In order to construct the interview questionnaire, the model was used to make sure the authors designed questions, which were in line with the purpose of this thesis.

4.7.2 Storytelling

Storytelling is a method used when conducting interviews. The story that is being told by the subject may represent his or her own experiences and relate primarily to the ideology of the storyteller (Belk, 2006). Storytelling plays a crucial role in qualitative research, where it serves as a tool of learning how customers feel about services, goods and companies (Flanagan, 1954; Levy, 1981; Zaltman, 1997).

In order for the authors to understand the emotions that the customers within the SAS EuroBonus program were feeling, storytelling was used when conducting the interviews. By using storytelling, the authors could dig deeper into the problem of customer frustration by analysing the subjects’ own narratives, scenarios and feelings. This was a helpful tool for the authors, to gain reliable and insightful findings.

4.7.3 Developing the Interview Guide

How the interview questions are formulated is a critical success factor for the research. When developing the semi-structured interview questions, it is important to divide the questions into interview themes that will later simplify the possibility of answering the research questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

When developing the interview guide (see Appendix 8.2), the authors looked at previous research about similar topics to find out what questions would be most suitable to ask. However, the authors did not find any previous interview guide suitable for this research. Instead, the authors developed an interview guide with the general frustration model as a foundation. The interview started by asking the subjects shorter questions to get an overall perception of the subjects and basic information about their memberships. The subjects were also asked to answer how satisfied they were with the EuroBonus program. This was done to test the customer satisfaction construct and see if the satisfaction level of the subjects corresponded to their true emotions towards the program.
Furthermore, the authors wanted to understand what perception the subjects had about SAS and SAS EuroBonus, to find out how strong this connection was and if subjects perceived them as one unit. Some questions were used to give the authors a perception about how involved the subjects were in the program and if they were aware of the possible benefits that could be gained. In order to stay neutral, both positive and negative aspects were brought up. However the key focus lied in the negative aspects since the authors wished to tap into frustration and specific incidents, sensations and behaviour linked to this. Therefore the storytelling approach was used to gain in-depth insights and understanding of the sequence of events, from incidents to behaviour. Further, it was important for the authors to find out which expectations the subjects had of the program, in order to evaluate if these expectations had not been fulfilled, hence resulting in frustration.

4.8 Data Analysis

When analysing qualitative data, one recommendation is to analyse it through the help of conceptualisation (Saunders et al., 2005), which was the method chosen to analyse this study.

4.8.1 Conceptualisation

By applying the theoretical framework with the primary data, conceptualisation is achieved. The collection from a qualitative research results in non-standardised data. Because of this, classification into categories is required. Data can be grouped into different processes. First, the data can be collected and then summarised. Secondly, it can be categorised. Thirdly, conclusions can be drawn based on the primary data collected and the theoretical framework (Saunders et al, 2005; Collis & Hussey, 2014).

Due to the qualitative nature of this thesis, the data were collected, summarised and categorised in order to arrive at a conclusion. Categorisation was performed in order to find similarities between the subjects, thus not to generalize from the findings. The general frustration model was used when analysing the results from the interviews to compare and make sense of the empirical data. The authors identified key patterns between the subjects, which helped outline valid conclusions.

4.9 Quality Criteria

Construct validity, reliability and internal and external validity are four appropriate quality measurements for research (Yin, 2009). Construct validity focuses on if what is being claimed as studied is actually what is being studied. Having the research reviewed by the main subjects of the study, as well as having several sources of evidence for the study, can assure this. Reliability concerns if the results from a study can be repeated or not; documenting the process so that others can replicate it can enhance this fact. Furthermore, internal validity concerns if a conclusion of a study is properly motivated or not. This can be strengthened by applying models in order to clarify the relationship. However, external validity concerns if the results and conclusion from a study can be generalized to other situations than the one being examined; analytical simplification, where the results are looked at beyond the context of the report can achieve this (Yin, 2009).

This thesis showed construct validity since the authors utilized many different and varied sources, for example literature and scientific articles. Furthermore, the authors
had tutors and other students that reviewed the findings of the study. By documenting the whole process of creating the research, reliability was created. Linking previous models to the research found generated internal validity. Furthermore, the authors repetitively questioned the secondary data collected; if not in alignment with this thesis, the data was rejected. Lastly, since external validity is used for generalizations, this was not implemented for this study, as the authors focused on complementing previous theories and providing insights to the topic.

4.10 Summary of Methods
Utilizing the interpretivist philosophy but also the abductive scientific approach was the foundation of this thesis. Furthermore, the authors used the research strategy case study and the qualitative research method. When deciding how to select the sample for the empirical study, both judgmental and snowball sampling were applied. By constructing twelve semi-structured interviews the primary data of this thesis were collected. In order to analyse the data, conceptualisation was used. Lastly, construct validity, internal validity and reliability were used as base for the thesis quality criteria.
5 Empirical Findings

The following section presents the empirical findings from the interviews conducted with members of the SAS EuroBonus program. The empirical data is divided into different categories, to make it more comprehensible for the reader.

In order to make the collected empirical data more understandable, the authors have divided the information into two main categories, SAS and SAS EuroBonus. Since the SAS EuroBonus program and SAS are intertwined, the authors wanted to provide information about SAS. However this was done in a separate section, due to the main focus of this study being SAS EuroBonus. Further, the main categories are divided into subsections to enhance readability and make the information more comprehensible. To give the reader a thorough understanding of the topics being discussed, the authors used storytelling. This resulted in many useful quotations, which provide the reader with insights of the interview.

5.1 SAS

5.1.1 Purpose of Travelling with SAS

Silver Members

The main purpose of travelling with SAS is private travels for subjects SM1, SM2, SM5, SM6, SM7 and SM8. Both SM1 and SM2 have travelled with SAS in business purpose earlier, but currently not. SM3 and SM4 travel with SAS in both private and business purpose.

For SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4 and SM7 the most important aspects when travelling privately is that the price is good. SM3 and SM4 think it is important to be able to collect and use points when travelling privately. SM5, SM6 and SM7 believe good service is very important and SM6 thinks it feels safe to travel with SAS. Subjects SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4, SM5, SM6 and SM7 travel with SAS because of the EuroBonus program, they want to be able to collect and use their points. SM5 and SM6 travel with SAS because of loyalty. Subjects SM8 and SM3 travel with SAS since they have the best availability and direct flights to destinations they visit frequently. SM2 only travel with SAS when there is no other alternative available, because of dislike toward the company, or when prices are extremely low.

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1, GM2, DM1, DM2 travel with SAS mainly in business purpose, but also use it when making private travels. The most important factor when travelling privately is price for subjects GM1, GM2 and DM2. GM1 and GM2 also express the choice of collecting and using points as positive. DM1 states that the price is not the most important factor when travelling privately, but rather values comfort and is willing to pay extra to receive benefits.

GM1 and DM2 travels with SAS since a lot of the departures from their closest airport are with SAS. GM2 choose to travel with SAS to take advantage of the bonus system, since they have the lowest requirements for reaching Gold. As GM2 has around 150 travel days per year, the benefits that come with this level are much appreciated. DM2 feels that it is good to support domestic production and thinks that it is good to support a
Swedish company. DM1 travels with SAS because it is convenient to access the lounge and bring extra baggage.

