Loyalty in e-commerce
- Less is actually more
Abstract
Internet has brought new opportunities for companies to do business with each other. The company should focus on increasing loyalty to achieve customer retention and long-term relationships. Today, customer loyalty is critical for the company to survive on the competitive market, especially in the context of e-commerce. A loyal customer have higher propensity to stay in the relationship, resulting in long-term benefits for both parties such as reduced transaction costs as well as an enhanced competitiveness. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the factors that drive customer loyalty in a business-to-business context, in order to facilitate the number of sales on e-commerce platform.

To fulfill the purpose of this thesis, the study has sent out a survey to a number of business customers. The investigation shows that a several factors drive a customer to become loyal in a business-to-business context. First, recommendations from others as well as guarantees from third parties are factors driving the customer to become interested in the company to begin with. One key concept that is recurrent in this study is simplicity, both on the e-commerce platform but also outside the platform. Another major driver to become loyalty are the factor about the company keeping the promise given to their customer.

Keywords
e-commerce, loyalty, customer retention, business-to-business.
Thanks
We would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have helped us during this bachelor thesis. Above all, we would like to thank Runelandhs AB, who has helped and supported us through the whole thesis. They have shown great commitment and provided with liters of good coffee during the whole process. We would also like to thank those respondents who took the time to answer our survey. Thanks to our supervisor Pär Strandberg who helped us forward in our study and who has assisted us with the most rewarding tutoring hours in his cramped office. Final thanks to Frederic Bill, who often created more confusion than clarity, but still gave us many good tips and thoughtful advice along the way.

Växjö, 30 may, 2015

Best regards,
Ida Kånneby, Emelie Pile and Amanda Sahlin
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1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall theme for this thesis, which is the loyalty aspect in a business-to-business (B2B) context in the line of e-commerce platform. The introduction is divided into background, problem discussion, research question and purpose.

1.1 Background

Companies have come to understand that the costs of obtaining new customers will be higher than if they try to strengthen and develop already existing relationships. The use of Internet and e-commerce has changed the relationship marketing aspects, but also the business processes during the last decades (Zineldin, 2012). By using e-commerce platforms, it has become easier for the company to interact with their customers (Ragothaman, Davies & Dykstra, 2000), since new information and communication technologies brings opportunities in terms of communicating effectively and building stronger relationships (Janita & Miranda, 2013).

Much attention has been given to business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce, which is online selling to a final consumer (Armstrong, Kotler, Harker & Brennan, 2012). An increasing interest has on the other hand been established in the business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce field. Internet has brought new opportunities for companies to do business with each other (Ragothaman, Davies & Dykstra, 2000). Companies in the B2B field now offer product information, customer purchasing and customer support online (Armstrong et al., 2012). Although, it is important to remember that Internet as well as e-commerce platforms does not replace the development of long lasting relationships with the customer, it is just another tool to achieve it (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Zineldin, 2012).

It is important to understand that a business customer differs in some aspects compared to an individual consumer (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Reichheld, 1996). When comparing B2C and B2B e-commerce, an individual consumer tends to be more subjective in their evaluation compared to the seemingly more rational business customer. In the context of B2B, first and foremost, the employees make decisions on behalf of the company in order to achieve certain goals, which often include costs and profitability (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth 2008; Briggs & Grisaffe, 2010). Secondly, the business customer needs customization of services, products and price structure. In addition to this, these customers generally spend more money on each purchase (Armstrong et al., 2012). Also, each business customer may use products or services in different ways compared to another business customer (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Reichheld, 1996). In other words, a business setting is more economical and functional in its nature compared to a consumer context (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth 2008; Briggs & Grisaffe, 2010).

E-commerce offers many opportunities for the company, but there are also challenges in terms of competitive drivers such as the company losing market shares to other e-commerce companies. Therefore, the company should improve the range and quality of the services offered (Chaffey, 2011) i.e. differentiate the value proposition in order to be
competitive (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). A customer generally come back and use a particular service that a company offers if they deem it to be valuable, which results in the company achieving customer retention. By meeting the customer’s needs and delivering a superior value compared to other competitors, the company can hopefully make the customer not considering changing to another supplier (Chaffey, 2011). If the switching cost is high, it is more profitable for the customer to remain in the relationship with a certain company. However, if the cost is low, it is a lot easier for the customer to switch to another company (Zineldin, 2012).

Developing individual relationships with each customer can offer a company a loyal customer base as well as greater profitability (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Reichheld, 1996). Rayuruen and Miller (2007, p. 21) state that “the importance and benefits of attracting and maintaining loyal customers has arisen from a general acceptance that profitability follows customer loyalty”. In other words, loyalty fosters customer retention, which many businesses seek to achieve (Zineldin, 2012), meaning that a customer returns to a company over and over again to make new purchases of their products. The customer will then return to the company if a need arises and deselect other options (Eriksson & Vaghult, 2000). The focus has shifted from serving the mass market in favor for creating loyal customers who returns to the company and act repeatedly, in other words, a shift from transaction to relationship marketing (Gummesson, 1987). For the company, essential economic outcomes of loyalty and in turn customer retention are; lower costs, higher revenues, a higher market share, greater profitability and higher customer switching costs (Zineldin, 2012).

1.2 Problem discussion

According to Zineldin (2012), the company should focus on increasing loyalty to achieve customer retention and long-term relationships. Reichheld and Schefter (2000) state that customer loyalty is critical for the company to survive in today's competitive market, especially in the context of e-commerce. Loyalty can be defined as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” (Oliver, 1999, p. 34).

In a B2B context, loyalty consists of both a behavioral as well as an attitudinal dimension. The behavioral loyalty is about purchase intentions, i.e. whether the customer repurchase a product or a service from a certain company as well as maintaining a relationship with that company. The attitudinal loyalty on the other hand, is about the customer’s psychological attachments and attitude towards the company in question (Rayuruen & Miller, 2007). By the company showing concern, keeping their promise and acting in the interest of the customer, the attitudinal loyalty can be strengthened (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malholttra, 2005). As a result of the company acting in the interest of the customer, the company will hopefully get a positive reputation. A positive reputation is important, both when it comes to attracting new customers as well as delivering value and keeping the
customers that the company already has a relationship with (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008).

Continuing in the context of e-commerce, the concept e-loyalty is suitable. This is in alignment with the previous definitions, about a favorable attitude towards a business, which results in a repeat buying behavior, but in an electronic setting (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). In the sense of an electronic setting, there are some factors on an e-commerce platform that need to function and be available at all times in order to achieve loyalty. One factor is the technical feature of the e-commerce platform, which provides convenience to the customer (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). The second factor is about the functionality of the platform, which represents the speed and ease with which a customer can access and navigate on the platform (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002). It is also important that the platform has a professional look to it, sending signals to the customer that the company itself has high ability (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2006; Wang & Emurian, 2005) and that the platform in itself creates a positive emotional experience (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006).

