Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming

The study of Omni Channel and its maturity in Swedish Firms

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Abstract

Title: Tomorrow belongs to the ones who hear it coming – A study of Omni Channel and its maturity in Swedish Firms
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Problem
Sweden is currently one of the furthest developed countries in Scandinavia within Omni channel ventures. The number of companies that are completely ready to transition may not be a large number, however there are many that with some help could reach this status. As the retailing industry evolves towards a seamless Omni channel experience, the distinction between physical and online will vanish, and customers will demand a personal communication treatment through all channels. The NBI Network provides a partnership where consultancy firms can use their platform to map out and determine existing as well as potential clients’ maturity levels. These clients can then be approached in order to offer a helping hand in developing an Omni channel strategy.

Purpose
To investigate the maturity level of Omni channel in firms today and what consultants can do to help encourage this transition. Within this purpose, we will also investigate factors that support or prevent Omni channel maturity, as well as capture the future options of Omni channel as seen by experts. To fulfill the purpose, secondary data will be collected from the NBI Dashboard. Our primary data will be collected from the consultants chosen to be a part of the first launch of the initiative in Sweden, together with the experts and partners that drive the change.

Method
We base our thesis on triangulation. We have chosen to use both an inductive and deductive approach as we have a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Our primary data is thereby collected from semi-structured interviews and our secondary data is collected through the NBI dashboard. The empirical findings are then analyzed and categorized according to our research questions, together with the theory presented.

Conclusions
The technology and infrastructure of the country is there to support the development according to the consultants. The largest restriction for the development of Omni channel in Sweden today seems to be the lack of knowledge around the concepts as well as the cost of implementation. We conclude that initiatives such as the NBI Network with its dashboard can provide a road map for the firm in terms of their own position in the market, and a comparison to their competitors.
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1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the reader with a background of the topic of Omni channel and present the problem discussion. The reader will be introduced to the purpose and research questions. Further, our delimitations, perspective and definitions are identified.

1.1 Background

The concept Omni channel once emerged out of a previous concept, customer relationship management, or in short, CRM. CRM appeared in the middle of the 1990's in the Information Technology (IT) vendor and practitioner field. CRM is a technology driven concept that can be used to manage customer relationships, just like sales force automation (SFA) (Payne & Frow, 2005). However, SFA is more tactical whereas CRM more strategically targets customer relationships (Johnston, 2001). The concept of CRM is wide and there are many definitions depending on what subject the researchers are focusing on. The concept can be defined with a focus on strategy or with a focus on tactics. This thesis focuses on the former rather than the latter (Payne & Frow, 2005). “CRM is a cross-functional organizational process that focuses on establishing, maintaining, and enhancing long-term relationships with attractive customers” (Yonggui Wang, Hui Feng, 2012, p.117).

Omni channel communication has increased in recognition over the last years, questions have been raised if it is just another word for multi-channel communication, but there is more to Omni channel communication in terms of content (CRM Magazine, 2014). The older concept of Multi channel communication is a description of different kinds of communication tools where customer experience can be versatile in the different channels (Timlin, 2013). Omni channel however, measures a wider aspect of channels in order to analyze individual customer needs and provides the ability to compare this need and preferences to other customers among different industries. It also gives an opportunity to involve and invite the customers to become more engaged in their own experience. The purpose is to deliver a wide range of services in order to offer a more personalized service that differs from other providers of the same service (CRM Magazine, 2014). According to Brynjolfsson, Hu and Rahman (2013) for a company to survive in an Omni channel market, it is vital to establish new IT strategies, design a personal customer experience, as well as create and maintain customer relationships. The core idea of using Omni channel communication is simple; a company wants to go the extra mile to make the customers feel like they understand and care for their needs in every way (Futturp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016).

So, who is the Omni channel consumer? Fairchild (2013, p.448) describes the consumer as “the central force shaping the future of ecommerce and brick-and-mortar stores alike”. Hence, the consumer is somebody who wants the brand experience and the final product to be available everywhere, at any point in time. An Omni channel strategy aims at satisfying this need by offering a constant personal relationship, through all channels, at all times. As much as Omni channel is currently used in retailing, it is also used as a measurement for marketing purposes (Futturp Kjaer, 17.02.2016).

The idea of industries communicating individually with each customer is daunting and may even sound futuristic to some. However, with the tracking of buying patterns, club cards etc. a company can today use this information to determine each customer's preferences and needs. Many companies have realized that this can be of great benefit to them.
According to Mr. Futturp Kjaer (personal communication, 17.02.2016) companies often only touch upon this on a shallow level. An example of this may be the marketing strategy of junk mails, which most companies send out if a customer has purchased something with them online. This junk mail often has no real interest for the customer, but instead there is a general show of what the special sales of the seasons are. This may actually create the opposite of the desired effect, irritation from the consumer if the sale does not interest them. What Omni channel marketing does in this case, is to take the junk mail and make it a personalized email, addressed only to that customer, offering him or her a special discount on complementary products to which he or she has purchased beforehand (Fut turp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016)

Networked Business Initiative (NBI) is a tool that measures Omni channel communication through a questionnaire, which results are displayed in a dashboard. The Networked Business Intelligence Research Consortium (NBIRC) is collaborating with the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and other industrial partners to form the NBI Network. The NBI Initiative is built on a questionnaire with 30 questions, which creates a dashboard for businesses where they can measure their Omni channel maturity (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016). They can measure their own IT maturity and compare it to other players on the market and measure what maturity level they possess in the digital society of 2016. The purpose of the research is to collect anonymous analytical data for further analysis, both academic and as potential customer spotting for consultancy firms (Fut turp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016).

After a successful launch of the platform in Denmark in 2015, the network has broadened their horizons and are now launching in Sweden, with a strategy of conquering the rest of Scandinavia within the next few years. The initiative has together with their partner Sitecore sought out four consultancy firms in Sweden have had a privileged access to the dashboard. This in an attempt to make their clients and potential clients become involved, receiving the dashboard as result (Houlind, 2015). This type of promotional relationship is just one of many the NBI Network has created to get the word out there and draw companies to their dashboard. The data is then stored for academic purposes. This is a triple win for all parties involved, the network receives the data, the companies receive a free measurement and the consultants (with permission) receives a clear status of their clients’ needs (Fut turp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016).

1.2 Problem

Sweden is currently one of the furthest developed countries in Scandinavia within Omni channel ventures. Even though the number of companies that are completely ready to transition may be small, there are many that with some help could reach this status (Avensia, 2015). Providing this help to the right clients who are open to the change and can see the great potential in having a personal relationship to their customers is an opportunity the consultancy firms recognize. “From a technology perspective, this implementation may need a significant technology investment, procuring or integrating technology platforms. It can also lead to rethinking the role of the store in the Omni channel retail experience.” (Fut turp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016)

As the retailing industry evolves towards a seamless Omni channel experience, Brynjolfsson et al. (2013) argues that the distinction between physical and online will vanish, turning the world into a showroom without walls. The retailing industry is the
industry sector in which Omni channels are mostly used today (Cook, 2014), but given the future prognosis, there is no industry that may be completely untouched by the concept. The idea of the Omni channel customer experiences may be somewhat of a foreign concept to most industries, but could in a near future be a change that many may have to implement in order to stay alive in the market (Cook, 2014).

“Omni channel customers show a very different set of behavior to traditional retail customers. They are better informed, make use of technology and demand more from those retailers they do business with. When they find a retailer that delivers the experience they want, these customers become very loyal and profitable providing that the overall experience is maintained” (Houlind, p. 17, 2015).

The NBI Network provides a partnership where consultancy firms can use their platform to map out and determine existing as well as potential clients’ maturity level. The client fills in the questionnaire and in return receives a dashboard showing their results. The dashboard shows which areas need more attention in order to reach the 25% highest percentile of their industry, a desirable status for any client to achieve. The consultants can then ask permission from the clients to view their dashboard, providing them with solutions in the areas where they lack (Futturp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016).

IT-management, application management, informational architecture, business intelligence etc. are all services that the consultancy firms provide. They develop personal solutions for each client and try to optimize their client’s full potential through all types of IT-solutions. As fairly small players in a competitive environment, the four consultancy firms chosen for the NBI initiative (Avanade, Consid, Mogul and Sigma) have used innovation and specialization to challenge the conventional ways to break a name for themselves in the business (Bokedal, personal communication, 20.05.2016). Therefore, the idea of introducing Omni channel concepts to their customers may not only be of great personal value for them, but may also generate new projects and clients to the company (Zenno, personal communication, 03.03.2016). This thesis aims to fulfill a gap between the general research of Omni channel, determine the Swedish maturity level among firms today and determine what clients and consultants can do in order to achieve a higher IT maturity.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the maturity level of Omni channel in firms today and what consultants can do to help encourage this transition. Within this purpose, we will also investigate factors that support or prevent Omni channel maturity, as well as capture the future options of Omni channel as seen by experts. To fulfill the purpose, secondary data will be collected from the NBI Dashboard. Our primary data will be collected from the consultants chosen to be a part of the first launch of the initiative in Sweden, together with the experts and partners that drive the change.

1.4 Research Questions
- How do IT-consultants work with their clients in order to increase the level of Omni channel maturity?
- What factors help encourage or prevent the maturity level of Omni channel in Sweden?
- How do the experts, partners and consultants see the future of Omni channel?
1.5 Perspective
This thesis involves several parties; the consultants, the NBI network, the experts, the partners and the authors. We have therefore decided that in order to get a less biased perspective, the thesis will be written from our point of view, the authors, with the purpose of contributing to the academic research as well as to the knowledge of the interviewed consultancy firms.

1.6 Delimitations
**Control over data collection:** The secondary quantitative data collection is performed by a second party, even though it is first-hand information, the authors do not have the authority to decide what type of data is collected, neither the amount of the data. As the authors do not have control over this part of the data collection, it may become an obstacle if the data is not collected at the right time.

**Geographic delimitation:** The research was limited due to the fact that Swedish firms could not exclusively answer the NBI dashboard, for our secondary data analysis. We came in at an early stage in the launch of the dashboard on the Swedish market, and therefore there were not enough answers to make our data plausible. Therefore, we chose to proceed with the data contributed from the entire dashboard, which as of right now makes up both Swedish and Danish answers.