“I mainly choose SAS because it is a pain in the ass to search for flights. It is just pure laziness... Sometimes it costs 1000SEK more than other flights, but I still choose SAS.”
(DM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

5.1.2 Perception of SAS

Silver Members

When the authors asked the subjects to describe SAS as a person, different responses arose. SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4, SM7 and SM8 described SAS as cheap and not very service minded. The subjects further described the company as old-fashioned and boring (SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4 & SM8). SM2 emphasize that the company should put more effort into the service and standard of SAS in general and not too much into the EuroBonus program. SM3 and SM4 are not satisfied with SAS when comparing it with other airlines. SM5 and SM6 however, feel safe when travelling with SAS, both the service and standard works well.

SM3 still considers SAS to be a premium brand. This leads to anger, since the company charges the customers for breakfast and refreshments on longer flights, which is not what a premium company should do. SM3 emphasize that if SAS would be a low-cost airline it would be more acceptable to do things like that and not really care, but since that is not the fact, the company is not doing well on the market.

“To answer your question shortly, if SAS is going to be a premium brand, then I feel that SAS EuroBonus could be skipped. The company needs to focus on becoming a premium brand and that businessmen travel with them and likes it. If that is not the strategy then go in another direction. At the moment they are standing in between and tries to be a premium brand but acts as a low-cost airline which makes me pissed.”
(SM3, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1 thinks that SAS provides a feeling of home, however when describing SAS as a person, the company is resembled with the founder of IKEA; a greedy person that is well-off but still tries to benefit as much as possible through other people. GM2 express that SAS is not service minded and that the staff feels old and tired. DM1 feels satisfied with SAS and considers the company to be safe and familiar. Furthermore, the company as a person is stubborn but fair (DM2). GM2 and DM2 does not consider SAS to be a low-cost airline even though the service is poor, thus a safe choice to fly with.

“The program was better before for those who flew more, today it is better for those who fly less.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

The company wish to satisfy more customers and that could make previously satisfied customers, less satisfied. That is probably the reason for creating the Diamond level as an attempt to make the old customers satisfied, even though the level actually does not provide any additional benefit (DM2).
5.1.3 Standard, Service and Price

Silver Members

SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4, SM7 and SM8 feel that SAS is charging too much compared to the service and standard provided. SM1 understands that SAS focuses on the customers that travel the most, however that does not give the company the right to let other customers feel dissatisfied. Subjects are negative to the fact that SAS does not include any food or refreshments on their flights (SM1, SM2, SM3 & SM4). SAS should charge a bit more for the ticket and include snack or refreshments on the flights to make customers satisfied (SM1, SM2 & SM4). SM4 wonders how SAS is thinking when only focusing on customers, which travel more expensive and further argues that this is not a case of jealousy but about giving all travellers better service, regardless of membership level.

“They have just decided, we’re going to handle the ones with Gold and Diamond really well, Silver not so much and don’t give a damn about the rest.” (SM4, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

SM1, SM2 and SM3 express the standard when travelling with SAS being too low in comparison with the price paid. SM1 rather travels with a more price worthy airline with higher standard. SM2 thinks that SAS used to be much better and does not longer stand the pressure from competitors. SM2, SM3 and SM4 express that they expect more from SAS, than from other companies.

“I have my opinions about Norwegian, but there I don’t expect anything extra, I don’t expect free drinks because I know it’s not included in the price. However the airplanes are new and fresh, the staff is polite, which they are not at SAS. They are old, tired and it feels like they don’t enjoy working there.” (SM2, personal communication, 2016-04-20)

Earlier, companies knew SAS was a good airline, however this is not the case anymore and therefore booking SAS is not a certainty (SM4). SM5 however, says that as long as one book in time, one can find really price worthy tickets.

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1, GM2, DM1 and DM2 feel the standard and service could be improved.

“My reflection is that you don’t feel genuine welcomed on-board. On other airlines you feel welcomed regardless of membership level. On SAS I feel more like; excuse me for taking your time.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

Furthermore, the airplanes are old (GM2 & DM1) and GM2 feels SAS should offer refreshments for free. Moreover, the subject expresses the recommendation of raising the price to include refreshments and snacks. DM2 explains that one can complain about the service SAS offers, however the subject chooses not to.

“Of course there are airlines with better service, it is only the question what you are looking for on a business trip. I don’t have that good standard on my office either, do I need to start to complain about that too?” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)
5.2 EuroBonus

5.2.1 Perception of EuroBonus

Silver Members

When asking the subjects about their perception of the SAS EuroBonus program, subjects SM1, SM3, SM4, SM6, SM7 and SM8 was satisfied. SM5 answered completely satisfied since the program has worked really well and the subject has been able to both redeem and receive points. However, SM2 is dissatisfied with the program since it is inconvenient and tricky to use. Further, subject SM1, SM3, SM4 and SM7 described EuroBonus as demanding and express the difficulty to obtain the next level in the program.

“It is unreasonable how hard one must work to gain bonus points. That I have to travel that much or purchase so much stuff to be able to get one tiny trip. It doesn’t give me that much really.” (SM1, personal communication, 2016-04-26)

When asking the subjects about their spontaneous thoughts of EuroBonus, both SM1 and SM7 described the program as dividing; that the tier-levels of the program are very distinct. SM4 and SM8 described it as out-dated and boring; the program is not developing in the right direction. SM5 and SM8 express that the Gold and Diamond cards looks appealing and mirrors success.

Gold and Diamond Members

DM1 and DM2 are satisfied with the program. GM1 and GM2 are neutral but express the feeling that it is difficult to collect points and get to a higher level of the program.

“Not the service in general but more that they have thresholds that are too difficult to obtain for regular people.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

GM1 thinks the program divides the members into distinct groups, DM1 says that the program suits best for business travellers.

5.2.2 Level of Knowledge

Silver Members

SM1, SM3, SM4, SM5, SM6, SM7 and SM8 believes to possess good knowledge regarding the tier-levels of the program and aspects related to air travel. The subjects mainly possess knowledge about benefits, which relate to their own membership level, but also benefits which they in the future wish to have access to. Further on SM1, SM3, SM4, SM5 and SM6 have credit cards connected to their EuroBonus membership. SM6 thinks it is easier to understand how much points one receive from the credit cards, since it is only based on how much they spend and is clearly expressed when connecting the card to EuroBonus.

“I have not been that familiar with how to collect points earlier, but since I got AMEX it is much clearer...Now it is more apparent and I get more points from it.” (SM6, personal communication, 2016-04-24)
Gold and Diamond Members

GM1 and DM1 feel they possess very good knowledge about the program, but mostly focus on the aspects and benefits they find most important. GM2 and DM2 are relatively well informed about the program, mainly on aspects as how to use points and advantages when travelling. DM2 feels the knowledge about the program has been higher earlier.