According to Huang (2008, p. 251) loyalty has a “cause-and-effect relationship with transaction intentions”. In other words, the customer has a propensity to do a rebuy (retention effects) as well as increasing the volume of ordered products, which in the end results in increased profitability for the company. In addition to this, positive word-of-mouth behavior is another outcome of loyalty, which leads to new customer acquisition (Briggs & Grisaffe, 2010). A loyal customer have a higher propensity to stay in the relationship, resulting in long-term benefits for both parties such as reduced transaction costs as well as an enhanced competitiveness (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). A loyal customer is not as price sensitive as a disloyal customer, resulting in an advantage for the company to enter into a relationship with a loyal customer. Also, a loyal customer prefers to deal with one specific company, and if they become dissatisfied, they will surely talk with the company before a change becomes necessary (Zineldin, 2012). Losing a customer to another company means lost revenue and replacement costs for the company in question. Therefore, a loyal customer is preferred (Briggs & Grisaffe, 2010), since the switching behavior is reduced (Oliver, 1999).

Thanks to the accessibility that the Internet offers, the customer can more easily compare suppliers in real time, giving them a wider range of choices than was possible before (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). If a customer is faced with the decision to make a purchase with a business or not, a company’s positive reputation can for example be a deciding factor (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Wilson, 2001). Also, without the glue of loyalty, the customer will do business with another company who offers them a relative value. A disloyal customer is sensitive to changes in price, regardless of the service quality being good or not. In addition to this, a disloyal customer also has a higher tendency to switch from one company to another, which makes them somewhat unreliable for the company in question (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). However, Zineldin (2012) points out the importance to see the e-commerce platform as a part of
the whole company, and that there are several factors outside the platform that also influence whether the customer becomes loyal or not (Zineldin, 2012), such as a company’s reputation in relation to other companies on the market (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). If the company can understand that, this could contribute to improvement, creativity and innovation (Zineldin, 2012).

1.3 Research question
What factors drives a customer to become loyal in a business-to-business context in the line of an e-commerce platform?

1.4 Purpose
The purpose of the thesis is to explore the factors that drive customer loyalty in a business-to-business context, in order to facilitate the number of sales on e-commerce platform.
2 Literature Review

This chapter presents theories from various authors, which treat the essential themes driving loyalty in a B2B context on an e-commerce platform. The loyalty concept consists of three major dimensions: The first is about how the company acts towards the customer, such as showing concern and keeping their promise. In other words, acting in the best way for the customer and its interests. The second dimension is about the reputation of the company and what makes the customer interested in doing business with a certain online store in the first place. The last dimension is about the e-commerce platform in itself including its technical, functional and graphical aspects.

2.1 Showing concern for the customer

This chapter is about how the company acts towards the customer, such as showing concern and keeping their promise. In other words acting in the best way for the customer and its interest (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005).

2.1.1 Adapting to customer needs

One important way to show concern towards the customer is by customizing and adapting to the customer’s wishes and needs. Through the e-commerce platform this can be done in different ways (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). The company can adapt to customer needs by being flexible to customer requirements in specific situations, such as the customer being able to change, add and remove from their order as well as changing features of the product if this is needed (Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990). A company must in other words have the willingness as well as the ability to be flexible and thus respond to customer requests, solving them in the best way given a certain situation. Likewise, the company needs to respond quickly to requests (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990).

In addition to this, the company can customize the information given on the e-commerce platform in order to adapt to customer needs. By doing this, the customer get a feeling of being seen and also that there is willingness from the company to satisfy their special needs as well as requests (Sultan et al., 2002). A way for the company to adapt and customize the information on the e-commerce platform is by providing personalized login pages, which is created at the time for the customer’s first purchase. On the personalized login pages the customer can store order history, current orders, delivery address and customer information. E-commerce platforms that enable the customer to get this kind of individualized attention contributes to the customer’s perceived value in terms of specific attention unlike a standard looking page that is the same for all customers. Being able to store information, such as order history entails that a customer can come back to the company and, for example, order the same product as the last time. Since this information is stored and available for both the customer and the company, this contributes to an easier order processing which enables the company to customize the information specifically for each customer (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Sultan et al., 2002).
2.1.2 Sharing information with the customer

It is highly important that the communication between the company and the customer flows both ways in order to maintain the relationship between them (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Hansen, Samuelsen and Silseth (2008) states that providing information even before the customer know they need it, contributes to the experience of using a platform, which in an e-context can be done through e-mail or directly through the platform. Also, by sharing information with the customer, this shows that the company is committed to the relationship with the customer (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008).

The company should not overwhelm its customer with information, instead they should tailor the message to fit customer needs as far as possible (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). Excessive customer care can actually create pressure on the customer, which result in the customer abstaining from doing a purchase. Instead, the company should inform the customer if there would be a delay in filling or completing an order (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012) or sharing information that might influence the day-to-day performance and the future relationship. This can include issues such as costs, extended services on the platform, products planned to be renewed and developed, whether price adjustments will be made or if new products are being launched on the platform (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). In other words, the company can show concern about the customer’s rights and interests by providing the customer with information when problems arise (Urban, Amyxb & Lorenzon, 2009).

In addition to this, the company can also provide the customer with truthful information about its offerings (Urban, Amyxb & Lorenzon, 2009). Prices of products, delivery information, taxes, replacements guarantees and return policies should be easily accessible to the customer – informing about the contract between the company and the customer (Shneiderman, 2000). In other words, keeping the promise given to the customer whether is about promised offerings, delivery time, items in stock or prices on the e-commerce platform (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002; Santos, 2003).

Whether a customer can ask a company representative about products or other services on the platform has an impact on the value that the customer experiences in this context (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). When there are possibilities for the customer to interact and communicate with the company via the platform, the customer feel a willingness from the company to satisfy them (Sultan et al., 2002). The company can in this case provide support to the customer by being available through telephone and via online representatives, which can be found on the e-commerce platform (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005; Ratnasingam & Phan, 2003) or by using a live-chat where the customer can ask questions directly (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). It is important that the customer have the possibility to speak to a company representative if needed (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005), since this increases the confidence in the selling company (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). In addition to real-time support, the
company can provide the customer support through user guidelines, free advice and suggestions, FAQ and help pages on the platform (Santos, 2003).

2.1.3 Recovery actions
If a problem occurs for example in a delivery or an order, it is essential that there is a willingness by the company to fix the defects or problems encountered by the customer (Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990). The company should have an “effective handling of problems and returns through the site” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005, p. 220). In other words, this is the company’s ability to solve problems (Yang & Fang, 2004). This can be expressed through the company giving the customer suitable options when returning not satisfactory products, handling their problems without delay and by the e-commerce platform telling the customer if their order is not processed (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005). It can also be expressed through direct response to phone calls, e-mail, order execution and order confirmation (Yang & Fang, 2004).