1.7 Definitions
**Customer relationship management (CRM):** A systematic fostering of good reciprocal relationships with existing customers, on the basis that this will provide new or ongoing business from that customer with more ease and speed, and less cost, than winning and developing new customers (Doyle, 2011, p. 15)

**Multichannel:** The design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development. (Verhoef, Kannan & Inman, 2015, p.175).

**Cross Channel:** “The fundamental difference between multi- and cross-channel marketing lies in the use of data across channels, this is where Cross Channel meets as a concept of in-between.” (Houlind, 2015, p.24)

**Omni channel:** “The design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development” (Neslin, Grewal, Leghorn, Shankar, Teerling, Thomas, and Verhoef, 2006, p.95)

**Network Business Initiative (NBI):** Starting from a small pilot program in 2010, to becoming a international collaborative network between industry and academia in Denmark and now also Sweden. It measures the maturity level of a company in the spectrum of Omni channel communication in comparison with other businesses. (Fitturup Kjaer, personal communication. 17.02.2016)

**Data mining:** The process of extracting or detecting hidden patterns or information from large databases. With comprehensive customer data, data mining technology can provide business intelligence to generate new opportunities (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009, p. 22).
2 Frame of Reference

This chapter will explore the concepts of CRM, Multi channel, Cross Channel and Omni channel. Their connection and differences will be examined and explained. Furthermore, the NBI project will be explored and the Omni channel hexagon will be introduced. Furthermore, an examination of Swedish IT maturity will be presented.

2.1 Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

There are many definitions to CRM and as of now, one accepted general definition does not exist. Swift (2001, p.8) defines the concept as “Enterprise approach to understanding and influencing customer behavior through meaningful communications in order to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty, and customer profitability”. Wang and Feng (2012, p.117) describe the concept as “CRM is a cross-functional organizational process that focuses on establishing, maintaining, and enhancing long-term relationships with attractive customers”. The latter will be used in this thesis, as it is a relevant definition according to our research.

The concept of CRM appeared in the 1990's as a function of the IT-field and is often referred to as “information-enabling relationship marketing” (Payne & Frow, 2005). Ngai (2005) mentions that customer data and IT-tools shape an effective CRM strategy base. According to Payne & Frow (2005) over the past two decades the Internet has been growing at a substantial rate, which has created a greater platform for marketing opportunities. The way companies create and maintain relationships with other businesses and customers have changed drastically. Many companies incorporate CRM in the organization; however most do not fully understand the concept. In order to fully exploit the field it is important to realize that CRM possess many different definitions and dimensions (Payne & Frow, 2005).

CRM has been depicted as a collection of processes and systems that facilitates the support of business strategy to build successful long-term relationships with targeted customers (Ling & Yen, 2001). The concept includes four different stages, described below:

- **Customer identification**: The recognition of potential key customers. This stage can also refer to the analysis of why customers switch to competitors and how to get them back, in other words customer analysis and customer segmentation (Ling & Yen, 2001).

- **Customer attraction**: Involves the detection of elements that may attract the target customers, such as direct marketing (Ling & Yen, 2001).

- **Customer retention**: Ngai, Xiu & Chau (2009) argue that this is the main part of CRM as it involves the customer satisfaction. In other words, what the customer was expecting and how the possible outcome is related with the customer’s satisfaction. For example, through one-to-one marketing and specifically targeted campaigns (Ling & Yen, 2001).

- **Customer development**: The fourth stage includes how the relationship with customers can be developed over time by analyzing the strength and value of transactions, but also the profitability of each customer. Examples of customer development can be; customer lifetime value analysis, up/cross selling and market basket analysis (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009)
These four dimensions allow for a deeper understanding regarding customers and their long-term value for companies. It is viewed as the main factor of a customer relationship system. This kind of processing of data may also be described as *Data mining*, and can therefore facilitate the process of discovering hidden customer traits and different kinds of behaviors in databases of a larger scale. The four dimensions also contain seven sub-dimensions (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009):

**Association:** How to create relationships between objects that are in the same account, for example market basket analysis or cross-selling programs (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Classification:** The creation of a model to foresee customer behavior in the future by classifying data base records (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Clustering:** Clustering is the task of segmenting a heterogeneous population into a number of more homogenous clusters (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Forecasting:** Estimates future values based on previous patterns in the record (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Regression:** A statistical tool in order to predict values (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Sequence discovery:** How to identify associations or pattern in a longer timespan (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009).

**Visualization:** How data is presented so users can identify and discover complex patterns. (Ngai, Xiu & Chau, 2009)

*Figure 1: Classification framework for data mining techniques in CRM*

*Source: Ngai, Xiu & Chau (2009)*
2.2 Multi channel, Cross Channel or Omni channel?

Omni channel descends from the field of commerce. However, there are many who confuse the concept with multichannel or cross-channel (CRM Magazine, 2014). In this section a description of the three will be made in order for the reader to clearly understand the differences between Multi channel, Cross channel and Omni channel.

2.2.1 Multi Channel

The concept Omni channel sprung from the earlier definition created in the introduction phases of e-commerce and digital marketing, Multi channel. Neslin et al. (2006, p.95) define the concept as: “the design, deployment, coordination, and evaluation of channels to enhance customer value through effective customer acquisition, retention, and development”. This means that the channels can be seen as spots where customers interact or as an intermediary between the firm and the customer. The interaction points to the fact that a channel is a two-way communication tool (Verhoef et.al, 2015).

The word itself describes the ability to use multiple channels in marketing. In the early days there was a tendency for digital marketing functions to simply copy the traditional mechanisms. However, these types of copycat actions were not always a successful concept, leaving the customer confused or untouched (Houlind, 2015). Parker & Hand (2009) and Ortis & Casoli (2009) explain the difference between the consumers in a Multi channel strategy who uses channels collateraly and in an Omni channel strategy where the consumers uses all channels pari passu. There is a natural flow of information in an Omni channel communication that is not repetitive or discharged, as it would be in a Multi channel communication with the customers.

In the past, channels have often had their own executive manager for each channel, one for the app, one for the website, one for social media etc. Each channel has had their own individual budget, target, data collection and even agency, in some cases. This type of solo division causes problems when there is an ambition to bring the business into an Omni channel strategy instead of just a Multi channel strategy. The collection of data is collected, but individually, channel by channel. This old way of collecting data results in data only being used to measure points for that particular function, there is no over-view. Even though this can be of great help to build up a strong app or web-shop, it does cause problems when it comes to integration of the channels (Houlind, 2015).

In comparison between the two concepts, one can determine that an Omni channel strategy incorporates a larger number of channels. It is also important to recognize that the interaction between the channels is not obvious in an Omni channel strategy, it tends to blur out into disappearance as many channels are in interaction with each other (Verhoef et.al, 2015). Brynjolfsson et.al (2013) state that this evolution will have a large impact on company strategies and their level of competitiveness. As an innovative concept, Omni channel is freer and more transparent than Multi Channel. It is eventually going to outperform other concepts and a requirement in order to stay competitive at the market according to CRM Magazine (2014).
2.2.2 Cross Channel

“The fundamental difference between multi- and cross-channel marketing lies in the use of data across channels” (Houlind, p.24, 2015). Cross channel marketing takes the Multi channel marketing strategy and upgrades it another step, recognizing that the customer will switch channels before purchasing the product. However, not fully committing to the concept, which Omni channel represents.

Any type of product with a bit more complexity than a loaf of bread is usually researched or viewed through several different channels before purchase today. Cross channel marketing identifies that each customer has its own purchasing habits and experience, which makes the situation more complex. The days when one single sales funnel could be used for all customers are over, the customer demands more. To make matters worse, there is always a chance that the customer will change their mind. She may fall out of the funnel at any time before the purchase has been transacted. Managers are therefore expected to get data from several different channels to then compare, in an attempt to personalize the segmentation. However, there may still be a situation of internal rivalry between channels in the firm sub optimizing for their personal gain rather than for overall success for the company (Houlind, 2015).

2.2.2 Omni Channel

The Latin word Omni translates to everything or everywhere (Houlind, 2015). Divine omnipresence is another notion we can detect from Christianity: to hear, to see and understand everything. When translating this into a marketing perspective, we look at how every individual customer communicates cohesively with your business through all available channels provided (Houlind, 2015). According to Lazaris & Vrechopoulus (2014) the concept could be found for the first time in reports from the IDC Global Retail Insights, where Parker & Hand (2009) and Ortis & Casoli (2009) propose that the developed shape of a Multi channel consumer is the Omni channel consumer. They also state that the word remained a buzzword for many years, but recently it has been used both by the academic world as well as by professionals.

Rigby (2014) mention that in today’s society, customers are only satisfied if they can get everything they want. Hence, they want to have a full physical store experience with customer service and the possibility to see and touch the product. Furthermore they wish to have the positive aspect of the digital factors, for example all information digitally provided about products, reviews and discounts. The idea regarding the concept of Omni channel is that the customer, regardless of which channel he or she chooses to interact with, will have one seamless meaningful experience. For this to even be possible, the business
has to recognize the customer and then collect data for every interaction made between them. This data then has to be remembered and applied in all communication and service in the future, regardless of the channel used (Houlind, 2015).

2.3 The Networked Business Initiative

The Networked Business Initiative was created in 2010 as a small pilot program. Over the next four years the project grew to include both a large number of industries and academia, all eager to share their experiences, data and knowledge within networked technology. “Now the “pet-project” has developed into a social entrepreneurship and a collaborative free platform, which is on the verge to launch worldwide in 20 countries with a possible 3500 partnering organizations targeting more than 250,000 companies” (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

The project recognizes the need for understanding the potential and use of networked technologies. Their ultimate goal is to create a global initiative where industry development will align how to measure all types of technologies - social media, cloud, web, big data, mobile etc. Furthermore, they want to explore how these channels can be implemented across all major business functions such as HR and Marketing (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

The Networked Business Intelligence Research Consortium (NBIRC) in partnership with other academic institutions as well as industrial partners founds the Networked Business Initiative. The network currently consists of the following partners:

Networked Business Institute - The initiators and founders of the program who drive the daily operations.

Copenhagen Business School - The NBI shares a partnership with the Computational Social Science Laboratory (CSSL) at the Department of IT Management for research purposes regarding the project.

Sitecore - Sitecore is a global software development company, who partly sponsors this program. They provide management platforms that combine the customer intelligence with web content management with a desire to create one-on-one interactions with customers at every touch point. (Bokedal, personal communication, 20.05.2016)

The Danish Chamber of Commerce - The combined network created for the service industry in Denmark. They represent 17,000 companies and 100 trade associations represented by a vast majority of industries in the country.