5.2.3 Expectations

Silver Members

SM1, SM2, SM3, SM4, SM5, SM7 and SM8 expected to collect points, which could be used to receive benefits. SM1, SM5 and SM8 explain that a reward for being loyal is essential and the subjects have gotten that to some extent. SM3 and SM4 feel it has become more difficult to gain points. SM3 talked to a colleague who travels a lot that also acknowledges the difficulty to gain the points needed.

“It is written in his contract that that he needs to travel 150 days minimum per year and he has problems of keeping his Gold membership. It is absurd how little points one get on travels.” (SM3, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

SM4 further express that since the prices to travel with SAS has risen, one can almost book with any other airline for a cheaper price.

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1 had no expectations when joining the program and was almost shocked when the subject received enough points to get an upgrade, which resulted in a positive feeling. However, after being a member for a longer time, the feeling changed. GM1 did notice the difficulty of collecting points increasing.

“The way that the program is built almost lead to business tricks.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

GM1 experience businessmen booking flights to consciously gain more points, for example people book late to justify booking premium seating. The subject however, rather books another airline to get better service than keeping the Gold membership. GM2 and DM1 expected to collect points, which could be used for travels and upgrades and feel pretty satisfied with the benefits they have gained. DM1 thinks the Diamond members should be able to access the first class lounge to get a more luxurious feeling.

5.2.4 Bonus Points

Silver Members

When asking the subjects about the collection of points SM1 was aware of the difficulty to collect points, however not as hard as it has been. Because of this, SM1 is not motivated to continue with the EuroBonus program, but the subject still uses the card when flying with the company. However, the subject does not choose SAS because of the points but more of convenience. SM2 mainly joined the bonus program to collect points and redeemed them for cinema tickets. This benefit had a value for the subject until it got removed. SM2 does not feel the other benefits had any real value and got irritated when this benefit was withdrawn.
SM4 has EuroBonus connected to AMEX and does a lot of shopping. However, SM3 and SM4 express the system not being flexible when it comes to all offers, but in general works well, even though it is difficult to collect points. Both SM5 and SM6 had no previous knowledge of the points collected from the AMEX card did not work as basic points, as foundation for the tier-level one gain. This information made the subjects frustrated and both subjects felt fooled.

Gold and Diamond Members

GM2 feels there is a big difference between redeeming points for travel and products. The subject considered purchasing headphones for the points, but decided to save the points when a pair of 3000SEK headphones could be redeemed for 200,000 points.

“Sometimes when you use them for travels you don’t need that much points, but when you’re going to purchase stuff for them a lot of points are needed. I think the value of the points is different depending on what you’re buying.” (GM2, personal communication, 2016-04-25)

DM2 hardly uses the points anymore.

“If you want to travel at the time that you want, you have to book it when the timetable is released, which is 13 months in advance, otherwise you won't get any seats.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

Another reason for not using the points is that it gets cheaper to travel with another airline instead.

“For example, it costs points and 900SEK per ticket in flight taxes to Munich and 700SEK if I book with another airline, then it is not an option” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

DM1 express that points may not be received when travelling with partners. For a Silver member it might take weeks before receiving the points and one might need to complain in order to obtain them. This however, has not been a problem when the subject has been on the Gold or the Diamond level.

5.2.5 Additional Benefits

Silver Members

SM1, SM3, SM4, SM5 and SM7 have had the opportunity of using the lounge. However, this has been when travelling with a Gold or Diamond member. The same applies for the fast track. SM1, SM3, SM4, SM5 and SM7 express that fast track to be a very good benefit due to time being valuable.

“Fast track is worth Gold.” (SM3, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

SM1, SM3, SM4 and SM7 have used the benefit of checking in extra baggage. SM2 does not value this, since the subject often travel light. One negative aspect that SM1 and SM7 points out is that parts of the staff and partners are not aware that Silver members are allowed to check in one extra bag. Both subjects have encountered a situation where there has been a discussion about this.
“All partners are not aware that it exist, and then they want you to pay for the extra bag. To need to stand and argument for something you should get is not very fun. It should be convenient.” (SM1, personal communication, 2016-04-26)

SM1, SM3, SM4, SM5, SM6 and SM8 believe it to be a great advantage to travel for bonus points instead of money to keep the costs down. SM6 has connected an AMEX card with the bonus program and collects points on purchases and then uses these points for flight tickets, which is seen as additional value.

**Gold and Diamond Members**

GM1, GM2, DM1 and DM2 really value the lounge and fast track. The lounge is a great benefit for business travellers who just want to sit down in a calm environment when waiting for the flight. Both benefits are used every time the subjects’ travel, it saves a lot of time and is convenient for the travellers since they do not have to stand in line.

“Fast track is a fantastic idea, it's probably the best one, you save a lot of time and frustration. It is the best that they have ever done in the bonus system, it is not that old but I think it’s the best move.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

DM2 mentions Gold and Diamond benefits to be worth a lot when not travelling business class. DM2 discuss comfort and convenience to be important when travelling frequently.

“It’s one thing if you travel on vacation privately once a year, then it doesn't really matter, but when you travel every month, maybe several times per month.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

GM2, DM1 and DM2 have checked in extra baggage and believe it to be a good benefit. GM1 does not value this benefit, since the subject travel light. Furthermore, DM1 has encountered the problem of partners not knowing the extra baggage should be for free and feels it is frustrating. Moreover, DM1 express the benefit of getting the bags prioritized on the carousel not working properly.

“It is very annoying if you get one of these priority tags on your baggage, and then it still shows up last of all the bags, when it says that it should come first, and it happens quite often.” (DM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

DM1 explains that SAS often loose bags or even break them. When the bag has gotten lost, the subject has sometimes needed to call and ask for it, which is irritating. However, when the bag breaks, the company understands and handles the situation well. GM1, GM2, DM1 and DM2 use the priority check-in and believe it to be a good benefit to save time.

GM1, GM2, DM1 and DM2 have used points in order to upgrade their tickets and to redeem free flights. DM2 explain there are unspoken benefits of being on a higher level. For example, if there are seats available in first class, SAS will number one; sell them, number two; upgrade members for points or three; upgrade the highest and most frequent flying member for free.

“It is pretty far to an upgrade but it happens, of course you go before the ones without a card, it has happened quite some times actually.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)
Further on, DM2 thinks the service one receives as Diamond member is really good, maybe even too good sometimes. One time when the subject flew home from Chicago with his two friends, he saw there were a lot of business class seats available and asked if he and his friends could be seated there instead. The flight attendant told the subject it was not possible because of the food. The subject answered he did not travel to eat and he thought it would be really bad service if they could not be seated in the front.

“Then it took about ten minutes and then the captain walked in and said that, of course you and your friends should sit in the front, there is room! And we got good food; there were lots of it. It did not work automatically and that's pretty strange.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

The subject further believes if you complain, you can get what you want, since the company does not wish to have customers expressing their irritation to other customers.

5.2.6 Tier-Levels

Silver Members

SM1, SM3, SM4, SM7 and SM8 discuss the struggle of reaching higher tier-levels of the EuroBonus program and the barriers, which are hard to overcome. SM1 and SM7 feel the real advantages of the program is the lounge and fast track, however these can only be used when reaching at least the Gold level. Therefore, the program does not grant any real benefits before that state. SM1 points out that it is negative to not receive rewards for being loyal; otherwise there is no point of having the program. SM3 mentions the struggle of reaching higher levels, which, is preceded by the struggle of keeping that level. SM7 does not feel prioritized as a customer and think this is because the subject is only a Silver member. SAS only focus on how much money the subject spends using their service, the real emotional relationship with the company is not taken into account (SM7).