Compensating a customer for problems that may occur during the purchase process and to what degree the company is able to do this has an impact on the loyalty dimension. The compensation dimension often needs human interaction. Notifying the customer if ordered products don’t arrive on promised time and picking up items that the customer does not want is a way to compensate for problems caused by the company and the platform itself (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005).

2.2 Reputation
This chapter is about the company’s corporate reputation on the market (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008), a company’s perceived size (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012) as well as recommendations and guarantees from other parties (Shneiderman, 2000), which together gives the company its overall reputation.

2.2.1 Corporate reputation on the market
A company’s reputation serves as a perceptual representation of the company in relation to other competing businesses that are available on the market. Reputation constitutes a type of market-validated information, which means that the market has spoken about the business, which in turn will have a big impact if a customer choose a certain company and whether the customer will experience the value that the corporate reputation in advance say about the company (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). In a more practical sense, reputation represents evaluations about the company’s past performance, which first and foremost includes how well the company handles the customer’s problems and requests (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

A company’s and an e-commerce platform’s reputation are important in various senses, both when it comes to attracting new customers as well as delivering value and keeping the customers that the company already has a relationship with (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). The fact that a company has a good reputation is based on previous customers’ perceived experience that has been spread further in the market. A company
that holds a good reputation can be seen as an asset mainly for the reason that the customer can rely on the company in a wider extent than would have been possible towards a company without a reputation of a positive character. If a customer is faced with the decision to make a purchase with a business or not, the company’s reputation can be a deciding factor. If the company’s corporate reputation is of positive character, this can be a critical factor for the customer’s final decision to make a purchase or not (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Wilson, 2001).

2.2.2 Perceived size of the company
The perceived size of a company has an impact on the reputation that a certain company gets, which is the customer’s idea of the company’s size (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). It has been shown that the customer generally have greater confidence in large companies, since they perceive these companies’ to have the skills and resources to run an e-commerce platform as well as completing customer service in terms of the variety of products and large stock of goods (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012).

2.2.3 Recommendations and guarantees from other parties
One way to communicate the company’s past performance towards new and existing customers is to show previous customer’s feedback after the purchase on the e-commerce platform (Shneiderman, 2000). Since the customer cannot get any face-to-face contact with an e-commerce platform, recommendations from colleagues and other business customers have a strong impact of the building of trust towards the platform, which is important to in the end build loyalty (Sivasailam, Kim & Rao, 2002). A third party can provide a guarantee in the form of a certification, showing that the e-commerce platform live up to a certain standard (Shneiderman, 2000).

2.3 User online experience
The user online experience is about the technical (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012), functional (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002) and graphical (Wang & Emurian, 2005) experience of an e-commerce platform.

2.3.1 Technical experience of the e-commerce platform
The e-commerce platform should possess technical features to provide convenience to the customer, making a transaction easy to accomplish. Thus, it is advantageous if the platform provide, for example, purchase order tracking (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). Also, privacy and security are two important technical features when it comes to e-commerce. Privacy and security are about protecting the customer’s personal information and the overall security of the e-commerce platform (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005; Yang & Fang, 2004; Santos, 2003). The security and privacy are related to whether a customer experience and perceive value related to the e-commerce, which also contribute to loyalty (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). Security and privacy have an impact when the customer evaluate a platform and considers a purchase (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005; Yang & Fang, 2004; Santos, 2003). If a customer is aware of the security and privacy of the platform visited, the
customer will be able to understand that the risk of leaving private information online is reduced (Lwin & Williams, 2004; Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012).

The customer should feel comfortable to provide private information to the e-commerce platform (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012; Shneiderman, 2000). The company can inform the customer on how they intend to use the customer’s private information and in what specific purpose (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Zhang, Dran, Small & Barcellos, 1999). It is important that the company clarify that the information is not going to be shared with any unauthorized third party, and also that the customer actively can renounce a subscription to newsletters from the company. Likewise, it should be easy for the customer to request the company to erase the private information that the company possesses about the customer in their systems (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). A customer's reliance in a company regarding security and privacy increases when the company clearly indicates that there are additional ways to get in touch with them on the platform if something goes wrong or if there are questions about the products as well as payment and delivery. When the customer’s expectations regarding a company’s safe handling of private information, the customer’s perceived value against the company and e-commerce platform will increase (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Lwin & Williams, 2004).

2.3.2 Functional experience of the e-commerce platform

When a customer uses a platform, the speed and ease with which a customer could access and navigate refers to the efficiency of the e-commerce platform (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002). In addition to the efficiency of an e-commerce platform, the structure design of a platform is also important. The structure design can be defined as “the overall organization and accessibility of displayed information” on the platform (Wang & Emurian, 2005, p. 116). In short terms this can be expressed by the platform being easy to use and navigate on (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). According to Nielsen (1998), consistency in the structure design is the key. All of the pages on the platform should look and function the same. If pages on the platform differ too much in design, the user gets annoyed since they have to learn everything over again for every new page. It should be easy for the customer to find what he or she is looking for as well as to get anywhere on the site (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002; Santos, 2003). There have to be possibilities to search by product, feature or keyword on the e-commerce platform (Santos, 2003). The customer should not need to do extensive searches on the platform to find the desired content, regardless of whether it is about products or delivery information (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006).

If the platform is easy to use and easy to navigate, arousal can be enhanced. Arousal is about being stimulated and excited when surfing the platform (Novak, Hoffman & Yung, 2000; Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). Generating arousal can also be done by engaging the user more actively. Engaging the user can be done if the site invites the user to actively use it, allowing collection of information and creation of own log-ins with complete information about the customer’s previous purchases and saved links (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006).
2.3.3 Graphical experience of the e-commerce platform

A professional e-commerce platform and its web design does not only have an aesthetic function, it also sends signals to the customer that the company has high ability through its graphic and content dimensions, which has an impact on the loyalty towards the e-commerce platform (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2006; Wang & Emurian, 2005). In addition to this, a professional platform can serve as a way for increasing the emotional experience, or more precisely the pleasure that the customer get from visiting the platform. Pleasure is about the customer feeling happy and pleased when surfing at the platform (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006).

The graphical dimension refers to the platform’s graphical design factors, which gives the customer a first impression of the platform (Wang & Emurian, 2005). Pleasure, as a part of the emotional experience of the platform, can be enhanced through visual material. The graphical factors of the e-commerce platform include for example an appealing layout, color scale and high-quality pictures (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). In terms of colors, these should be cool and of low brightness as well as being used symmetrical. Especially moderate pastel colors seem to have an effect on the overall perception of the e-commerce platform. In terms of high-quality pictures, these should cover at least half of the total screen size (Kim & Moon, 1998), since high-quality pictures and well-chosen images has a positive effect on the professional impression of an e-commerce platform. But by overusing pictures as well as graphics, this have the opposite effect on the professional impression of the platform (Wang & Emurian, 2005; Zhang et al., 1999).