The Confederation of Danish Industry - (DI) is a private organization. They are funded, owned and managed entirely by 10,000 companies within the manufacturing, trade and service industry (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

2.3.1 The NBI Dashboard

The Networked Business Intelligence Research Consortium (NBIRC) has created an online survey for the use of measuring a company’s Omni channel maturity. After a company signs up from a login provided by one of the partnering consultancy groups, they fill out the questionnaire of 30 questions, and in return they gain a unique dashboard with a personalized login that can be used for internal benefits. The consultants may then ask for permission to view the firm’s dashboard, a win-win scenario where the firm is shown what
they lack and the consultant can provide the right solutions. The answers are collected and then analyzed through the NBI database and then shown on the dashboard. The results are then illustrated through charts showing the results in many different perspectives. These results can then be compared to the results of other companies, both within and outside of the company’s own industry, as well as to the highest 25% of the industry (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

![IT Utilization Score Chart](image)

*Figure 3: IT Utilization* Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)

### 2.3.2 Consultancy Firms Sweden

After a successful launch in Denmark in 2015, the NBI Initiative decided to launch the dashboard internationally, with a strategy to start with Sweden, then onto the other Nordic countries and so on. Denmark and Sweden are not only close geographically, but they also share many similarities in infrastructure, business climate and culture.

With their headquarter situated in Jönköping, Consid was the first consultancy firm we came in contact with. The initial contact started in October 2015, when one of the authors emailed the firm asking if they were interested in acquiring two master students for some extra help with a real-life project. Patrik Zenno, Business Area Manager, took us under his wing and has been an enormous source of knowledge and help. Consid introduced us to the NBI network and Sitecore, and together we have shaped the research for this thesis. The other consultancy firms were gracious enough to let us interview them, as well as join them on a full-day seminar in Stockholm.

The four consultancy firms chosen through the help of Sitecore to be the initial launchers of the dashboard and have exclusive right in the first year are as follows:

- **Consid**
- **Mogul**
- **Avanade**
- **Sigma**
We chose consultancy firms Consid, Sigma and Mogul as they are all transforming from technical consultants into digital transformation consultants with a focus on the customer relationship, it’s an exciting journey we are making with them exploring new possible strategies including the Omni channel mindset. Avanade is our biggest partner globally and so therefore they also had their natural invite from us to join. (Bokedal, personal communication, 20.05.2016)

A larger discussion on the consultancy firms can be found in the Empirical Findings.

2.3.3 IT Maturity Levels

Below a list of other models that measure maturity levels of IT is presented. These models have been disregarded in this research study. We have chosen to use the Omni Channel Hexagon as it provides the firm with many different tools of measurements. According to Houlin (2015), the Omni channel Hexagon is a mix between several different models and developed based on deep knowledge and understanding of the concept. As this is the model that the NBI Network has used for their dashboard, we saw it fit to also incorporate it into our thesis.

IT Performance Measurement Maturity Model”, (ITPM), aims to build a base for how other maturity models can be developed and is built on several models and studies. (Becker, Knacksstedt & Poppelbuß, 2009).

Analysis Capability Maturity Model (ACMM), which describes how to evaluate processes of organizations that conduct state-commissioned studies for example (Becker et.al, 2009).

Business Process Management Maturity (BPMM) investigates in the maturity of process management in a business and must cope with scientifically accepted standards (Becker et.al, 2009).

Capability Maturity Model (CMM) is a framework that describes the main factors of an efficient process within software development (Goksen, Cevik, & Avunduk , 2015)

Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI): This model works with different models and is mainly based on a famous maturity model, CMM (Capability Maturity Model) (Becker et.al, 2009). SWCMM, the systems engineering capability model (SE-CM) and the integrated product development capability maturity model (IPD-CMM) were merged into become the CMMI (Goksen et.al, 2015).

2.3.4 The Omni Channel Hexagon

The academic research behind the initiative has taken three years to produce the Omni channel Hexagon, a maturity model measuring six disciplines. It was created for companies to not only determine what maturity level they currently have; it should also be used as a roadmap of how to optimally exploit digital possibilities (Houlind, 2015). “The purpose of the maturity model is to outline the path to maturation, thus enabling benchmarking and providing a roadmap for future progress.” (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016). In other words the model seeks to determine the maturity as a measure to evaluate the derivative of business value. (Houlind, 2015)

The customer is focused to the middle of the model, surrounded by the six disciplines of Omni channel marketing. They represent all factors that the firm should try to optimize to
a mature and customer-oriented degree. Furthermore, it aims to encourage continued work across channels and can be used as a guide on how to constantly improve them. The disciplines are not to be viewed in any specific order. However, it will be difficult to exceed in one discipline without having somewhat of maturity in another as they go hand-in-hand. The goal is not to focus solemnly on one area at a time to optimize, but rather to slowly move inwards in all together as the channels are being created, preserved and strengthened (Houlind, 2015).

Customer Recognition and Permission Gathering - The goal is to reach out to as many customers you can determine and do this through your own initiative. The greater the customer reach, the greater the total impact, as well as less expenditures that have to be spent on other media outlets (Houlind, 2015).

Data Collection - The only way for your company to remember a customer is to store his/her data. It is vital that every single customer is transcribed systematically so that it can be used for the analysis of more relevant communication and service. The goal is to provide a comprehensive picture of all customers in your base (Houlind, 2015).
Data Discovery - A fundamental understanding of the correlation between data and desirable/undesirable customers’ behavior is vital in order to actually use the data. This data should then be used to in the company’s prioritization and estimation of impact on the new marketing initiatives (Houlind, 2015).

Communication and Service - The way the data is then used to communicate and provide the right service for each customer is vital for the data to be of any use. The right offer at the right time acknowledges that the firm knows their customers history, both when they turn to them and vice versa (Houlind, 2015).

Performance Analysis - In order to develop a customer-focused organization, you have to measure more than just a few individual channels. One way to do this is to incorporate customer centric measurements in your performance analysis (Houlind, 2015).

Organizing and Management - All internal structures have to be open to support customer servicing across channels. The firm also has to possess the right set of skills and tools in order to do so (Houlind, 2015).

2.4 IT Maturity in Sweden
According to the Global Information Technology Report 2015, Sweden is ranked as the third most well developed, mature country to use IT and communication in the world. The only countries ranking higher are Singapore and Finland. 39 % of the world's population has access to the Internet, but the division is highly dependent on the overall wealth of the country. The concept of digital poverty is very much a real fact concerning many of the underdeveloped parts of our world (Alvarez, Dutta, Behar, Enriques & Battista, 2015).

![Figure 5: Global Information Technology Report - Sweden Source: Alvarez et al. (2015)]
Looking at the graph represented, the report concludes that Sweden is above the average high-income global citizen in almost every aspect of the graph. Most significantly, there is a large individual usage in Sweden, much more than the average. Business usage is not far behind, as well as the infrastructure, leaving the report to conclude that the Swedish IT landscape is optimal for expansion in the next coming years (Alvarez et al., 2015).

Since the 1950’s, Sweden has built public education, training systems and welfare-safety nets that have been praised around the globe, in an attempt to avoid excess concentrations of wealth and power. Examples can be drawn from transparent, decentralized democratic institutions, gender equity and civil rights to mention a few actions made. Income inequality may again be rising in Scandinavia, however, it is still much lower than most of their European neighbors. Freedoms to benefit from new technologies are encouraged and widespread, which is partially why Sweden scores highly on the social, economical and political impact of the Web (World Wide Web Foundation, 2015).
3 Method

In order for us to fully understand the underlying factors regarding the concept of Omni channel and its existing maturity, a mixed methods approach will be conducted. A quantitative data collection of the NBI questionnaire will be done together with a qualitative data collection of semi-structured interviews from every consultant firm chosen to be a part of the initiative, together with experts on the subject. Our chosen methods are explained below with arguments regarding why.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) describe research philosophy as a system that is built on beliefs and assumptions of the process of knowledge creation. In most cases it is necessary to look at the assumptions in order to decide upon a research philosophy. There are three different types of assumptions: Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology. Ontology regards the assumptions concerning reality and its nature. Another way of writing this is that you, as the researcher, decides on your own research topic and therefore also how the world is seen from your personal perspective. Epistemology includes assumptions about knowledge, what is valid and reliable knowledge? How can we make others comprehend this type of knowledge? The assumption allows for a wider range of methods to be accepted. However, it is important to realize that using different kinds of methods also may create some obstacles and therefore it is important to mention and argue for limitations and strengths in each method. The last assumption mentioned is Axiology, describing the importance of values and ethics within the process of a research. For example, how values are dealt with both from the researcher’s perspective and the contributors of the research (Saunders et.al, 2009).

According to Saunders et.al (2009) it is important to choose an accurate research philosophy, but also the research approach. There are four different types of philosophies to choose from as a researcher. These are:

- **Positivism**: The philosophical position of the natural scientist where the researcher normally uses deductive approaches, for example, building hypothesis based on already existing theories.
- **Realism**: What we experience in our mind is exactly what the world is illustrating, it is realistic. Realism criticizes the positivistic philosophy.
- **Interpretivism**: This theory refers to the fact that the researcher steps into the role of interpreting and comprehend the social world from their personal perspective. Interpretivism leaves room for own interpretations and assumptions about the social world and is also developed as a critical philosophy to positivism.
- **Pragmatism**: Uses different methods in order to answer the research question. It may use hypothesis, theories, concepts ideas, and findings in order to interpret what importance they have for the specific problem. Reality is also crucial for pragmatism as it may affect the ideas and understanding. Normally, the research is based on a practical outcome and is not abstract. The most important part from the pragmatist point of view when it comes to strategy and design is the research problem and also the research question. The pragmatist usually sees the world from different perspectives and interprets it in the same way (Saunders et.al 2009).
As the first three are not accurate philosophies for our thesis they have been disregarded. Our thesis chooses to use a mixed methods approach; hence, both qualitative and quantitative data is examined. Therefore we need a philosophy that allows for this use of methods. A pragmatism epistemology is the most useful philosophy and assumption for this thesis due to the fact that we are working with different parties and different perspectives. The different methods will be used in order to interpret the research problem and the research question.