SM1, SM3 and SM6 express one of the largest benefits of the EuroBonus program to not be related to the level itself, rather that points can be collected by making everyday purchases through AMEX or MasterCard. Further on, SM3 and SM6 express that based on how much one spend through AMEX; one should be upgrade to higher tier-levels of the program.

“I make purchases with the card and receive bonus points for that. That's how I collect my points but it's still not enough to reach a higher tier-level, one time I got upgraded by a friend.” (SM3, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

However SM1, SM4 and SM8 understand members of higher tier-levels have worked hard to achieve that, therefore they should be rewarded.

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1, GM2, DM1 and DM2 express the benefits which are valued the most is to have access to fast track, lounges and priority check-in. GM1, GM2 and DM1 further elaborate on the fact that benefits of the program felt useless before reaching the Gold level.

“It's a big step to become Gold member, as Gold I really feel that I have advantages... Feels worthless before Gold, the upgrade from Member to Silver is like a pretend
upgrade, you get nothing from it, at least nothing that I value. A good idea would be to be able to choose the benefit that you value the most. I would opt out everything as long as I can go through fast track.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

“All benefits are lost if you go back to a lower level of the program, I’m worried about losing my Gold status, since travelling becomes much more troublesome.” (GM2, personal communication, 2016-04-25)

GM1 and DM1 did not receive any proper benefits or privileges before reaching Gold and therefore might as well not have been a part of the program.

“I didn’t feel worth as much as a Silver member, I perceive it as ridiculous to call it a loyalty program when I’m Silver and loyal toward SAS but still get treated like everyone else. So why should I be loyal then?” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

DM1 feels it to be ridiculous to have a Diamond level instead of Gold, since people working at the airport only recognize Gold; more information to staff and people who are working on the floor is needed. DM2 has been at least Gold member since the program was introduced and recently received notice about reaching lifetime Gold, however the subject is sceptical to if it will really work. DM2 complaints is that there are too many people in the lounge, it is too easy to get access to the lounge and too easy to become a Gold member.

“I miss the idea of a small selected group of Gold members, then the lounge was great, it was a place to rest. They want to fit in more people, I understand SAS, I think they have good investigation results which tells them what is most profitable for them.” (DM1, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

5.2.7 Recommendations

Silver Members

Subjects SM2, SM3, SM4 and SM7 would not recommend the EuroBonus program to a friend or colleague. SM5 and SM6 would recommend the program to a friend. SM1 and SM8 would recommend the program to someone who travels a lot.

“I would recommend it to someone who travels very frequently and that flies on routes which is operated by SAS, where there are no other options. You can join, but don’t have too high expectations, take it for what it is. You can collect points which you might be able to use later, don’t be to engaged if you’re not a frequent flyer.” (SM1, personal communication, 2016-04-26)

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1 states that being a member of EuroBonus is better than not having any membership at all, but further says one might as well be part of another program, depending on the situation. If one is a frequent traveller it is recommended, even though there are barely any benefits. GM2 would recommend the program to someone who travels a lot, then it really has value. DM1 would recommend SAS EuroBonus if one wants to be member of a program. If DM2 travels with someone who is not a member, the subject would really recommend it.
“It is free of charge and if you use it – you might get a reward. It is very stupid not to collect points, since it will probably lead to advantages in the future.” (DM2, personal communication, 2016-05-03)

Both GM1 and GM2 say it would be good with a less luxurious lounge with access to coffee and Internet, where Silver members could sit comfortably. This way Silver members would receive something for being loyal.

“One suggestion, Silver members, just give them somewhere to sit, that would be enough for me. Treat them some coffee, then it’s already good, it would have been enough for me.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

5.2.8 Outcome of Negative Emotions

Silver Members

SM1, SM2, SM3 and SM4 has never acted against SAS, different incidents have led to them choosing other companies to travel with. SM3 search for flights with other companies since the EuroBonus system is not flexible; it is easier to pay a low amount and travel with low-cost airlines instead.

“If I don’t get any reward for being loyal I don’t see the point with it. I think it’s irritating and you become negative towards the company and therefore doesn’t choose SAS.” (SM1, personal communication, 2016-04-26)

SM3 and SM4 mention considering leaving the program since they mostly use it combined with AMEX, which costs 1000SEK per year.

“AMEX is not a popular card...and then the cost for it is 1000SEK per year, then I can skip that and order the trips I want with a low-cost airline instead. Which means that I then leave the bonus system and SAS as a company.” (SM3, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

SM7 and SM8 behaves passive towards SAS. SM7 does not really want to be a part of the program, but have not yet taken the effort to leave the program. The main reason for wanting to leave the program is due to the points collected having an expiration date. SM8 got irritated when noticing the points collected from a trip being much lower than expected.

“I accepted the situation... If I travel the same route, there is no reason to choose SAS for that purpose anyways.” (SM8, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

Gold and Diamond Members

GM1 and GM2 has never acted out or expressed their negativity toward the company, however both have chosen other companies instead.

“I have never expressed my irritation, instead I have chosen other alternatives. So more of a passive dissatisfaction... I appreciate the benefits I have, but not compared to the price I have to pay. I have considered not continuing to be a member many times.”

(GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)
DM1 has never expressed complaints to the company because the subject feels it not being that important. GM2 and DM1 discuss the cost of switching to another frequent flyer program.

“It has considered switching for many years and join Lufthansa, but I haven’t done it since if one is at Gold and then switch to another, one has to start from scratch and then it will take one to two years to reach the same level again.” (DM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

GM2 thinks it is good to chose one program to focus on, but if the tier-level is downgraded to Silver there are no benefits and the subject would consider switching to another program. Further, SM3, GM1 and DM1 most frequently fly on a route where SAS has the best availability and where SAS have an agreement with their company, which includes free shuttle from the airport.
6 Analysis

The following chapter analyses the empirical findings applying the Frame of Reference and the authors own ideas and interpretations. The structure of the analysis will be in line with the Frame of Reference to increase readability.

6.1 Customer Satisfaction Construct

The authors found that 75 per cent of the subjects in the selected sample to be either satisfied or completely satisfied, when asked about their level of satisfaction on a scale from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied. However, when digging deeper into subjects’ feelings and perception about SAS EuroBonus and SAS, the authors have indications that this level of satisfaction is not completely true. The findings from the study conducted are in line with, and strengthen the research results previously made by Söderlund (2003), Stauss and Neuhaus (1997) and Stauss et al. (2005).

Although subjects stated to be satisfied or completely satisfied, two of the Silver members consider, as a result of various intertwined aspects, leaving the EuroBonus program and SAS as a company. Three of the Silver members would not recommend the EuroBonus program to a friend, even though the subjects stated to be satisfied with the program in the beginning of the interview. When connecting this information to the satisfaction construct, the authors can conclude the construct concealing negative emotions. Further on, some of the Silver members act passively towards the company and look at other alternatives when booking flights. Some Silver members from this particular sample conclude it to be unreasonably hard for one to gain bonus points and reach higher levels of the program. This and other factors lead to an overall dissatisfaction toward the EuroBonus program, even though the subjects are reported as satisfied or completely satisfied.