The content of an e-commerce platform refers to the textual and graphical information components that are included on the e-commerce platform (Wang & Emurian, 2005). It is important that the platform is using correct and updated information about the products and their prices (Zhang et al., 1999). In terms of using correct and updated information about the products being sold (Zhang et al., 1999), the e-commerce platform can facilitate decision making for the customer as well as increasing decision confidence, which in the end enables the user to fulfill his or her shopping needs (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). By packing the platform with content that is not relevant for the customer in question and that replaces the information that is actually useful, such as outdated product offers or advertisements should not be there (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006).
3 Method

This chapter describes the methods and approaches used in order to fulfill the research question and purpose for this thesis. First, the selected research approach and research method is presented. Secondly, the theoretical approach is explained, including selection of literature, source criticism and operationalization. Thirdly, Runelandhs as a study object is presented. Continuing, the empirical approach and its methods is described, including the survey and its components, the selection of respondents and coding of responses. Lastly, the reliability and external validity of the study and the ethical principles are discussed.

3.1 Research approach

This study uses a deductive research approach, which according to Bryman and Bell (2013) means that the study is based on different theories in a particular subject area, which is further used in the empirical study. Thus, the empirical study is the result of the collected theory. First, theory from previous researches was gathered to give the researches an understanding of the main factors driving business customers to become loyal in an e-commerce context. Further, the theory was used to designing survey questions appropriate for the study. Using a deductive approach was therefore considered the most appropriate based on the given purpose.

One of the major advantages of using a deductive approach is that the survey questions get a theoretical foundation, resulting in a minimal risk that the questions are asked in vain (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

3.2 Research method

There are primarily two different methods that can be used for collecting empirical information - qualitative and quantitative method. The qualitative method is deemed most appropriate when researchers want to interpret or understand a certain phenomenon. The quantitative method is suitable when researchers want to explain, prove or test a hypothesis. A mixed research approach on the other hand, uses a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. There are differences between qualitative and quantitative researches, which need to be taken into consideration, but this does not mean that a qualitative and quantitative research methods are incompatible. For example, a quantitative perspective can be used in analysis of qualitative studies and vice versa (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

This study has used a quantitative approach with qualitative elements when the survey was sent out to a number of Runelandhs customers. A survey with a quantitative approach with qualitative elements was deemed to be an effective method for collecting of empirical information in this study. The more quantitative closed questions were supplemented by qualitative more open questions to obtain fuller and more detailed responses from the respondents.
3.3 Literature review

Literature and scientific articles have been selected with the intention to relate to the purpose of this thesis. The theoretical framework is based on factors that create and build loyalty in a B2B relationship in the context of an e-commerce platform. Searches for scientific articles have been made in Business Source Premier (BSP) and Google Scholar. Google Scholar was primarily used as a supplement when going back to original sources identified in other articles. The keywords that have been used when searching for scientific articles were; loyalty, e-loyalty, customer retention, e-commerce, B2B, perceived value, trust, service quality, B2B-relationship and reputation. These keywords have also been combined in various configurations to identify relevant articles for this thesis.

The reason why relatively few keywords have been used is because when relevant articles were identified, those articles reference lists’ were used for further searches. All scientific articles used in the thesis are peer-reviewed and considered relevant in relation to the purpose. In addition to the scientific articles other literature have been used. Searches in Linnaeus University's library database have been made, and the keywords used for this were; marketing and e-commerce. In addition to this, previous course literature from the programme Enterprising and Business Development have been used. The literature review has in turn built the operationalization presented in the appendix (see appendix 1).

The scientific articles used in the thesis have a focus on both B2B and B2C contexts. For this study, the focus is on the B2B context, but certain articles with a focus on B2C were considered relevant. There are both differences and similarities between the B2B and B2C field when doing business. The main differences are presented explicitly in the problem discussion, which also has existed in mind when using the scientific articles.

3.3.1 Source criticism

There are four main dimensions to consider when it comes to source criticism, these are; authenticity, time-related, independency and tendency freedom. The authenticity of the source relates to whether the source is what it claims to be. The aspect considering the time-related dimension is whether there is any reason to doubt the source to the extent that it has been a long time between a specific event and until it is mediated. Regarding the source’s independence, it should not be a copy or a summary of any other source. The independence aspect means that a source has been spread in several stages between people. Tendency freedom is about there being no reason to suspect the source giving a false picture of reality. A false picture of reality could arise when an author have political, personal or economic views that may impact on the argumentation that is given (Thurén, 2013).

Based on the searches, there are a number of authors used in the thesis who have been recurrent and well referenced within the chosen area, indicating independent and authentic sources. Continuing, when founding relevant articles relating to the purpose of this study, further articles were found by going back to original sources used in an
article’s literature review. This kind of approach of choosing theoretical sources is what Bryman and Bell (2013) would call a snowball selection. By starting from a number of sources, the researcher could find additional sources, which were relevant to the study’s purpose and research question (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

When analyzing and reviewing the found articles, the most important aspect is to gain an understanding of what is known within the chosen field and what concepts that are used within this field (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The focus of this thesis is within the B2B field in the context of an e-commerce platform in terms of loyalty. Therefore, both loyalty in regular commerce as well as e-commerce were reviewed, gaining an understanding that the concepts used in both fields resembles each other in many aspects, aside from the dimensions concerning the online experience of an e-commerce platform such as the graphical appearance of an e-commerce platform. For this reason, scientific articles that not directly focus on e-commerce have also been used. In addition to this, all scientific articles used are peer-reviewed by Business Source Premier.

3.4 Operationalization
Based on the theory, an operationalization has been designed. The main purpose of the operationalization was to break down the theory to formulate questions for the survey. See appendix 1 for the operationalization schedule and appendix 2 for the survey.

3.5 Study object
Runelandhs profiles itself as a company selling equipment and furnishing for all types of company on the Swedish market, which is mainly done through catalog and e-commerce. The majority of the sales are made through catalog, while the e-commerce represent a significant part of the total sales. The company possesses forty years of experience in equipment and furnishing everything from small offices to large factories. The e-commerce platform has been in use for about ten years. Runelandhs aim is to offer the widest range of everything from tailored solutions to the simplest products to their customers at the right price.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the factors that drive customer loyalty in a B2B context, and by doing this facilitating the number of sales on the e-commerce platform in the long term. To implement this study, Runelandhs and their e-commerce platform customers are selected as a study object. Runelandhs and their customers create opportunities to carry out this study, resulting in results that are relevant to Runelandhs regarding their e-commerce platform. In other words, Runelandhs and their customers is the object for analysis in this thesis.
3.6 Survey
To collect data, an online survey has been used as a methodical tool. The main reason for this was because of the availability that an online survey offers. Answering a survey does not require the researcher's presence (Bryman & Bell, 2013), which was beneficial for this study, because the selected respondents were spread across many different locations in Sweden. According to Bryman and Bell (2013), surveys unlike interviews, are quick to administer where several thousand can be sent out via email at the same time. This study chose to send out an email to the selected respondents via a link to the survey, which in turn was linked to Google forms. The email was sent out with help of Runelandhs business system. The biggest reason for using Google forms when designing the survey was because this would mean continuous access to survey at all times.