3.2 Research Approach

In any academic paper it is crucial to understand what research approaches to use and why. Three reasons are mentioned in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2012). Firstly, it will supply a better comprehension of the research design. Secondly, it will facilitate the selection of research strategy and method. Thirdly, the process of understanding the limitations of the research method will be easier.

Ghauri & Grønhaug (2010) discuss two types of research approaches; inductive and deductive. The inductive research approach is normally based on empirical data and starts by collecting data. Subsequently the collected data is analyzed and builds a body for the theory. The theory is formulated based on already existing academic literature and knowledge.

Inductive approaches are mostly used in qualitative research. Usually it includes interviews, or case investigation, as these provide a deeper understanding of a subject that is more detailed (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

To use an inductive strategy for case studies, can be beneficial if the study collects quantitative data. There are two reasons to why this is relevant. The first one includes the explanation of behavior and events that your study is investigating in. Secondly, the collected data may be a part of the analysis in the case study. In both cases, the qualitative data can be viewed from a critical perspective (Yin, 2012)

The deductive approach is normally connected with quantitative studies (Alexandiris, 2006). The approach is typically examined through hypothesis, which is broken down from the theory assumptions. “Deduction begins with an expected pattern that is tested against observations, whereas induction begins with observations and seeks to find a pattern within them” (Babbie, 2010, p.52). It concentrates on hypothesis testing that are accepted or rejected. These tests normally follow logical patterns but it does not mean that they have to be true (Snieder and Larner, 2009).

3.2.1 Mixed Methods (Triangulation)

Triangulation is, according to Yin (2012), “The convergence of data collected from different sources, to determine the consistency of a finding”

A set of methods that utilizes two or more methods to indicate that the final result is correct is called triangulation. Data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and environmental triangulation are all included in the field of qualitative studies and aims to reinforce the truthfulness of the final result (Guion, 2011; Yin 2012; Patton, 2002). A triangulation method may help to reinforce the validity of a case study. Since there are several different sources of evidence, this method also gives the opportunity to measure the evidences in different ways, which creates a higher level of credibility (Yin, 2012).
We base our thesis on a mixed approach, also referred to as triangulation. We have chosen to use both an inductive and deductive approach as we have chosen to work with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. The inductive approach that has been adopted is based on in-depth interviews and first-hand information combined with academic literature. As we have chosen to use a mixed approach, both data collection methods will be used in order to reach our purpose and answer the research questions. In order to understand the chosen subject for this thesis, it is required to have a deep knowledge of the subject and therefore interviews are an accurate form of collecting data. However, we recognize the importance to collect quantitative data from the NBI Network as a base to build our questions upon, as the research is extensive and the dashboard will provide us with data that will improve our research.

Methodological triangulation is often used when studies chose a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, consequently strengthening the reliability of the results. In order to get an accurate outcome from the data collection, a methodological approach has been utilized. Interviews, the dashboard and existing literature have been examined in order to obtain accurate data to analyze. In this kind of research, the triangulation method is used frequently but it may be time consuming, as it requires many resources (Guion, 2011). The use of more resources may also inquire higher costs for the research, than if the data would be collected from only one source. Another aspect to consider is that the researcher needs to have knowledge about the different data collection techniques, if not that may have a negative impact on the study (Yin, 2012).

3.3 Research Strategy & Data Collection

According to Singh (2009), a research strategy is a general plan for the structure, solution and the objective of a research study. It aims to solve a problem through these aspects based on an outline for the study. The research strategy is a part of the developmental process of the research approach. For this particular case, data from both surveys and interviews will be collected in combination with previous knowledge from existing literature. The interviews were carried out as semi-structured in order to collect the most accurate and interesting data possible. The interviews were all conducted face to face as to gain real, in-depth data and for the free follow-up questions to come naturally.

The quantitative data will be collected and analyzed through the NBI platform. We will then analyze the collected secondary data in order to combine it with the knowledge that has been obtained through our primary data collected from the interviews. As the two external parties are co-operating on a business level, it is important to take into consideration that the answers might be biased during the interviews. It is also crucial to acknowledge that as we do not have first-hand control over the data collection, it may be necessary to calculate for some delay in the data collection process. Another important factor to realize is that the answers in the survey may not be carefully answered and therefore not accurate. These aspects are all vital parts to consider when the data collection is performed (Yin, 2012).

The data used for the analysis and conclusion is divided into two categories, our primary data and our secondary data. The primary data can be described as all the data we have collected first handily on our own. The data is ours and cannot be traced back to any other external source. The secondary data is the data we have collected through any information that has been collected before our research was conducted, by any other researcher. All
these researchers have been acknowledged for their contribution through accurate references (Yin, 2012).

3.3.1 Primary Data
The primary data collected for this thesis was all done through face-to-face interviews. A positive aspect of collecting your own primary data is that you as the researcher will have complete control of the whole collection process. However, it may take time to collect all information, it brings in extra costs and it can be difficult to get admission to the data (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). Yin (2012) discusses how there are strengths and weaknesses in every method chosen for the collection of data. We identify that our main strengths by choosing semi-structured interviews are that we focus directly on the topic at hand and can lead our interviewee through the process. Furthermore, we acknowledge that interviews are also perceived to be casual and more information may be obtained in this way than through for example, a written correspondence. We also recognize that adding observations to further develop our primary data only will strengthen the research.

A common mistake when choosing interviews as the primary data collection method is that the questions may be biased or poorly constructed. There is also always a chance that the respondents’ answers may be biased or inaccurate due to poor recall. Another weakness identified may be the issue of reflexivity. For example, the interviewee may respond to a question with the answer that they believe the interviewer wants to hear. We have chosen to tackle these issues in different ways, and the solutions will be presented throughout the following sections (Yin, 2012). Normally, the researcher uses secondary data as a first hand choice. However often this data does not fully answer the question the researcher wants to answer, and this is where the importance of collecting primary data comes into play (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

The reason we choose to collect our own primary data is to go beyond the initial question of how mature companies are to Omni channel and dig deeper into what factors play a key role for consultants when helping them achieve maturity or even just primary knowledge of the concept. This type of data cannot be collected through our secondary data from the NBI questionnaire, but had to be explored on our own, through in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the consultants, partners and experts on the subject.

3.3.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews
A semi-structured interview is a type of collection strategy within qualitative research. The researcher gathers information by asking the interviewee questions with open endings that are already organized before the interview. The interviewer is in more control over the interview, than in unstructured interviews, but has more freedom than in structured interviews. The interviewer normally organizes this type of interview in advance and then lets the correspondent answer freely (Given, 2008). The questions we have chosen for our interviews are a mix of standardized questions that all follow the same type of interview style for all respondents, and others are personal to that specific interview and build up the topic as follow up questions.

We identify the need to be accurate, as a structured interview would have provided less in-depth answers and an unstructured interview may lead the topic astray. As a triangulation approach is used as a base for this research, it is important to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore, qualitative data is collected in terms of in-depth interviews based on a semi-structured approach.
The purpose for using sampling interview techniques is to encourage the respondent to reflect personally about the topic and problem. According to Kitchin and Tate (2000) this creates an open dialogue where the respondent may provide more valuable answers than in a fully structured interview. In order for the respondent to feel comfortable and initiate trust, we have offered them to be anonymous, should they choose to do so.

The interviews were held in both Stockholm (14-26 of April) and Jönköping (27-29 of April), as can be viewed in the table below. They lasted between 36 min to an hour 11 min, depending on the interviewee. We conducted most of our interviews at the consultant’s offices but also at Sitecore. We based our questions on the NBI Dashboard, which can be viewed in the appendix provided. We chose to stay within a limit of 15 questions, due to the fact that they were all open-ended and the interviewee often spun out in their own direction with a question.

Table 1: **Interview Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interview Duration</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rasmus Houlind</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>25/04/16</td>
<td>53 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mårten Bokedal</td>
<td>Marketing Director</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>20/04/16</td>
<td>47 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Futturp Kjaer</td>
<td>Head Organizer of the NBI</td>
<td>Jönköping</td>
<td>28/04/16</td>
<td>38 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elia Sjömar</td>
<td>Digital Business Developer</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>21/04/16</td>
<td>34 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrik Zerno</td>
<td>Business Area Manager</td>
<td>Jönköping</td>
<td>29/04/16</td>
<td>1 h 11 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Rydstöm</td>
<td>Regional Sales Manager</td>
<td>Jönköping</td>
<td>27/04/16</td>
<td>46 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Gustavsson</td>
<td>Business Analyst</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>26/04/16</td>
<td>51 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulf Streiby</td>
<td>Communication Strategist</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>25/04/16</td>
<td>43 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan Nedin</td>
<td>Group Manager</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>14/04/16</td>
<td>37 min</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.1.2 Observations

We were given the opportunity to observe the consultants, Mr. Houlind (Author) and Mr. Bokedal (Sitecore) at a seminar encouraged by Sitecore in Stockholm in April. This was not a meeting where our thesis was in focus, and therefore it does not fill a large role for our findings. However, we see this as an important day nonetheless as one of the authors could be there and tie valuable connections with the consultants and experts. All the interviewees chosen for this thesis were first approached during this initial meeting.

3.3.2 Secondary data

As Patton (2002) state, the most common way for researchers to approach their thesis and answer their research question is to use both primary and secondary data. Some examples of secondary data can be printed articles, online articles, journals, books etc. The purpose
of using secondary data has always been to find theories in different areas that could be of use to this study. Theories will be collected regarding CRM, Omni channel, the NBI network and the Swedish maturity level within IT in an attempt to cover a vast majority of the subjects. We will use the data collected by the NBI network as part of our own analysis regarding the maturity level of Omni channel. Most of our secondary research will be collected through the Jönköping University Library database. All databases used are academic, with a focus on Google Scholar, DIVA and Scopus (Patton, 2002).

3.3.2.1 NBI Network Questionnaire

The questions provided by the NBI questionnaire are both open ended and scale-like. The survey covers five technologies across six business functions, stated in the theory. Researchers are constantly working on developing the survey further with input from the industry. The survey is designed to collect data from many different-sized companies, both large and small. The answers are collected from a diverse set of executives and employees, in both local and international companies across Sweden and Denmark. The outcome is an overall assessment of the larger extent of adoption of Omni channel by the responding company across every business function. A selection of variables can later then be chosen to view where the company is located in a comparing maturity level to its competitors as well as the benchmarked (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

A team of researchers at Copenhagen Business School has developed the provided dashboard and maturity model for the company to easy review their results upon. The designs of the study, the models and the questionnaire have all been created through focus groups consisting of a group of selected experts from the NBI partner network, complemented by systematic literature analysis. The results have helped build the maturity model, core elements of the maturity matrix and the definition process of the dimensions (Houlind, 2015).