One of the Diamond members states the reason for sticking with SAS EuroBonus is due to high switching costs. Therefore this might indicate that if the subject had been on a lower level of the program, no real benefits would have been attained, and the loyalty towards the program and company would be much lower. One of the Gold members, who reports to be neutral toward SAS EuroBonus, also mention the cost of switching to a new loyalty program and having to start all over again, which can be further connected to previous studies by Kievetz and Simonson (2002), Grönroos (1998), Söderlund (2001). Both subjects on the Gold level worry about being downgraded in the program, since their perception is that all of the benefits that are valuable for them will then be lost and therefore the program will become useless for them.

As argued by Jones (1996), companies fail to acknowledge that even though a customer answers “satisfied”, the risk of customers to defect can still be high. The findings from this study indicate that this is the case for SAS. Furthermore, as discussed by Stauss et al. (2005) and Söderlund (2003), the real level of satisfaction should be measured by incorporating several emotions to result in a reliable consumer research.

The findings of this study, regarding the customer satisfaction construct, is an indication that companies conducting consumer research, should not solely focus on the customer satisfaction construct, but rather choose another research approach, which does not conceal negative emotions. The level of satisfaction compared to the expressed negative emotions can be seen in the figure below:
6.2 Negative Emotions

Customers are individuals and therefore express themselves in individual ways (Söderlund, 2003). The authors conclude, from this particular sample, this statement to be true. The subjects express negative emotions towards SAS but also EuroBonus in different ways such as irritation, anger, frustration and disappointment, which are all categorized as negative emotions (Tronvoll, 2011; Stauss et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2003; Wetzer et al., 2007). However, from this particular sample, it can be indicated that even though subjects express themselves differently, the actual emotions are the same.

“It is unreasonable how hard one must work to gain bonus points. That I have to travel that much or purchase so much stuff to be able to get one tiny trip. It doesn’t give me that much really.” (SM1, personal communication, 2016-04-26)

“Not the service in general but more that they have thresholds that are too difficult to obtain for regular people.” (GM1, personal communication, 2016-04-24)

Furthermore, the same situation may trigger different responses depending on the individual being exposed to an incident (Rosenzweig, 1938; Söderlund, 2003; Van Steenburg et al., 2013). This makes it even more important to really understand what customers are actually feeling, in order to retain them. For this particular sample, the Silver members express more negativity towards the program and SAS in general. Gold and Diamond members are more positive towards the benefits, which can be gained from the program, however SAS in general could be better. Gold members concern more about the struggle to gain points in order not to get downgraded in the system and lose benefits.

The service provided by SAS is in this sample, highly questioned. Six out of eight Silver subjects as well as all Gold and Diamond members feel the service from both employees and the company overall needs to be improved. This is a high motivation for not choosing SAS for the subjects’ next trip. This can be connected to Liljander and
Strandvik’s (1997) assumption that negative emotional responses concerning employees will lead to unfavourable effects for the relation towards a service provider. Further, Liljander and Strandvik (1997) conclude it to be evidence indicating positive emotions not having as strong effect on a service experience as negative emotions have. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to keep their customers satisfied at all times, since one negative experience will have stronger effects on the relationship than positive ones.

6.3 Frustration

Frustration, as mentioned, appears when an expectation or goal is being blocked or withdrawn (Coleman, 2001). This is evident, when subjects from this sample anticipate a reward; which is being blocked. For this particular sample, frustration arose in situations regarding things such as, collection of points, baggage and service aspects. One common reason for frustration to arise in this sample is the fact that the subjects do not perceive SAS as a low-cost airline and because of that expect more from the company. As one subject indicated, when travelling with a low-cost airline, the subject does not expect anything, however when flying with SAS, expectations are higher. This can also be connected to the fact that historically, subjects have perceived SAS as the company with best service, and therefore expectations on the company are very high.

SAS has previously been positioned as a premium brand, however the company faced a crisis and repositioned themselves. Nowadays, the company target the travel class, which consist of customers who travel more frequently than other (BLINK, 2016; SAS Group, 2016). From the sample chosen for this study, a majority of the subjects still perceive SAS as a premium brand, which leads to subjects wanting more. One of the Silver subjects expressed if SAS wishes to be a premium brand, the company needs to put more effort and focus on acting like one. The subject feel that SAS is acting like a low-cost airline, but pretends to be a premium one, which provokes negative emotions. Furthermore, some Silver members emphasize the company putting too much effort into the EuroBonus program instead of focusing on SAS in general. Further, the subject believes the company needs to stop defocusing and become more aware of how SAS is perceived from all potential travellers. One Silver subject feels it not being about jealousy of the Gold or Diamond members, it is about giving all travellers better service, regardless of membership level.

When analysing the findings using the three parts of the general frustration model (Stauss et al., 2005): frustration incidents, frustration sensation and frustration behaviour, the authors can make some observations.

6.3.1 Frustration Incidents

From the chosen sample, many frustration incidents can be found. There is a strong indication of it being too hard to collect the points needed to get upgraded to another level of the program or to redeem for a free flight. Many subjects express their frustration regarding the difficulty of collecting points. When subjects have the expectation of tier-level upgrades or collecting points to redeem free flights, and find out that this is not going to be as easy as expected, frustration arise. The qualification barrier of
reaching higher levels in the program is too high, which causes subjects feeling the reward is difficult or even impossible to attain. Another frustrating incident that becomes apparent in this study is subjects expected reward being inaccessible. Two different Silver members mention the struggle of arguing with partners of SAS about checking in one extra baggage, which should be allowed for Silver members. Frustration arises when this expectation is withdrawn because of partners not being informed by SAS that this benefit exists. Another incident, which can be connected to inaccessibility, is when points are not received when travelling with partners of SAS. The expected reward is withdrawn, hence resulting in frustration. A Diamond member further mention that sometimes the priority tag on the baggage does not work. This incident is connected to frustration, since members expect their bag to appear first on the carousel, and this is not fulfilled.

Moreover, the majority of Silver members do feel some of the benefits offered at the Silver level not giving any real additional value. Subjects from this sample expect to achieve valuable benefits when entering the program. This has led to frustration since the subjects do not feel the benefits offered are valuable enough and the subjects think they deserve more. Some subjects even question their membership in EuroBonus, since they do not consider themselves gaining anything from being a member. Some Gold members even fear losing their membership status since they felt being on a Silver level was actually not beneficial at all. The subjects’ express that the real benefits can be attained at Gold and Diamond level. Furthermore, in this sample, some Silver members express the frustration of having to invest additional costs in order to redeem a reward. This can be seen when one subject explained that in order to redeem the points gained for a free flight, flight taxes are included and this cost almost exceed the cost of flying with another airline. This causes frustration since the expectation of saving money is blocked by having to invest additional costs.