The disadvantages of surveys are that the researcher themselves cannot help the respondent to interpret the questions, which has to be considered in the collection process (Bryman & Bell, 2013). With this in mind, the survey questions were designed as simple and understandable as possible.

According to Bryman and Bell (2013), it is common with a lower response rate in a survey compared to a structured interview. This means that the respondents can choose not to answer the survey. To prevent a low response rate, this study chose to introduce the survey with a short introduction text. The aim of the introduction text was primarily to arouse the curiosity of the respondents, but also to explain the purpose of the survey. Also, the introduction text highlighted that the survey would be handled anonymously and that it was carried out by students at the Linnaeus University. The text also gave examples of how to answer the open questions. To further increase the response rate, two notices were also sent out. One notice also offered an offering of 15 % on the next purchase of Runelandhs.

3.6.1 Asking questions
According to Bryman and Bell (2013), a survey can be designed with different types of questions. They can be of open character, meaning that the respondents can formulate their responses by themselves. They can also be of closed character, which means that the respondents must choose between already predetermined answers. Through the open questions, the respondents can answer in their own words, which leave place for unusual and unexpected responses. One of the biggest disadvantages of open questions is that the responses may take long time to encode, while they require a greater effort to answer, which takes time of the respondents.

Unlike open questions, the closed questions are easier to process and encode. Another advantage is that they are easy to answer while the comparability of the responses increases. One of the biggest disadvantages of closed questions is the difficulty to get comprehensive answers (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This study relies on a survey design with both open and closed questions, in order to get as comprehensive answers as possible. The closed questions made it easier for the researchers to draw parallels.
between the various answers, while the open questions were considered relevant when
the researchers wanted to see how the respondents in their own words expressed their
views on Runelandhs and e-commerce platforms in general.

3.6.2 Selection of respondents
In this study, the selection of respondents was based on a number of parameters. The
selection was made using Runelandhs web order-history where information such as
customer name, purchase amount, number of purchases and date of purchase was
shown. First, the customers chosen from Runelandhs portfolio were the ones that had
made purchases over the web on Runelandhs e-commerce platform during the time
period of 20130512-20150512, which yielded a total of 6534 customers. In addition to
this, customers that only made one purchase was excluded from the selection, while
customers that made two purchases or more during the chosen time period was
included, which resulted in a total of 1200 customers who received the survey. The
reason for choosing customers who made more than one purchase can be explained
through the definition of loyalty in this study, which includes a retention behavior as
mentioned by Oliver (1999), Rauyruen and Miller (2007) as well as Anderson and

A total of 57 respondents answered the survey, a response rate that was slightly lower
than expected. The researchers had hoped for a response rate between 100-200. The
researchers were not expecting 1200 respondents to answer the survey, but wanted a
relatively high span of respondents in case of a possible response loss. As mentioned
before, a total of 57 respondents answered the survey. Out of the 57 responses, there
was one invalid response, which resulted in a final selection of 56 responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers of orders</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sales channel</th>
<th>Customers receiving the survey</th>
<th>Total respond rate</th>
<th>Invalid responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two or more orders</td>
<td>20130512-20150512</td>
<td>Web</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Selection table
Source: Own figure

3.6.3 Pilot study
A pilot study can be conducted in order to reduce the risk of the respondents
misunderstanding the questions in the survey that will then be used in the actual study.
A pilot study means that one or more persons outside the selection get to test the survey
before it is sent out to the actual sample of respondents to the study, ensuring that the
questions are clear and understandable. The pilot study should also ensure that the
responses contribute to the purpose given for the study. An additional advantage of
carrying out a pilot study is to provide an idea of how long it will take for the
respondents to answer the survey. Likewise, the persons carrying out the pilot study
could also provide other ambiguities or deficiencies of the survey to the researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

The pilot study made in this thesis was conducted with two persons that was not a part of the selection of the study. Both persons in the pilot study possess a work where purchases are made in a B2B context. One of them has several years of experience, and the other is relatively new to this on the workplace and these assignments. The reason for doing a pilot study was to ensure that the terminology remained at a good level where both experienced buyers and new buyers in a B2B context could understand the meaning of the questions. The feedback that emerged through the pilot study was; to change the order of some questions, as well as adding a help text to a question that needed to be clarified. The comments generally referred to that the survey had a good and understandable structure and that the mix between the open questions and the check questions were good.

3.6.4 Coding of responses
Since this study have used a quantitative approach with qualitative elements in the form of both open and closed questions in the survey, two methods for coding the responses has been used in parallel. In order to encode the open questions, grounded theory was used. When doing coding within the frame of grounded theory, the use of concepts is central. The concepts act as labels for concrete and distinct phenomena, which are connected to the building blocks of theory. The building blocks of the theory in this thesis can be found in the operationalization (see Appendix 1). The concepts should then be included in a category. Categories can in turn include two or more concepts. In short terms, grounded theory is used when comparing and categorizing data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

By using this type of method for coding the open questions in the survey, the researchers were able to see different patterns in the responses and whether the respondents tended to use the same words and descriptions. In order to find what factors that drives loyalty, the responses were compiled question by question. The researches could thereafter find similarities in the answers. In order to encode the closed questions, a compilation scheme was made. In the scheme, a summary of the different answers was presented in percentage, which could then be used in the empirical framework.

3.7 Observation of e-commerce platform
An observation of Runelandh’s e-commerce platform has been made as a complement to a few questions in the survey, which is based on the operationalization. When the observation was conducted there were a strong focus on objectivity, since it is the customer’s opinions that is relevant for this thesis. For example, a question from the survey that also was observed was; Is there an accessible questionnaire on Runelandh’s e-commerce platform where the most common questions and answers can be found (FAQ)? This type of question requires no personal validation and could hence be observed objectively by the researchers as well. The reason for also observing some of the content on the e-commerce platform was mainly to see if there were any difference
in the customer's perception of the platform relative to the actual platform and it's content.