3.4 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by both members of the research team and resulted in pages of transcription. The documents, together with audio recordings of the interviews have been stored and can be made available upon request. The audio recordings have been analyzed together by the researchers, and then transcribed. The actual words spoken by the interviewee is the raw data at hand we have categorized as our primary data. Nothing can substitute the data of the actual spoken word according to Patton (2002). As some of the interviewees chose to answer in Swedish, we have had to translate some of our material. An extensive amount of time has been put to transcribing the interviews to achieve a detailed and accurate data collection. As Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend, we used a data reduction techniques in order to categorize our empirical findings. We chose to categorize our findings in regards to our three research questions; our analysis pursues the same structure in the following chapter. The material we found to not be relevant to our purpose was excluded from the thesis.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) suggest theme identification when gathering and examining the empirical data. We chose to categorize our data, dividing them into the three research questions. The primary data was matched with the secondary data. The secondary data was categorized into the following headings: digitalization, IT-investment and IT-strategy. The answers from the respondents regarding the themes were then matched towards our research questions. To ensure that the standard of our analysis would meet that of high quality, a continuous discussion was held throughout the interview process.
between the authors. We gave ourselves enough time to discuss and also solemnly reflect on the empirical findings before the start of our analysis.

3.5 Trustworthiness and Ethics

According to Yin (1994) and Kumar (2014), two main research findings can be determined to create extensive quality: validity and reliability. Validity describes to which extent the research measured actually determines what the researcher foresaw them to assess. Reliability on the other hand, focuses on the actual persecution of the data collection and if the empirical findings may be independent (Yin, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) however, state that the validity of a qualitative study depends on its credibility, as well as its transferability. Therefore, the trustworthiness of this study will be discussed through its reliability, credibility and transferability.

3.5.1 Reliability

The reliability of a paper regards whether the data collection technique used will result in the same findings if the same research were to be made again or at a later convenience (Patton, 2002). In order to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the research made, reliability in regards to the study may result in questions involving credibility, judgment and trust according to Marshall and Rossman (2010).

Marshall and Rossman (2010) critique semi-structured interviews or in-depth interviews in terms of reliability in the argument that these techniques are not always supposed to be repeated as they often reflect the current feelings when conducting the interview. To reduce the possible negative assessments, they recommend a detailed description of notes should be kept regarding the research design, as well as the reasons chosen for method and data. The records can in this way then later are examined by other researchers, the procedures can be applied and a completion can be made of a re-analysis. Another issue stated at the interviews was that of an environment that encouraged fair answers. As Vartanian (2011) states, this may be a limitation to the possible threat of participant bias. This study aimed at avoiding these issues by taking the right precautions. This is why all interviews were conducted in rooms with only the researchers and respondent present, as to encourage the respondent to answer freely without the response being altered by the influence of colleagues overhearing.

Furthermore, we adapted the interview questions to the language best suited for the interviewee, as a positive encourager for them to share their information. We tried to create a relaxed interview atmosphere, however the location was not chosen by us and therefore we had to stay flexible. For example, interviews were interrupted by phone calls and that is why we identify that this study may not be entirely lacking participant errors and bias.

The interviewee was given time to think about each question, responding in no haste, with questions that were worded in an unbiased way. We sent out the questions before hand so that the interviewee would have enough time to prepare and think through his answers. As the interviews were both held in Swedish and English, depending on the choice of the interviewee, we identify that there is a risk of some data becoming lost in translation. However, as both authors are Swedish by birth and one author is American by nationality, we see this risk as minimal.
3.5.2 Credibility
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) credibility deals with how compatible the research study is with reality, a large argument for the study’s trustworthiness. In order to achieve a high level of credibility in our thesis, we have chosen a triangulation of data collection, carefully documented and analyzed. Since we have chosen to go with a mixed methods approach, it is important to ensure that the conclusions drawn are reasonable to ensure a high quality thesis (Jacobsen, 2002). A high level of credibility can be achieved through semi-structured interviews, according to Patton (2002), if they are performed in a careful and detailed way.

3.5.3 Transferability
The transferability of our study regards the extent to which this study can be applied and re-enacted again according to Vartanian (2011). The chosen method of data collection, semi-structured interviews, makes this possible as we provide the questions below and they can be applied once again. We have gathered the relevant data and documented it to our best abilities, with the hope that this will keep our thesis at a high transferability through the thorough explanation of preparations, execution and empirical findings.

3.5.4 Ethics
“Ethics refers to the appropriateness of your behavior in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it. “ (Saunders et. al., p. 183, 2009)
Throughout our research process we have been guided by the principles of writing an ethically correct thesis. The choice of participating in the study was entirely up to the consultants; we realized the importance of not pressuring them into this. We have tried to make the interviewees feel in control of their own answers, and completely comfortable with anything recorded. We have offered all interviewees to be anonymous if they wish to do so, however no one decided that this would be necessary.
4 Empirical Findings

The data collected through the NBI Network will be presented, together with the results from the interviews conducted. The secondary data collected will be presented as a ground for how we have chosen to base our interview questions, as well as a background to where the future of the concept is heading. A presentation of each consultancy firm together with a brief introduction on each respondent from the companies will be given. Their personal view and understanding of the concept of Omni channel and its maturity will be shown. We have chosen to pick out certain aspects of each client’s responses in order to differentiate the answers and show how each interview gave its own perspective to the research.

4.1 Empirical Findings

The dashboard is presented after the questionnaire is finished, showing the personal IT maturity of the firm. They can then compare themselves to others in the industry, choose the top 25 percentile of the industry or even internationally compare themselves to other industries. Responding companies and partners of the NBI project have access to the dashboard, but permissions have to be given in order for them to be viewed. The NBI Network can obtain the company’s aggregated data and benchmark this for further comparison and academic use. The dashboard helps the company determine their own capabilities and performance (Networkedbusiness.org, 2016).

“The dashboard helps you become an expert in Omni channel, you go from zero to hero.” (Futturp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016)

The research has been conducted by the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in cooperation with NBI Initiative and Mr. Rasmus Houlind, author and researcher behind the Omni channel hexagon. Several partners listed in chapter 2 have helped finance the initiative. The dashboard aims to assist managers and businesses with a digital maturity model that can help organizational developments and promote changes that lead to an advanced digital maturity (Futturp Kjaer, personal communication, 17.02.2016) The survey includes more than 30 questions about five different technologies across six different business functions. It has been developed in collaboration with a set of experts from both the academic and the industrial world (networkedbusiness.org). The aim of the survey is firstly, to look for a pattern that leads to maturity and secondly, to validate a tool for benchmarking that will result in a digital maturity model. (Networkedbusiness.org).
4.1.1 Digitalization

- To what extent is the company, in your opinion, a digitally mature company today?

78% of the respondents believe the their company is digitally mature, to some degree or more. The majority of the correspondents (38%) place themselves down the middle, but we can see that over-all the respondents are confident in their maturity.

- To what extent has digitalization been a priority in the company over the last 3 years?

Figure 6: Digital Maturity Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)

Figure 7: Digitalization as a priority in the past Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)
Only 5% respond that digitalization has not been a priority in the company in the last three years, a positive number for our research. Again, the respondents are confident in their company and its digitalization, with 50% answering to a large degree or more.

- **To what extent will digitalization be a priority in the company in the coming year?**

![Digital Maturity Graph](image)

*Figure 8: Digital Maturity Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)*

The digitalization strategy increases among firms, as 80% respond that they are prioritizing this to a large degree or more in the upcoming year. Only 1% responded not at all.
4.1.2 IT Investment

How were the company’s IT investments over the past year, compared with previously?

Figure 9: IT Investments in the past year Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)

The majority of respondents (49%) answer that their IT investments have increased, and an alarming number (12%) do not know.

- To what extent do you agree that the following are barriers that affect the company's investments in technology?

Figure 10: Barriers Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)

According to the dashboard, lack of time is the biggest barrier to the investments in technology with a score of 2.6. Second place, 2.3, is shared by lack of knowledge on the
return of investment and financial resources. Lack of skills and lack of capabilities/ functionality in existing software scored 2.1 and 2.0.

4.1.3 Strategy
Has your company adopted a digital strategy/plan?

![Graph showing the adoption of digital strategy/plan](image)

**Figure 11: Digital Strategy/Plan** Source: Networkedbusiness.org (2016)

55% answered that they do not have a digital strategy or plan, a surprisingly large number. Whereas only 37% of the respondents know for certain that they do.

4.2 Consultancy Firms
The six consultants chosen to participate in our semi-structured interviews represent the four consultancy firms that were chosen to promote the NBI dashboard in Sweden during its first year of launching. All consultants were present at the workshop in Stockholm and were afterwards approached for further interviews.

We chose consultancy firms Consid, Sigma and Mogul as they are all transforming from technical consultants into digital transformation consultants with a focus on the customer relationship, it’s an exciting journey we are making with them exploring new possible strategies including the Omni channel mindset. Avanade is our biggest partner globally and so therefore they also had their natural invite from us to join. (Bokedal, 20/04/16)

Below Figure 16 is presented where all of the consultants and experts that we chose to interview are described. We chose to draw up this figure in an attempt to clear out any possible confusion on how each interviewee is connected to the initiative.
4.2.1 Consid

4.2.1.1 Patrik Zenno - Business Area Manager

Mr. Zenno is the head of digital business at Consid; his official title is Business Area Manager. In short, my team and me help clients create business changing digital solutions - primarily as advisors, strategists and business consultants.

Mr. Zenno has been our primary contact at Consid from the very beginning and has been our go-to for all questions and problems. Mr. Zenno has been kind enough to invite us to several large meetings with the NBI Network and Sitecore, as well as taken personal interviews. He introduced us to the NBI Network and helped us create contact with all other consultants.