From this particular sample, there are also frustration incidents concerning the company SAS in general. A majority of the Silver members express their dissatisfaction towards how the company treats Gold and Diamond members in relation to Silver members. A majority of Silver members in this sample see themselves as valuable and loyal towards SAS, however do not receive equal treatment.

“They have just decided, we’re going to handle the ones with Gold and Diamond really well, Silver not so much and don’t give a damn about the rest.” (SM4, personal communication, 2016-04-23)

Furthermore, the recurring problem, which arise in the interviews, which can be connected to frustration incidents, is that SAS, as a company, is not service minded. The subjects expect more from SAS and feel the company can achieve great things by taking small actions such as serving refreshments and snacks for free. The subjects expect the standard and service to be improved when comparing it to the price paid for the ticket and since it is not fulfilled, frustration arise.
6.3.2 Frustration Sensation

As previously discussed by Smith and Ellsworth (1985), frustrating incidents evoke frustration sensation. Negative emotions, which are caused by frustrating incidents is in this particular sample expressed in different ways. Some subjects call it irritation, frustration, disappointment and so forth. How strong the frustration sensation becomes, depends on how the frustration incidents are perceived by the individual, which is connected to how high expectations one have (Rosenzweig, 1938; Söderlund, 2003; Van Steenburg et al., 2013). From this particular sample, different incidents were perceived differently for the subjects. Some subjects express themselves with stronger words than other, and this indicate how strong the sensation actually is, but also what the frustration behaviour will become.

6.3.3 Frustration Behaviour

Frustration behaviour is the actions caused by frustration sensation. How the customer behaves depends on how the subject wishes to eliminate the negative emotion (Berkowitz, 1989). In this particular sample, three main categories of frustration behaviour are noticed: avoidance, protest and passive behaviour. Both subjects from the Silver level but also Gold and Diamond level have avoided SAS due to frustration incidents. The subjects discuss that instead of flying with SAS, the subjects choose other airlines. Both some Silver members and Gold members do not view SAS as a first choice in their minds, but instead search for the most price worthy alternatives. The reason for choosing another airline is mostly because the subjects feel a reward for being loyal is not obtained within SAS. All of these factors can be connected to expectations not being fulfilled.

Furthermore, due to expectations not being fulfilled, subjects discuss ending their membership completely. In this sample, both some Silver members as well as Gold and Diamond members question the choice of being a member in the EuroBonus program. Because of the EuroBonus program’s connection to SAS as a company, two Silver subjects explain that if they leave the program, they will also leave SAS as a company. It is of major importance to remember that SAS and the EuroBonus program are connected, since the subjects express their feelings toward the program but at the same time toward SAS. Further, subjects of Gold and Diamond level, express the difficulty of switching to another program. When reaching a higher level of the program, the cost of switching to another frequent flyer program becomes too high; therefore, the possibility of actually doing so becomes low.

The second frustration behaviour from this sample is protest. Two Silver members and both Diamond members have acted verbally towards the company when frustration has arisen. The Silver members expressed their dissatisfaction towards the company when facing the problem of checking in extra baggage. This protest was directed towards the employees of a Star Alliance partner, in order to clearly show this problem would not be
tolerated. One Diamond member from this sample have complained to SAS about not receiving points when travelling with a SAS partner but also called SAS service line and complained about the baggage being lost, to clearly express dissatisfaction. The other Diamond member, complained when not receiving an automatic upgrade to business class. The subject expects this to be an obvious thing and when that was not the case, the subject complained to the stewardess. This complaint gave the subject the free upgrade, however, it would have been more appreciated if the upgrade had happened automatically.

The last evident frustration behaviour is acting passively towards the company. This behaviour can be seen in this sample from a majority of Silver members but also both Gold and Diamond members. When the subjects face a frustration incident, they often act in a passive way. The subjects do not express their dissatisfaction toward the company but instead discuss the problem with family and friends or simply ignore it. This type of behaviour can from this sample be connected towards lower frustration sensations, which means the frustration incidents do not provoke strong negative emotions (Stäcker 1977; Stauss et al., 2005). Because of this, the subjects simply do not feel the need to act toward the company.

The General Frustration Model applied on the SAS EuroBonus Program

6.4 Frequent Flyer Program

As stated by Liu (2007), the main reason for companies implementing loyalty programs is to get profitable customers and an ability to encourage repurchase behaviour. Further, a frequent flyer program’s goal is to increase consumer demand for airline companies that offer such programs but also enhance the value of the products and services, the airline offers (Kopalle & Neslin, 2003; Nako, 1992). In regard to the SAS EuroBonus program, information from SAS year-end Report from November 2014 – October 2015, concludes half of the company’s revenues from passengers originating from members of the EuroBonus program. Therefore, relating this information to the 80:20 rule (Pareto, 1897), this relatively small group of customers is very valuable for the company and in order to keep them, depending on program member’s status, different benefits can be given. Thus, the authors conclude the goal of getting profitable customers is achieved.

As mentioned by Uncles et al. (2003), the goal of a loyalty program is to encourage customers’ willingness to stay loyal towards a company. However, some subjects described SAS EuroBonus as out-dated, boring and further mention the program not
developing in the right direction, thus decreasing the willingness to stay loyal toward the company.

However, the subjects from our selected sample indicate that there is a level of dissatisfaction toward SAS EuroBonus that the company may, or may not be fully aware of. Many subjects mention, the rewards gained from the EuroBonus program not being sufficient. The members expect more than what is actually received by being a part of the program. As a frequent flyer programs goal is to reward members of the program for their loyalty to the company by receiving points which can be later used (Terblanche, 2014), this is what members of the program expect when deciding to join the EuroBonus program.

Nevertheless, subjects’ talk about not receiving any reward for being loyal, this is especially evident when looking at the sample of Silver members. Subjects feel the step from Member to Silver level to be like a pretend upgrade, which does not provide any benefits of real value. This leads to negative feelings toward the program, since customers’ expectations are not met. In this sample, there is an overall perception, that the real value of the program can only be attained when a member has reached at least Gold level. This can be connected to previous studies by Drèze and Nunes (2009); tier-levels make use of members desire for status, recognition and feeling of being superior. From the interviews conducted in this study, the authors can conclude that subjects perception, is that Gold and Diamond members are perceived as superior and get special tags for their luggage in order to increase recognition. Further, members that get access to lounges, fast track and other benefits, get a feeling of higher status and a feeling of being more important than others. One of the Diamond members of the sample chosen, has received a Lifetime Gold membership, however the subject is sceptical towards if this will function, which indicates scepticism toward the loyalty program provider.

6.4.1 Switching Costs

Furthermore, a loyalty program increase the switching cost for members, since changing to another program will result in loss of points, levels and discounts (Gómez et al., 2006; Kim et al., 2001; Palmer & Beggs, 1998). The issue of switching cost is evident in the studied sample, however only for Gold and Diamond members. Since these members have attained a number of benefits from the program, it is not appealing for them to switch and start all over again, even though negative feelings toward the EuroBonus program exist. This perceived switching cost is not evident in the sample of Silver members chosen for this study. By analysing indications from subjects, the authors can conclude this being due to the fact that members have not received any special benefits that would be hard to lose.