3.8 Reliability of the study
Reliability is about the extent to which a measure of a concept is stable or consistent. When measuring the reliability in quantitative research, there are two dimensions applicable to this study: stability and inter-observer consistency. The stability dimension is about the stability of a measurement, i.e. if a study was made a second time with the same selection of respondents, the result should not fluctuate. The inter-observer consistency on the other hand, is relevant when coding data into different categories, for example when categorizing open questions in a survey. When several researchers are involved in a study, there is a risk for different interpretations of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In the sense of the stability of the measurements, it has not been possible to do the survey a second time to verify that the result does not fluctuate. On the other hand, the thesis have used a specific set of concepts that it has adhered to, both when it comes to operationalize the literature review in order to create questions as well as analyzing the empirical data. The thesis has in other words been set in the light of certain concepts. In terms of the inter-observer consistency, this has been increased by predetermining the process of coding the empirical data, which can be found in the method chapter Coding of responses, following the approach of grounded theory.

Since this study uses a quantitative method with qualitative elements, it is deemed appropriate to also mention the reliability criteria in the context of a qualitative research. Here, the reliability criteria is about creating a complete and accessible description of all phases of the research process, such as selection of respondents and decisions on the analysis of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). To increase the reliability in this study, disclosure of the whole research process has been presented in the method chapter, such as coding of responses and the survey design.

3.9 Validity of the study
Validity is about the extent to which a measure of a concept really gives a picture of the concept, and whether the conclusions from the study are linked or not. Validity is a collection term for different types of validity. The validity dimensions applicable to this study are: face validity and external validity. The face validity is about a concept really reflecting the content of the concept in question. The external validity on the other hand raises the question whether the result from a certain survey context can be generalized in other contexts. In the context of qualitative research, this concept is entitled as transferability (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

Doing a pilot study of the survey, where two persons that was not a part of the selection of the study participated, increased the face validity in this study. Both persons in the pilot study, as mentioned before in a previous chapter, possess a work where purchases are made in a B2B context. One of them has several years of experience, and the other one is relatively new to this on the workplace and these assignments. By doing this pilot study, the persons participating in the pilot study could give feedback on whether the
questions were interpreted in the way that the researchers wanted. In terms of the external validity criteria, this study did not use any kind of probability sample, which can make it hard to generalize. On the other hand, this is not the main objective of this study since the selection of the respondents was strategically selected.

3.10 Ethical principles
According to Bryman and Bell (2013) ethical principles are about voluntariness, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the persons involved in the study. By informing the respondents about the study’s purpose, why it is conducted and how long time it will take to answer the whole survey - this study seems to take the ethical principles into considered. In the introduction text of the survey, it was mentioned that it was voluntarily to participate in the study and that the received answers would be treated completely anonymously. Also, the researchers promised Runelandhs that the web-order history that they had access to only would be used for research purposes and under no circumstances be distributed to a third party.
4 Empirical Framework

This chapter presents the collected empirical data for this project. It is based on the survey sent out to Runelandhs business customers that have made two or more purchases online on their e-commerce platform. The structure of the empirical framework is in alignment with the previous structure used in the theoretical framework.

4.1 Showing concern for the customer

4.1.1 Adapting to customer needs
91% of the respondents consider it positive being able to create an individual login account on the e-commerce platform in connection to the purchase. The main reason for this being a positive feature is because the buying process becomes easier and faster, while customers do not have to enter the entire customer details at each purchase. Also, the customer can view his or her own order history. This means that only 9% do not see any advantages to creating an individual login account.

12.5% of the respondents claim that Runelandhs are flexible when it comes to changing, adding or deleting items from an already placed order. 14.5% mean that Runelandhs is quite flexible, while 73% had no opinion about it since they never had the need to change anything in an order.

When it comes to changing an existing product's appearance or function, 94% of the respondents claim that they are not sure if Runelandhs can do this. 2% of the respondents states that Runelandhs only has a relatively small capacity when it come to doing changes in products, mainly because of Runelandhs being an intermediary between the suppliers and the end customers. 2% of the respondents believe that Runelandhs has the ability to change the products or functions, and 2% of the respondents states that Runelandhs do not have any possibility doing changes in the product appearance or function.

4.1.2 Sharing information with the customer
According to 54% of the respondents, Runelandhs has a question forum (FAQ) on their e-commerce platform where the most common questions and answers are described. Despite this, 46% of the respondents state there is no FAQ presented on the platform. Based on the observations, FAQ is actually presented on the e-commerce platform.

Continuing, 71% of the respondents points out that Runelandhs provide them with information throughout the whole purchasing process, information such as confirmations, delivery notifications, delays and information about suppliers and partners. 29% of the respondents argue that Runelandhs do not provide them with information during the purchasing process. On the question whether it is easy to get hold of Runelandhs sellers, 27% of the respondents think it is very easy. 71% state that it is easy to get hold of the sellers, while 2% think it is difficult.
Regarding the delivery time for each product, as supplied on the e-commerce platform, this consistent with the actual outcome according to 96 % of the respondents. 4 % of the respondents claim that the delivery time does not match the actual outcome.

100 % of the respondents also stated that the delivery note always matched the placed order.

4.1.3 Recovery actions
If a product is backordered or delayed, 46 % of the respondents state that Runelandhs do inform them about this. Runelandhs will then contact them by e-mail, and informing the customer when the new delivery is expected to be delivered. 50 % do not know how Runelandhs would handle a delay, since they never experienced it. 4 % of the respondents state that Runelandhs do not inform them if a product is backordered or delayed, and as a result the delivery time will be very long.

If something is wrong with an order, 18 % of the respondents claim that Runelandhs compensate them. According to one respondent, Runelandhs “compensates them with a new product and/or a price reduction”. 4 % mean that Runelandhs do not offer any compensation if something goes wrong. 78 % of the respondents claim they do not know if Runelandhs offer any compensation, because they never have been exposed to anything going wrong with an order.

4.2 Reputation

4.2.1 Corporate reputation on the market
62 % of the respondents claim that the reason for initially making a purchase on Runelandhs e-commerce platform was because Runelandhs had a good selection of products to satisfactory prices. The respondents also state that Runelandhs has a wide range of products consisting of the specific brands that they requested. In addition to this, Runelandhs has certain products in their product range that some of the respondents could not find anywhere else. An additional 3 % of the respondents initially chose to shop at Runelandhs because of the quick delivery times as well as the desired products being available for quick delivery. 21 % of the respondents state that the physical catalog that Runelandhs sends out was a crucial factor for making an initially purchase on Runelandhs e-commerce platform. By getting the physical catalog, this resulted in the customers visiting Runelandhs e-commerce platform and doing a purchase. An additional 9 % of the respondents received recommendations through colleagues, internal tips in their business and even old customer contacts, which in the end made them doing a purchase at Runelandhs e-commerce platform. There were also a 5 % of the respondents that began purchasing products at Runelandhs e-commerce platform by mere chance. According to one respondent, “when we needed warehouse inventory, Runelandhs catalog reached us the same day”. This resulted in the customer visiting the e-commerce platform to make purchase.
There are divided opinions regarding the perception that the customers had about Runelandhs before they became customers. 71 % of the respondents had never heard about Runelandhs before they became customers. There was no knowledge of the company before an initial purchase was made, but colleagues who had previous experience of Runelandhs recommended them. The respondents, which had a perception of Runelandhs before they made purchase with the company, consisted of 29 %. They perceived Runelandhs as a company with a wide product range, good prices and quick delivery. They also had an idea of Runelandhs being a major supplier in its sector as well as a serious and well-established company. In addition to this, many of the respondents got an impression of Runelandhs based on positive feedback from other companies, resulting in them becoming a customer to Runelandhs.