Omni channel and its maturity

Mr. Zenno is one of the initial contacts between the NBI Network and Consid, and has therefore had close contact with the initiative for several months. He is positive to the collaboration and strongly believes that it will benefit not only the clients, but also the consultants. He recognizes the academic value of measuring Omni channel maturity in firms and believes that the best way to move forward is to collaborate, in order to increase not only the clients, but the consultants knowledge regarding Omni channel strategy implementation. “The initiative is rapidly growing into new markets and collecting data from companies all over the world, so we could soon benchmark the Omni channel state of the nation, Sweden, towards the rest of the world. Without those facts and figures on the table, my personal experience is that many Swedish companies are putting digital into their strategy and starts challenging their own organizations to create more seamless customer experiences, but they still struggle on the "how" and execution.”

4.2.1.2 Christian Rydström - Regional Sales Manager

Mr. Rydström is the Regional Sales Manager for the Malmö Office at Consid. He has an extensive career within IT sales behind him and is one of the corner contacts for our research. Mr. Rydström has been present at many of the meetings one of the authors attended and has been a great source of information for us in the writing process.

Omni channel and its Maturity
Mr. Rydström is a firm believer in the development of IT in the next decade and speaks with great enthusiasm about the concept of Omni channel. In the next 10 years to come, he believes that the personal experience between customer and company will become more and more important. “Speed and struggle free relations with brands will in the future just increase when our children turn into adults or teenagers. They are getting used to this more and more frequently, and they will not be satisfied with having half assed experiences in the future.” Companies will be forced to be on their toes in the relations with their clients, Mr. Rydström explains, or the clients will go somewhere else and the companies not adapting will vanish from the market faster and faster.

“In general I think that Swedish companies are quite far behind in the development within Omni channel. Countries like USA, UK and Australia are leading the development, and Sweden and the rest of Europe seems to be in the middle in the middle of the curve when it comes to status in Omni channel.”

4.2.2 Sigma

4.2.2.1 Peter Gustavsson - Business Analyst - Digital Transformation

Mr. Gustavsson is a Business Analyst – Digital Transformation and Head of Sigma Business Optimization Services. Through a partnership with Sitecore, Sigma was offered the opportunity to be apart of the NBI Initiative. Mr. Gustavsson was chosen as head of the implementation strategy and manager of the project from Sigma’s response.

Omni channel and its Maturity

Mr. Gustavsson remembers hearing about the term somewhere around 2010 to differentiate technical capabilities from Multichannel. Most customers are aware of the term but there are a variety of explanations of the concept, something that can be quite difficult to determine and may slow down the process according to him. When asked about the maturity level of Sweden today he adds, “I don’t have an adequate international perspective of the maturity internationally, to give a good view on this, but what I can say is that large international firms striving for the development of Omni channel strategies inspire us. As there are many more international success stories than Swedish it seems easy to claim that Swedish companies are left behind. I personally believe that the competition in the market will eliminate many of the companies we see today, in five years there will be a whole different market and the companies who are slow in their IT maturity will fail and die out as a result.”

Many industries have suffocated from the digital transformation since years back, according to Mr. Gustavsson, companies may not catch the drift until it is too late. He further adds that it will only get worse, because the market is definitely not slowing down. “Media for example, helps lead the change in their own direction and in that way can also stay on top of the development. Others like steel commodity producers and wholesalers are more reluctant to appreciate the idea and to challenge established methodologies and fundamentals for strategy, marketing and sales.”

When asked about the future he foresees that Omni channel will continue to develop more advanced methods and techniques to serve users and customers. “For example, improved predictive personalization and communication automatizations. Vendors will strive for a "singularization" of channels, attempting to provide service for more usage life cycles than its own to attain an individual customer/buyer/user information channel monopoly.”
4.2.2.2 Ulf Streiby - Communication Strategist

Mr. Streiby has been working at Sigma since the start of 2016 but has had a long career within Customer development, customer communication and customer relationship management. Mr. Streiby works as a communication strategist for Maverick, the digital PR agency owned and operated by Sigma. He has worked in the business ever since the start of the cell phone digitalization and has a vast experience of the market. He has worked within the field of CRM for over 30 years and is somewhat of an expert on the history of customer communication.

Omni channel and its Maturity

Mr. Streiby’s long experience gave us another great aspect to consider when interviewing him for this thesis. He stresses the importance to understand that the “older” versions of customer purchases, for example buying the product in a physical store, still generates around 90% of the revenue for firms. There is enormous potential for development, but the companies have to meet the clients earlier on in the process.

When asked if his clients understand the concept, Mr. Streiby answers, “The people that have direct contact with the marketing and strategy of a company definitely know about Omni channel, but the issue is that the other 80% does not. This is a problem, because we need to convince the entire organization that this transition is vital in their strategy.” If the majority does not understand why, it may be hard to make a complete implementation for the company.

4.2.3 Avanade

4.2.3.1 Johan Nedin - Group Manager

Mr. Nedin has been a member of the Avanade Company for over eight years. He has had several different roles in the company, such as a key member of development team, to leading group manager, responsible for 40 employees below him. His team is currently working on implementing digital commerce for a large Swedish car manufacturer. He was chosen to represent Avanade in the NBI launch because his high status as one of the company’s digital experts as well as a platform specialist on the Sitecore platform. The content management system that is needed for this development is a system Mr. Nedin will help develop.

Omni channel and its Maturity

Mr. Nedin also mentions, like several other consultants that in the past that Omni channel has really just been a trend word, but in the last few years it has become a phenomenon that really carries a meaning for businesses, even though the development is not completely there yet. The technology is there; it is technically possible to implement an Omni channel strategy into most types of firms, but the infrastructure and knowledge is not mature enough. “Our clients still struggle with the implementation and the strategy around it. Some of our more advanced clients are mature enough to implement some kind of Omni channel strategy, however it is a process in early stages at the moment.” He goes on discussing how the Swedish market has some leading companies in the running of digital maturity, however in an overall comparison they are nowhere near the leaders. Some companies, especially older bureaucratic firms have a long way to go and these are the ones that Mr. Nedin, contributing to what Mr. Zenno explained above, will have to change tremendously in order to survive. Spotify is a great example of a highly mature Swedish company that will lead the way in coming years in terms of platform reach, advertising and digital customer relationships in general. What needs to be implemented into a clear Omni channel strategy is, according to Mr. Nedin a clear marketing strategy, cross platform strategies, useful and unique intelligence on their clients.
Most of his clients will benefit from this, but the biggest issue we found seems to be the cost of investment that has to go into implementing an Omni channel strategy. Furthermore, the infrastructure to support it is often times just not there in the budget. The larger firms have to lead the way in this development, often times however they do not understand the importance as they lack insight on the subject. Instead, they pour money into initiatives that in the end do not generate the money it should, and the Omni channel maturity strategy will be put even further back in the planning. It’s a huge challenge for Avanade and other consultants to try to implement this on a smaller level for both the bigger and smaller firms that do not have an unlimited budget to spend on this.

4.2.4 Mogul

4.2.4.1 Elis Sjömar - Digital Business Developer

Mr. Sjömar has worked at Mogul for three months, and has a background as a consultant in sales and marketing. He specializes in B2B marketing within the IT sector. His relationship with the initiative is therefore quite recent and he was thrown in from the start of his employment at Mogul. Mr. Sjömar was not chosen, but instead volunteered, as he has a big interest in Omni channel and its future from his background in Marketing.

Omni channel and its Maturity

As a consultant, Mr. Sjömar mostly deals with marketing managers and IT managers, and there is an apparent difference between the two. Mr. Sjömar has noticed in the last few years that the word has picked up buzz in the marketing world, making managers interested and more aware. However, their knowledge is scarce and on the surface. It’s not actual knowledge, and this is where there often is confusion with the consultants, as this type of strategy requires a lot of changes for the client and may become costly. Few people have the ambition to have something to do with it yet. *We use the concept as a buzzword in a meeting booking campaign for the NBI dashboard, a lot of people think that it is interesting, but not a lot of them actually understand what it entails and what they can get out of the dashboard. Regarding the maturity level of the concept, Mr. Sjömar felt that he did not have the expertise to comment.*’

4.3 Experts & Partners

4.3.1 NBI Network - Jan Futturp Kjaer

Mr. Futturp Kjaer is the Head Organizer for the NBI Network since 2013 and works together with a large group of colleagues and academics to promote the initiative. He has been the contact person in charge for the Swedish consultancy firms and has been traveling around the country “keeping them on track and inspiring them to go further”. Describing his daily tasks as “My job is basically to do all those uncomfortable things no one else wants to do, like nag and follow up, together with inspiring and implementing our initiative.” Mr. Futturp Kjaer has been very encouraging in the process of our thesis writing, giving us access to his own knowledge and also opening doors to others.

4.3.2 Author - Rasmus Houlind

The author of *Make it all about me, and I’ll buy it*, first published in 2015. Mr. Houlind spent ten years as a consultant within digital marketing agencies before he became the chief strategy officer within Digital Marketing at a software company. Mr. Houlind was teaching as guest lecturer for a Masters program when the idea for the book came to life. When he was introduced to the curriculum, he realized that none of the books held the right standard or had the right hands-on cases that could describe what really happened in the business world. *The basic textbooks were too abstract and descriptive and did not make the reader*
completely understand what to do. I felt like there was a lack in the literature and as a teacher, I was forced to come up with better explanations on my own. Because of his extensive career and hands-on experience within the subject, Mr. Houlind decided that he should write his own book. He also had a huge interest in customer clubs and digital marketing. Omni channel was at this time not a coined buzzword.

4.3.3 Sitecore - Mårten Bokedal - Marketing Director

Sitecore is a global leader in customer experience management. *We sell a software product, from the beginning sprung out from a web content management platform but today is a full digital suit for handling customer experience management.* The vision for everyone who uses Sitecore to have complete conversations online no matter what channels they use. Mr. Bokedals operates as the marketing director in charge of the Nordic market. There is a large focus on local marketing as well as branching out to the rest of the European markets. *We are based in ten different markets in Europe; we all help each other with this. I plan and execute both the global and the local strategy, everything from event management to press releases, different types of campaigns etc.*

As one of the early sponsors of the NBI network, Mr. Futturp Kjaer and the rest of the team naturally contacted Sitecore when the Swedish expansion plan was starting to develop. Sitecore is also the platform that the network is built upon. They acted as the middleman, finding the right consultancy firms that would fit well with the initiative and that also have a tight connection to Sitecore. Mr. Bokedal was in charge of finding the right consultancy firms that met the criterion of the network. Some of the greatest factors in the process where:

- Larger agencies with the right connections
- A strong regional presence with several offices
- Committed to Sitecore through personal and professional relationships
- A strong sense of commitment to the initiative
5 Analysis

The fifth chapter will be devoted to the analysis of our research. The empirical findings of the study will be combined with the theoretical approaches presented in chapter 2. The structure will follow our research questions and will therefore be divided into the following three subheadings.