6.4.2 Five Benefits of a Frequent Flyer Program

O’Brien and Jones (1995), state five different benefits of a frequent flyer program, one can evaluate SAS EuroBonus by using these benefits. The first benefit is cash value of reward. Subjects complain that the level of points collected from flights is too low, and that the system is hard to fully understand. The second benefit is multiple options of rewards. Members from the selected sample, think there are various options of rewards that are really good, but indicate that it would be beneficial if SAS chose to focus on a smaller number of options, which are actually relevant for members. The third benefit, possibility to travel for free, and fourth benefit, likelihood of attaining a reward, are intertwined, since members indicate there is a possibility of travelling for free, but the
likelihood of attaining a reward is lower than expected when joining the program. The fifth benefit is *user friendliness*, most members of the program perceive it as user friendly. However, one of the subjects believes the opposite, that it is way too complicated.

### 6.4.3 Utilitarian, Hedonic and Symbolic Benefits

Further on, Mimouni-Chaabane and Volle (2010), has divided the benefits that the customers gain from loyalty programs into three categories; *utilitarian benefits*, *hedonic benefits* and *symbolic benefits*. When looking at the utilitarian benefits of SAS EuroBonus, findings indicate some subjects finding it convenient to use SAS and not search for other alternatives. It is also concluded that one Diamond subject is willing to pay more for a ticket and not make monetary savings, since the convenience aspect is found more important. However, members at the Silver level discuss that if one book flights at the right time, monetary savings can be made. Savings can also be made when redeeming bonus points for travel. Further on, many members discuss that larger monetary savings can be made through booking with other companies, and therefore this is frequently done.

From the sample studied, the authors cannot make any evident conclusions regarding hedonic benefits of SAS EuroBonus. However, subjects frequently discussed symbolic benefits. The indications are that before reaching Gold level of the program, members do not receive a higher service than non-members. The feeling of being a part of an exclusive group, which receives recognition, is apparent for Gold and Diamond members. These members receive special treatment by the service provider and therefore get a feeling of superior. However, the subject that had been on a Gold level since the program was introduced, complained about the program not feeling exclusive enough, and the group of Gold and Diamond members being too big.

### 6.4.4 Recommendations

Further, the members from the selected sample express themselves positively about the membership being free of charge. Due to the non-existing cost of joining the program, many subjects would recommend it to a friend. However, some of the subjects pointed out that one should not have any expectations when joining the program and that it mainly is suitable for frequent travellers. Nevertheless, members who have connected their membership to credit cards, complain about the high fees. Some of the subjects also express negative opinions on the fact that the points collected through their credit cards is not used as a basis for their tier-level. Since customers get annoyed by not knowing which points are counted as a basis for the tier-levels, the authors of this thesis believe information about basic and extra bonus points should be communicated more clearly to reduce frustration. Furthermore, the members are confused about the number points received when travelling, opposed to the points collected through credit cards. The authors of this thesis argue for clearer information on how the points system works in order for less confusion and disappointment.

During the interviews, some demands and recommendations from members arose. Access to first class lounge for Diamond members and a less luxurious lounge for Silver members, with access to Internet and comfortable seating would increase the level of satisfaction. Further on, in the chosen sample, there is an overall demand for better service from SAS with friendlier treatment, including refreshments and snacks.
7 Conclusion

The following chapter presents a brief conclusion, drawn by using results from the Analysis.

Through combining the findings from the sample selected with the Frame of Reference, the authors can conclude the assumptions previously made by Söderlund (2003), regarding the customer satisfaction construct being true for this particular sample. It is evident that the use of only dissatisfaction and satisfaction as a measure in consumer research conceal existing negative emotions.

By relating the findings of this study to the general frustration model and at the same time answering the research questions the authors can make some conclusions. To answer the first research question; the authors have identified the main categories of situations, which are perceived as the frustration incidents by the selected sample. Namely incidents related to qualification barriers, inaccessibility, no additional value, additional costs and service. Further, to answer the second research question; the customer frustration sensations within the SAS EuroBonus program result in both strongly and weakly felt frustration sensations. However, it is concluded that the subjects’ feelings are individual. This leads to different individuals perceiving the same incident in different ways, resulting in frustration sensations expressed as for example being pissed off, irritated, angry, frustrated or disappointed. Moreover, to answer the third research question; the response these frustrations bring on program members behaviour towards SAS EuroBonus is categorized as, avoidance, protest and passive behaviour.

When analysing the findings of this study, the authors want to emphasize on the fact that the positioning of SAS, in the minds of the consumers, is very important. Since members perceive SAS as a premium airline, they expect more from SAS, thus when their expectations are not fulfilled frustration arise. In the findings from this study, the authors can clearly distinguish between how Silver, Gold and Diamond members have responded on different questions. The most reasonable interpretation of this, is due to the large difference of access to the benefits members perceive as valuable, since many Silver members perceive higher tier-levels as impossible to reach, but still see themselves as loyal, and therefore think they deserve more benefits. When further looking at different categories of benefits, the one that is most evident in the selected sample is symbolic benefits, this, since companies use individuals’ drive for recognition and exclusiveness as a foundation of frequent flyer programs.

Further, by connecting the empirical findings of this study with the customer satisfaction construct, the authors have been able to conclude, even though individuals claims to be satisfied, members have a lot of dissatisfaction and concealed frustration which, when digging deeper is exposed. Most members never complain directly to the company but instead avoid or behave passively toward the company, in some few situations the members express their emotions by protest behaviour. Thus, if a company never confront and conduct in-depth research within frequent flyer programs, it will never be fully possible for them to understand the magnitude of the problems of negative emotions. Therefore, when weighing the evidence, it appears relatively more likely that companies need to incorporate other negative emotions than dissatisfaction, when conducting consumer research.
8 Discussion

This section presents theoretical implications as well as implications for practitioners of the research conducted. Moreover, it includes further findings, limitations and suggestions for future research.

8.1 Implications

The process of conducting this research has resulted in fulfilled research questions and purpose, but also provided the authors with greater understanding and insights of implications, which could be of interest for both researchers and practitioners.

The authors have applied previous theoretical constructs, the general frustration model and the customer satisfaction construct, on new empirical data and consequently contributed with further knowledge and new perspectives to the previous theories. The main theoretical implication of this research is that companies should not solely focus on using the customer satisfaction construct, since it conceals negative emotions. Instead, companies should use another construct in order to truly understand the frustrations, which arise, and how the company should manage them.

Thus, the authors argue that the topic of research is of great interest for individuals who conduct research or work in the field of CRM. This will be of interest, since it is important to understand that a customer base consists of individuals whom might not express their different types of negative emotions, in research conducted with the customer satisfaction construct. Hence, findings from this thesis can provide implications for SAS and companies with similar frequent flyer programs, to reveal and manage existing negative emotions the members of their programs might possess.

Although the purpose of this thesis was to develop valuable insights for SAS EuroBonus and similar frequent flyer programs, the authors also argue this research could be of interest to other companies within other industries, which use the customer satisfaction construct when conducting consumer research. Thus, the authors want to acknowledge the importance of further evaluating the overall use of the customer satisfaction construct when conducting consumer research. In order to conclude which construct would be of best use, to not conceal negative emotions, further research regarding the customer satisfaction construct and negative emotions is needed.