How the respondents initially heard about or came in contact with Runelandhs is based on four main aspects. The majority of the respondents, approximately 43 % came in contact with Runelandhs through the physical catalog they achieved by mail. The catalog is sent out continuously by Runelandhs and gives the customer a good overview of the company’s product range. 26 % of the respondents were in need of a specific product and chose to do a search via Google, which resulted in them finding Runelandhs e-commerce platform. After their initial searches they could verify that Runelandhs got the desired products that they wanted at the time. Another 18 % of the respondents had previous experience of Runelandhs from earlier workplace and other local customers that had made purchases from Runelandhs for a long time. The remaining 13 % heard about Runelandhs through recommendations from colleagues and directors at the own company, who had previously made purchases from Runelandhs.

The expectations from the respondents that existed after the first order placement is based primarily on four categories. 32 % of the respondents expected the entire purchase process to be managed smoothly by Runelandhs, such as the delivery being completed without delays and products being out of stock. Likewise, there were expectations about the order being complete when arriving as well as no damage occurring to the products during transport. Another 32 % of the respondents wanted the products to meet the expectations that had been built up through the e-commerce platform. The products should visually correspond to their presentation on the e-commerce platform, and live up to the promised quality. Next, 20 % of the respondents expected the delivery to be quick, where some of the customers wanted to receive the delivery within a week. Continuing, that the delivery goods would arrive at the promised was an expectation of 16 % of the respondent. This would not necessarily mean that the delivery had to be fast, but rather that it would arrive within the scheduled delivery time.
4.2.2 Perceived size of the company

Regarding the perceived size of the company, 64% of the respondents consider Runelandhs perceived size having no influence in the choice of them as their supplier. According to these respondents, the product range and quality of the products are of more essence when choosing a company to purchase products from as well as the company being available when required. Also, it is rather the active period that the company has been operating in the industry that has an impact on the selection of a company to purchase products from. As mentioned before for many respondents, Runelandhs perceived company size was nothing they actively thought about when began purchasing products from Runelandhs.

But a company’s perceived size did to some extent affect the choice of supplier for 31% of the respondents answering the survey. The argument they put forward was the fact that they believe that larger companies often have the ability to hold a larger volume of products in stock, which in turn can contribute to faster deliveries. A company’s perceived size is considered very essential for 5% of the respondents when it come to choosing Runelandhs as their supplier. They consider Runelandhs to be a large and safe supplier with great resources as well as offering a high security for customers. Another important aspect is that customers do not need to have so many suppliers in addition to Runelandhs since they hold a wide range of products, offering the customers many different products to choose from. A larger company can according to these respondents usually keep a larger and wider stock, and for that reason, the size of the company has an impact on the customer's choice of supplier.

4.2.3 Recommendations and guarantees from other parties

Regarding Runelandhs e-commerce platform, 70% of the respondents mean that reviews from past customers’ experiences of products and services can be found on the platform, while 30% of the respondents mean that they could not found such information. According to the researchers observations, reviews from past customers experiences are actually presented on the e-commerce platform.

That Runelandhs possess third party certification (AAA Soliditet credit rating system) seems to be of great importance to 14% of the respondents. 36% of the respondents consider it of very great importance, 27% that it is of little importance, and 23% believe that it is of very little importance that Runelandhs possesses this type of certification when considering to do a purchase on Runelandhs e-commerce platform.

The main factors crucial to the respondents for returning to Runelandhs e-commerce platform is simplicity and the product range offered. 76% of the respondents feel that the simplicity of the e-commerce platform made them return to Runelandhs and their e-commerce platform. This simplicity represents factors such as; easy to make a purchase and placing an order. This simplicity was increased even more when customers already had made purchases before, since they thereby had created an user account on the e-commerce platform. Although the e-commerce platform itself is easy to handle and navigate on, a further aspect that make the respondents return to Runelandhs e-
commerce platform are the ease to get in touch with the sellers on Runelandhs by telephone. The respondents feel that they are answered quickly and that it is no problem to solve the problems or requests they have. As one respondent mentions, the salespersons at Runelandhs are “very nice and willing to help customers no matter what it's about”. One respondent feel that it is easier to keep shopping at Runelandhs e-commerce platform, since it is time consuming to create new login pages on every other e-commerce platform. According to 24 % of the respondents, they choose to return to Runelandhs based on the range of products that they offer. The range is considered to be satisfactory, containing the products the respondents are in need of at a good price. The quality of the range is also considered to be very good, and when some of the respondents receive a defective product, they feel that the handling of this complaint case is done excellently by Runelandhs, making them return to Runelandhs as a customer.

4.3 User online experience

4.3.1 Technical experience of the e-commerce platform
In conjunction with the purchase at Runelandhs e-commerce platform, 80 % of the respondents consider the platform to provide them with information about how their company's information is handled by Runelandhs. 20 % of the respondents mean that there is no clear access to information about how their personal information is going to be handled by Runelandhs. According to the observations by the researchers, there is no clear information presented on how customer information is handled by Runelandhs in connection to the purchase.

According to 93 % of the respondents, there is a possibility to change their personal information such as shipping address and billing address directly on the e-commerce platform, but 7 % feel that there is no opportunity to do this.

Regarding the possibilities to track an order after purchasing, 88 % of the respondents claim that this opportunity exists. 12 % argue that there is no such possibility to track an order. According to the observations, opportunities to track an order after purchasing exist.

4.3.2 Functional experience of the e-commerce platform
Regarding the information on Runelandhs e-commerce platform, for example in terms of service and delivery time, 95 % of the respondents think that they are clearly presented. 5 % of the respondents claim that there is no clear information given on the e-commerce platform. According to the observations, Runelandhs presents clear information such as terms of service and delivery time in connection with a purchase at their e-commerce platform.

Concerning the headings to every product categories on the e-commerce platform, 77 % of the respondents consider them to be helpful in order to find what they are searching
for. 2 % believe they are of some help, while 21 % believe that they are not of any help to find what they were searching for.