5.1 How do IT-consultants work with their clients in order to increase the level of Omni channel maturity?

There has been a wide range of answers from the consultants on the topic of when they first heard about Omni channel. Mr. Zenno, together with several other consultants, states that he first heard the term in 2010 “as a way to differentiate technical capabilities from Multichannel”. Mr. Zenno, Mr. Rydström & Mr. Nedin agrees that the term has only been a buzzword for the last decade and did not carry any real value up until the last five years or so. Others, such as Mr. Streiby, argue that “I have heard the term used for over twenty years, by IT experts mostly in the past, but I was not surprised when others started using it in more common terms. If anything, I was surprised it took them so long to catch up.” Several consultants also argue that there is confusion in the term still, many clients link it to multi or cross channel. Mr. Nedin argues that “This is a major issue as a consultant, the lack of knowledge that most clients have about what the concept really entails, and especially how much it is going to cost them to reevaluate their strategy and change it, in order to align with the benefits they see beneficial.” Mr. Sjömar confirms the research by Lazaris & Vrechopoulus (2014) stating that in the last few years the word Omni channel has picked up buzz in the marketing world; making managers interested and more aware. However, their knowledge is scarce and on the surface. It’s not actual knowledge, and this is where there often is confusion with the consultants, as this type of strategy requires a lot of changes for the client and may become costly. Few people have the ambition to pursue an Omni channel strategy just yet.

The idea that the knowledge of both consultants and clients are scarce on not only what the word Omni channel entails but also how to implement the strategy. This is something that Houlin (2015) mentions in his book, as well as in his interview with us. This is why I chose to create the Omni channel Hexagon, not because it is the most extensive academic research you can do on the matter, but really a guide map for consultants and clients when implementing a strategy. When I consulted a friend, who is an NY Times Best Seller, he told me that there was only one way to go if I wanted my book to really make an impact. He told me to focus on the model, so that consultants could flip through the book, find it and use it as a hands-on help with strategy implementation. Together with the NBI Network I believe we can help thousands of companies around the world. As he also states in his book, it was created for companies to not only determine what maturity level they have; it should also be used as a roadmap of how to optimally exploit digital possibilities (Houlind, 2015).

When asked about the current maturity level of Omni channel implementation in Swedish firms, the consultants have different answers. Some were positive, others negative, but they all seem hopeful of the future. Confirming the research by Alvarez et al., (2015), there is an overall agreement that Sweden is in no way leading the change, but that the Scandinavian region is well suited and that the countries are definitely ahead if you look to a global perspective. The NBI dashboard confirms this in figure 6, claiming that the majority of respondents (38%) answered that their company’s digital maturity should be defined as to some degree. Mr. Rydström illustrates the answer that several of the consultants repeated, “In general I think that Swedish companies are quite far behind in the development within Omni channel.
Mr. Zenno is hopeful for the future, stating that “my personal experience is that many Swedish companies are putting digital into their strategy and starts challenging their own organizations to create more seamless customer experiences, but they still struggle on the "how" and execution…. but we are not far behind!” An interesting finding is that there is an overall agreement between all consultants interviewed that the clients still struggle with the implementation and the strategy around it. Some of their more advanced clients are mature enough to implement some kind of Omni channel strategy, however it is a process in early stages. Figure 6 supports their claims, as the results show that only 11% answered to a very large degree. Furthermore, Figure 11 shows that only 37% say that they have developed a digital strategy, the very foundation for an Omni channel strategy to be possible. Even though there is not a clear path forward on how to implement, the technology is there, this is a statement all consultants agree upon. This is also confirmed by the previous theory we collected through the World Wide Web Foundation (2015) who claims that the citizens’ freedoms to benefit from new technologies are encouraged and widespread, which makes Sweden leading in the development of a high technological infrastructure.

The issue most clients seem to have at this point is that they do not seem to understand the importance of a closer customer communication, the knowledge of its benefits are not apparent to them according to Mr. Futturp Kjaer. Even though Houlind (2015) state that the right offer at the right time acknowledges that the firm knows their customers history, both when they turn to them and vice versa, firms have not come to change their mass-communication just yet. Mr. Streiby argues that “it’s extremely important to understand that the “older” versions of customer purchases, for example buying the product in a physical store, still generates around 90% of the revenue for firms. There is enormous potential for development, but the companies have to meet the clients earlier on in the process.” This may be part of the explanation as to why only 22% of Figure 7 answered that they prioritize digitalization to a large degree. The lack of knowledge around the subject creates issues for all of our consultants asked, Mr. Sjömar states that “The people that have direct contact with the marketing and strategy of a company definitely know about Omni channel, but the issue is that the other 80% does not. This is a problem, because we need to convince the entire organization that this transition is vital in their strategy. If the majority does not understand why, it may be hard to make a complete implementation.” However, there is still a great market for improvement in this area for the future and the shift seems to have started, slowly, as Mr. Christensen states “about 75% of today’s buyers look up product information online before purchase and they expect to have a consistent experience across any channel.” So even though the physical purchases still heavily outweigh the virtual, there is strong a customer presence across all channels, often before the purchase has been made, that can help convince. The data that can be stored and used correctly, through an Omni channel strategy, can then help the firm become personal with their customers (Houlind, 2015).

5.2 What factors help encourage or prevent the maturity level of Omni channel in Sweden?

The greatest encouragement seems to come from the world of technology, according to the consultants. Silicon Valley with large IT corporations and innovative start-ups are inspiring the entire market, according to Mr. Sjömar and Mr. Nedin. Mr. Houlind adds, “As much as we would like to say USA is the leading country, I don’t think we should look at it like that any longer…because Spotify (a Swedish-founded digital music service) is up there as well. Today we can not
assume it is a national comparison that needs to be made, but rather one where we compare companies.” The larger corporations need to lead the way, according to Mr. Nedin, however initiatives such as the NBI Network does their part as well. They inform and educate all size companies on the matter and help them get in contact with the right consultants to help them improve further according to Mr. Futturp Kjaer.

It was clear from the very first meeting we attended together with Consid and Mr. Futturp Kjaer (NBI Network) that the initiative had great ambitions. He spoke with great passion for the project, and Consid were clearly excited to be a part of the launch in Sweden. When we then met with the rest of the consultancy groups, Mr. Houind and Mr. Bokedal at Sitecore’s office in Stockholm we received an even greater understanding of just how helpful this dashboard can be. Mr. Gustavsson, for example, started up an interesting discussion where he tried a selling technique on the other consultants, right after the initial introduction of the dashboard. There seems to be an overall excitement between the consultants, as this is a tool that they can actually use that will benefit not only their clients but themselves as well. Mr. Zenno adds, “The initiative is rapidly growing into new markets and collecting data from companies all over the world, so we could soon benchmark the Omni channel state of the nation, Sweden, towards the rest of the world. Without those facts and figures on the table, my personal experience is that many Swedish companies are putting digital into their strategy and starts challenging their own organizations to create more seamless customer experiences, but they still struggle on the “how” and execution.”

According to Mr. Futturp Kjaer, the dashboard should be viewed as a guiding roadmap of where the company is positioned, improvements as well as strengths are shown. All consultants agree that this initiative opens up for a conversation between the clients and themselves, as well as informs the clients of their progress. The best way to use the dashboard, according to Mr. Zenno and Mr. Rydström is to sit with the clients as they fill in the questionnaire to make sure that they answer truthfully and understand the questions correctly. The second best would be to review the dashboard together with the consultant at a later convenience, where both parties can hold an open discussion on how to improve. This is really a win-win activity for both parties, as Mr. Bokedal puts it, because this way the consultants will know what to provide for their clients, and the clients will know what to ask for. Not only that, it informs the client of where they are located on the dashboard compared to the top 25%, and the rest of their competitors. It is a great tool in order to map out what needs to be done and why, according to Mr. Bokedal.

Implementing an Omni channel strategy may sound good on paper, but can be hard and costly for the clients. The survey (Figure 10) states that the second largest barrier to a company’s investment in technology (after lack of time) is the lack of knowledge about possible return on investment and cost. Due to the fact that many clients do not understand the concept, according to Mr. Gustavsson, or what an Omni channel strategy can do for their competitive advantage, they choose to not pursue it. Furthermore, they realize what a huge transition it would be financially to change their strategy to align with Omni channel communication. Mr. Nedin describes “The biggest issue we found seems to be the cost of investment that has to go into implementing an Omni channel strategy. Furthermore, the infrastructure to support it is often times just not there in the budget. The larger firms have to lead the way in this development, often times however they do not understand the importance as they lack insight on the subject. Instead, they pour money into initiatives that in the end do not generate the money it should, and the Omni channel maturity strategy will be put even further back in the planning”. This seems to be an over-all compliance between the consultants on the matter. As Figure 11 describes, only
37% of the respondents said their company has adopted a technology strategy, implementing this alone may look like a massive investment for firms that may not show return at once. However, Mr. Futturp Kjaer stresses the importance of companies to not only understand but also get excited to implement this change in their strategy. “There are so many benefits to be ahead in this. It may not generate large flows of return at first, on the contrary this may take time, but that is why we have to convince them that this is a long-term investment in their own survival. If they want to keep their customer relationships strong in the future, they have to start recognizing them on a personal level.”

There is an overall agreement among the consultants that the communication and personal recognition their clients have with the end customer has to be improved if they want to keep their competitive advantage in the years to come. As the Omni channel Hexagon states, customer recognition is only one of the steps towards Omni channel communication. The firm has to not only know the customers preferences and buying pattern personally, they also have to communicate with them on a personal level and make them feel like they really can be of great assistance (Houlind, 2015). Mr. Nedin adds, “If you do not take the time to adapt your strategy towards the Omni channel way of communicating with your customers, you will not survive. Maybe it is not an issue at the moment, but the development goes at a rapid pace, that’s why I predict that 50% of the companies today won’t last another decade.” We found a correspondence to this statement with Figure 11, where the respondents have answered that 55% still, today, have not developed a digital strategy plan. Mr. Gustavsson confirms this further, saying “I personally believe that the competition in the market will eliminate many of the companies we see today, in five years there will be a whole different market and the companies who are slow in their IT maturity will fail and die out as a result. Many industries have suffocated from the digital transformation since years back, and it will only get worse.”