Furthermore, implementing a frequent flyer program can sound positive and intriguing due to the ability of retaining customers and increasing revenue. However, if one look at the reality, it is much more complicated. Customers are all individuals and value benefits differently, thus making it hard to satisfy the whole customer base. Moreover, if frustration arises within a frequent flyer program, it is possible it negatively influencing not only the program but also the company. This will in turn create a negative perception towards the company, hence resulting in overall dissatisfaction. Therefore, when companies consider implementing a loyalty program, thoughtful consideration is recommended.
Further Findings

The authors have succeeded in delivering the goal of this thesis, which was to tap into the concept of frustration within the SAS EuroBonus program. Nevertheless, during the study, knowledge about SAS was attained, since the members do not perceive SAS and EuroBonus as two separate units. This was not the actual purpose of the thesis, however, this information provided the authors with great understanding of more than initially planned.

The information collected in the chosen sample, concludes Gold and Diamond members mainly travelling with SAS in business purpose, as business travellers. Thus, it appears relatively more likely to reach higher tier-levels if a member is a business traveller than a private traveller. This might be one of the underlying reasons for Silver members complaining more about the program than Gold and Diamond members, since most of them have spent private resources on achieving this. Thus, the consciousness is higher for Silver members than for Gold or Diamond members, which do not spend private resources on achieving higher levels. However this is a result of the fact that frequent flyer programs are based on rewarding members loyal behaviour, thus members of lower tier-levels will not have the possibility of attaining these rewards.

Limitations and Future Research

If a similar research would be conducted, some adjustments should be considered. Firstly, a larger sample would be recommended, in order to provide more reliability of the findings. Moreover, the execution of the interviews could be adjusted. If possible, the interviews should be conducted with more than one interviewer. This, to make sure the data collected to be more accurate. An aspect that limits this study is the authors’ lack of experience when it comes to conducting research, particularly in the field of managing interviews in a correct manner. Consequently, the first conducted interviews might not include the same information as the last ones. However, during the interviews, the authors increased their knowledge and skills, thus creating reliability to the information collected. Moreover, for future research it would be recommended to choose a more experienced interviewer and if possible, conduct the interviews face to face to eliminate surrounding bias as well as observing the body language of the subject. Additionally, misinterpretations of data might exist, because of the authors’ limited experience in qualitative data analysis.

The interviews were conducted with the Swedish market as a focus, since it was not possible for the authors to collect suitable samples from other markets. The sample selection was therefore limited and for further research, studying additional markets would be recommended. Moreover, if not having to translate the transcribed interviews, the authors would be able to conclude content not being lost in translation. One shortcoming of this study is that the sample does not include any members from the Member level; therefore future studies should include these members as well. One interesting future research approach would be to evaluate differences within each tier-level, to gain knowledge and understanding about how new versus old members of that specific tier-level, perceive benefits of the membership.

Lastly, customers have chosen to be a part of a frequent flyer program even though negative emotions exist, this calls for interesting questions that could be further studied. Why have customers chosen to be a part of a program even though it is indicated that
negative emotions towards the program occur? The authors believe SAS and similar companies, which have implemented frequent flyer programs should conduct further research, especially regarding the customer satisfaction construct and also conduct quantitative studies or use larger samples in order to contribute with generalizations. Moreover, it is important to further study the concept of frustration in relation to the customer satisfaction construct but also evaluate the construct using various negative emotions, in order to conclude, which being the most appropriate one. The authors made the choice of focusing solely on frustration, however being fully aware of the fact that more studies have to be conducted in the same manner for various types of negative emotions to conclude which approach being most suitable.
References


9 Appendix

9.1 Figures

SAS Satisfaction Measure (2016) Figure 1.1

SAS Satisfaction Measure (2016) Figure 1.2
### SAS EuroBonus Levels, Benefits and Offers (2016) Figure 3.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>MEMBER</th>
<th>SILVER</th>
<th>GOLD</th>
<th>DIAMOND</th>
</tr>
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<td>Special offers from SAS and other partners</td>
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<td>✅</td>
<td>✅</td>
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<td>Benefits and discounts from partners</td>
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<td>✅</td>
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<td>Free calls and text messages to members with the EuroBonus Connect app.</td>
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<td>✅</td>
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<td>Text messaging service</td>
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</tr>
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<td>✅- 20%</td>
<td>✅- 30%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Free extra baggage with SAS***</td>
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<td>🛰</td>
<td>🛰</td>
<td>🛰</td>
</tr>
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<td>One free or 20 kg extra baggage with Star Alliance (read note below)</td>
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<td>✅</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn 25% more Basic points on SAS &amp; Wideroe</td>
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<td>✅</td>
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<td>✅</td>
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<td>Priority baggage handling and boarding</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Give away a Silver card</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Give away a Gold card or two Silver cards</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended point validity</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose a Welcome gift from our Goody Bag</td>
<td></td>
<td>✅</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2 Interview Guide

- How old are you?
- How long have you been a member of the SAS EuroBonus program?
- What membership level do you have in the SAS EuroBonus program?
- In what purpose do you travel with SAS?
- What is most important for you, when travelling privately?
- Why do you choose to travel with SAS?
- How satisfied are you with SAS EuroBonus on a scale from completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied?
- Are you a member of another frequent flyer program?
- If you look at the picture in front of you, what are your first spontaneous thoughts? *(Show picture of SAS logo)*
- If you look at the picture in front of you, what are your first spontaneous thoughts? *(Show picture of EuroBonus cards)*
- How much knowledge do you have about the SAS EuroBonus program?
- Have you ever taken part of any benefits through your SAS EuroBonus membership?
- What do you feel is the greatest advantage of SAS EuroBonus?
- Have you ever experienced something annoying or negative in conjunction with the SAS EuroBonus program?
  - Can you tell me about a situation where you felt this way?
  - What & how did you feel?
  - How did you act?
  - Can you tell me about another scenario?
  *(Mention various possible benefits from SAS EuroBonus where a negative scenario could arise, such as fast track, lounge, check-in, baggage, bonus points, tier-levels)*
- What expectations did you have when joining the SAS EuroBonus program? What were the reasons for joining?
  - Have these expectations been fulfilled?
  - If expectations have been fulfilled - Do you feel satisfied with what you get out of the program, or do you feel that you would like to have more benefits than what you get today?
  - If expectations have not been fulfilled - How do you feel about your initial expectations not being fulfilled? Do you feel that you get enough out of the program anyway?
  - Why are you still a member?
- Do you consider that the program had deteriorated or improved during your time as a member? *Explain*
- Imagine that SAS would be a person, with what characteristics would you describe that person?
- Imagine that SAS EuroBonus would be a person, with what characteristics would you describe that person, same attributes as SAS or different?
- Do you usually reflect over your membership and the value you get from the program?
- When you redeem your bonus points, do you get surprised or do you keep track of how much points you have and what you can redeem?
- Would you recommend SAS EuroBonus to a friend?