5.3 How do the experts partners and consultants see the future of Omni channel?

The general feeling we received when interviewing the consultants and the experts were that this is an exciting time for the Omni channel concept. Even though the ideas may not be completely implemented yet, the technology is there, ready to be used. Like CRM Magazine (2014) also predicts, our consultants agree that it is a thrilling idea to think that in just five or ten years the entire strategy for customer communication could have shifted to an Omni channel perspective in almost all types of companies. The possibilities are really endless for the future. According to the consultants, there are many more international success stories than Swedish it seems easy to claim that Swedish companies are left behind. This is not supported by the World Wide Web Foundation (2015) however, who states that Sweden is in the forefront of global technology. This is an important fact for the research to account, as Sweden is still highly developed among others if we see to the entire world. Figure 5 further supports this.

Customer behavior and technology are both evolving faster than ever, and this should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a challenge according to Mr. Kjaer Futturp. This may be something companies are starting to understand, as Figure 9 shows that 49% of respondents say that their IT investments have increased over the past year. Mr. Gustavsson argues that the customers are more empowered and informed than ever, and at the same time less tolerant and less loyal. In short, with the development come higher expectations. An exciting finding from our secondary data is that of Figure 8, where 46% of respondents say that further digitization will be a priority to a very large degree in the
upcoming year. Mr. Nedin, Mr. Rydström and Mr. Houlind all predict that mass communication will be given up, as companies will start to see the value in having a personal relationship to each customer in the next decade. Automation and predictive analysis will play a huge part in this, the structural issues customers’ deal with will be taken away, and this is a temporary issue we are dealing with right now. This is also confirmed by Alvarez et al. (2015) in their statement concerning the Swedish infrastructure and its adaptability to a high technological society.

Mr. Houlind adds, “10 years from now, every sales associate for example, will use Omni channel whenever they speak to a customer, ordering something online that is not in stock or helping them through their stored data of preferences. It’s going to be a lot easier in the next few years to implement this type of strategy because people will be used to it, and they know how to give an Omni channel treatment to their customers.” According to Mr. Houlind the world is in a transformational stage, we will see data everywhere in the future, every type of product will have a chip or a recognition code inside of it for the company to store, consultants and experts both agree on this matter. Mr. Zenno adds “I believe we are heading towards a more contextual approach where companies will take advantage of the full history of interactions with the customer and have even better understanding in serving that personalized experience, that is both smoother and more automated/proactive from the customer’s perspective.”

The personal experience will become more and more important; this is a statement we have heard from almost all of the interviewees. Speed and struggle free relations with brands will in the future just increase when our children turn into adults. Mr. Streiby stresses that the kids of today are getting used to having a personal relationship to their favorite brands and products, and they will not be satisfied with mass communication. Companies will be forced to be on their toes in the relations with their clients, or the clients will go somewhere else and the companies not adapting will vanish from the market on way or another. Several consultants state that they believe that the competition in the market will eliminate many of the companies we see today, in five years there will be a whole different market and the companies who are slow in their IT maturity will not survive.
6 Conclusion

Our aim has been to investigate the maturity level of Omni channel in firms today and what the consultants can do together with the NBI Initiative in order to help encourage this transition. Furthermore we aimed to determine what the biggest barriers are in the development as well as question where the consultants and experts see the future of Omni channel heading. Below we conclude our research.

According to the consultants, Sweden is in no way leading the change towards Omni channel communication. However, the empirical findings suggest that they are in a good position to implement this concept into firms. The technology and infrastructure of the country is there to support the development according to the consultants. The largest restriction for the development of Omni channel in Sweden today seems to be the lack of knowledge around the concepts as well as the cost of implementation.

The lack of knowledge regarding what the implementation of an Omni channel strategy can do in the future for a firm is concerning to the consultants as they see how this enforcement may become vital in the future for the firms success. We conclude that initiatives such as the NBI Network with its dashboard can provide a road map for the firm in terms of their own position in the market, and a comparison to their competitors. Furthermore, it may act as a tool for the consultant to guide their clients and the initiative provides a network for consultants to work together, over company boundaries, to enhance the knowledge of the clients as well as exchange their own experiences.

The cost of the implementation of an Omni channel strategy seems to be extensive, from what we can conclude. However, the consultants and experts all argue that this investment should be viewed as long-term in the survival of the firm, in an ever-changing globalized, digitalized market. Without this, the prediction seems to entail that the firm will be in the hypothesized 50% of firms that will not survive in the next ten years due to late recognition of the strategy shift. According to the consultants In the upcoming decade the over-all prediction seems to be that the Omni channel strategy will be implemented in all types of firms, in every type of industry. From what we can conclude from our interviews and secondary data collection, that the majority of consumers will have a personal relationship with the firm, and the companies that lack this intelligence will not survive.
7 Discussion

The final chapter completes the thesis by examining the limitations of the study, the implications for practice and the suggestions for future research.

7.1 Limitations

We realize that it is an impossible goal to write a thesis that does not require some limitations. Therefore, we see it fit to discuss them so that our reader can have a clear understanding of our writing process and some of the challenges we encountered along the way.

Not all consultants that we contacted were positive to being interviewed, for several different reasons. We are grateful for the large response we have had and understand that our research may have conflicted with others. Our goal was to bring in another expert on the subject of Omni channel, an academic outside source to validate the research and make it less biased to the NBI Network. However, this plan fell through last minute and we were unfortunately forced to proceed without. We realize that the thesis will sound more biased without this outside source. Also, two of the companies interviewed, Avanade and Mogul only have one consultant each whereas the others have two. This is due to differences in interest and time concerning the project. We see it as a great limitation to our thesis that no female consultant or expert could be interviewed. The field is mainly male-dominant and both of the female consultants we reached out to did not have the time.

Due to the limitation of both cost and time, we see a great advantage in using the NBI questionnaire for our quantitative data analysis. As Vartanian (2011) discusses, the use of secondary data can centralize a large set of data with much less effort. This can then be the foundation, which the researchers choose to build their own analysis upon. We recognize that this type of data would have been almost impossible for us to collect solely on our own, and are therefore careful to analyze this to our greatest extent. From the collected secondary data we have been given from the NBI network we can see that we have been given a great privilege to use their research.

However, there are also limitations to using secondary data. These have to be taken into consideration and also listed as limitations of the thesis (Vartanian, 2011). We have no control over the questions asked by the questionnaire but have to trust past researchers that their studies have led them to word each question correctly. Questions that may have been relevant to us but not to them have been looked aside. This is why we have chosen to dig deeper with a mixed methods approach, as to not only stop at another researcher's conclusions (Yin, 2012).

We encountered a large problem at the start of our writing process concerning the Swedish firms and their data. It became apparent during our writing process that not enough data was coming in for us to validate having only Swedish respondents. Therefore, we had to account for the Danish data as well, collected in 2015. This made our data less reliable in terms of the Swedish market only but unfortunately this was out of our hands. We decided to move forward with the data presented to us and built our analysis around the secondary data of the entire NBI Network.

Another limitation to the essay is the transferability of the study. We determine that the cultural differences will make the results differ if our research were to be tried and re-conducted in another country. Even though the results do not seem to change dramatically
between Sweden and Denmark, we realize that there could be huge differences if we were to conduct the study in, for example, Thailand.

7.2 Implications for practice

We have had the great privilege of observing the consultants as they met together to work towards the common goal of implementing the NBI Dashboard on their clients. This opened our eyes to the idea that the consultants are all interested to develop this concept further in Sweden, even beyond their own general benefit. They exchanged ideas and strategies, and seemed to genuinely care. When the data of the Swedish clients did not come in at the estimated speed that they had first predicted, they worked together to form a new strategy of action.

Therefore our advice to the consultants is to follow on with this collaboration, together with the NBI Network and Sitecore. We hope to encourage this collaboration through our thesis and its result and we hope that the future for the NBI Network in Sweden will be flourishing. To help the clients build a stronger knowledge on the concept, we advice them to arrange seminars where the consultants sit down with the clients and guide them along through the questionnaire. This will not only help the clients understand the questions better, it will also give the consultant a chance to have a personal contact with the firm regarding their position earlier on.

We advice firms to start by taking the NBI questionnaire and read up on the phenomena if they have the ambition to implement an Omni channel strategy. From there on, a consultant can further help interpret the answers and together a strategy can be formed.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

Due to the fact that enough Swedish data was not registered in time for our research to solely depend on it, we see an opportunity here for future research to pick up where we leave off. By conducting a larger qualitative study that entailed more detailed data and further interviews, the results will be viewed as more reliable. By only analyzing the Swedish data, the results could possibly differ from the conclusions we have drawn from both the Swedish and the Danish data.

There is much potential in the research around the NBI Network, as well as the Omni channel concept. The NBI dashboard can be used in multiple other ways, both as a basis for a qualitative study, like in this thesis, but also for an extensive quantative analysis. We notice a gap between the research of the concept of Omni channel and how to actually implement the strategy into firms today. More research is needed in order to make a full analysis, and as we can conclude from our research, this could help greatly to close the gap of knowledge between clients and their consultants.

To conclude, we hope that our research has opened up new collaborations for future students and the NBI Network, as well as encouraged others to further develop the research on the concept of Omni channel.
References


9 Appendix

9.1 Interview Template

- Describe your role at XXX (company name)?

- How did you get in contact with the NBI network?

- Why were you picked to be part of this initiative?

- When were the first time you heard about the term Omni channel?

- Have you encountered an overall interest from companies?

- Do you think the NBI Initiative can help companies understand the importance of Omni channel? In that case how?

- Are there any negative aspects that you can think of?

- Is there anything else that concerns you about joining this initiative?

- If you were to describe the Swedish market in comparison to the rest of the world, how mature do you think companies are to incorporate this next step in the development?

- Would you say there is a leading country in the front of this development?

- Are there any particular industries you see will be leading in the transformation into Omni channel relationships with their customers?

- Which industries do you believe will benefit most?

- Which industries may be hesitant or may you struggle to convince?

- Can you explain how Omni channel can be used in a B2B relationship?

- Can you explain how Omni channel can be used in a B2C relationship?