All respondents believe that the structure of Runelandhs platform is consistent i.e. that all pages on the e-commerce platform have the same structure design and work similarly.

In order to find specific products, 20 % of the respondents use Runelandhs searching tool to a very large extent, while 57 % of the respondents use it to a large extent. 20 % of respondents use it in a small extent, and 3 % use it in a very small extent.

On the question what makes the respondents to return to an e-commerce platform in general, it is mainly three factors that stand out. First, 71 % of the respondents claim simplicity to be a crucial factor. In the sense that the platform should be easy to use as well as providing relevant information about the products as well as delivery terms in an accessible manner. Likewise, it should be easy to find the desired products and it should not require extra time for the customer in question to complete a purchase. It should also be easy to shop through the e-commerce platform in the aspect that the purchase can be made when it best suits the customer, i.e. the customer should not need to adapt to the platform, and they should also feel safe to complete a purchase online. Regarding product range, this is a factor that 29 % of respondents consider as an important part for returning to an e-commerce platform. In order to get the customers to return to an e-commerce platform it is of relevance of keeping the requested products in stock, as well as delivering the quality that is promised.

On the question what customers value the most when shopping at an e-commerce platform, a clear pattern is identified. One of the factors considered most valuable when shopping at an e-commerce platform is simplicity. It should go easy and convenient to make a purchase, without unnecessary steps. The e-commerce platform should be easy to navigate on, including good search capabilities and clear pages. Another valuable factor is speed, which means that it should go quick to make a purchase on the e-commerce platform. The third most valuable factor is good delivery times. Good delivery times means that products quickly must leave the stores. The delivery shall also be made directly to the customer and "not to a delivery point such as Posten or DHL". The fourth factor that the customer value when buying online is clearly stated information on the e-commerce platform regarding products, prices and delivery. The information should be visible, easy and clear. Other factors that customers value when purchasing online are good prices, good product quality and a wide range. One respondent press the importance of the product being consistent with what is promised on the e-commerce platform, as this creates the conditions for repurchases. Another valuable factor is that customers can make a purchase when the time is available.
4.3.3 Graphical experience of the e-commerce platform

Regarding the products that Runelandhs offers, 36 % of the respondents feel that these products are presented very good graphically in the picture on the e-commerce platform. The majority of the respondents, 62 %, believe that they presented good. No respondent feel they were poorly presented, but 2 % feel that the products are presented very badly graphically.

73 % of the respondents mean that they get a clear picture of how the products look like given the images used on e-commerce platform. 27 % of the respondents consider that the pictures partly gives a clear picture of the products, and none of the respondents feel that the pictures available on e-commerce platform does not provide a clear picture.

The images on Runelandhs e-commerce platform provide a professional impression regarding color scheme, composition and sharpness according to 91 % of the respondents. Respondents who believe that the images partially give a professional impression consist of 9 % and no respondents believe that the images do not provide a professional impression.

The color scheme of Runelandhs e-commerce platform ease the navigation on the platform according to 53 % of the respondents, while 27 % think it partially ease the navigation. 20 % of the respondents consider that the coloring do not facilitate the navigation of the e-commerce platform.

On the question how the respondents perceive the overall graphical impression of Runelandhs e-commerce platform, 87 % consider it positively. They argue that the e-commerce platform is easy to navigate on thanks to the highly developed graphics. Runelandhs also use fine, large images and clear texts, which seems to increase the positive impression of the platform. The major boxes with usable facts along with the large fonts gives the site an “airy and light feel”. Thus, it gives a more pleasant experience than many of their competitors according to many of the respondents. However, a few respondents prefer to use the paper catalog over the e-commerce platform, since they feel that they get a better overview compared to the e-commerce platform. One respondent also argue that the platform is satisfactory, but not crucial to carry out a purchase. 13 % of the respondents claim that the graphical impression is negative. For example, some argue that it is difficult to find measurements and dimensions of the products. The platform also lacks pictures of how the products look on the backside, where one respondent wishes pictures of the products on all sides. The platform can also be perceived as somewhat stiff and a little too much “less is more” as one customer mentioned. The platform also lack in the information on how to use the product. Some of the respondents even claim that Runelandhs previous e-commerce platform was more satisfactory, much due to the color tabs available on the previous platform that has been removed on the new one.
5 Analysis

In this chapter, the following research question is answered: What factors drives a customer to become loyal in a business-to-business context in the line of an e-commerce platform? In the analysis the researchers have created a discussion regarding the factors driving loyalty using Runelandhs as the object for analysis, thereby stressing the importance of the factors driving loyalty in a B2B context in the line of an e-commerce platform.

5.1 Showing concern for the customer

5.1.1 Adapting to customer needs

One important way to show concern towards the customer is by customizing and adapting to the customer’s wishes and needs. Through the e-commerce platform this can be done in different ways (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006), both by the company being flexible to customer requests (Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990) as well as customizing the information on the platform (Sultan et al., 2002). A significant part of the customers expected the entire purchase process to be managed smoothly after their first purchase, in other words the purchasing process being handled in a simple manner. This is also something many of the respondents value when they shop on an e-commerce platform in general, where the platform offers an easy and convenient way to make a purchase.

According to Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) as well as Sultan et al. (2002), an effective way to create convenience for the customer is to provide personalized login pages, which are created by the customer in conjunction with their first purchase. This way of providing personalized login pages is highly appreciated by the respondents answering the survey. One respondent stated it to be time consuming to create new login pages for every other companies, making it more convenient for the customer to stay with their current supplier when doing further purchases, in this case Runelandhs. This is also in alignment with the statement made by Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) as well as Sultan et al. (2002), where they state that the customer can store order history, current orders, delivery address and customer information. Since this information is stored and available for both the customer and the company, this contributes to an easier order processing which enables the company to customize the information specifically for each customer.

Continuing with the second way of customizing and adapting to the customer’s wishes and needs, the company can as mentioned above be flexible to customer requests. This can be made by the customer being able to change, add or remove from their order as well as changing features of the product if this is needed (Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990). Likewise, the company being available to quickly respond to requests is of value in this sense (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990). When it comes to changing, adding or removing something in an order, this is not something that any of the respondents pointed out clearly to be of importance in order for them to return to an e-commerce platform. On the other hand, some of the
respondents mentioned the ability to solve customer requests as important for returning to Runelandhs platform and do further purchases. Implying that this may apply even when it comes to changing, adding or removing something in an order. A company’s willingness as well as the ability to be flexible to customer requests and solve them in the best way given the situation as mentioned by Hansen, Samuelsen and Silseth (2008) as well as Noordewier, John and Nevin (1990) seem to be valued by the respondents. For example, many of the respondents were positive to the company, in this case Runelandhs, being “Very nice and willing to help customers no matter what it's about”.

Ability to change in products or its functions as mentioned by Noordewier, John and Nevin (1990), 94% of the respondents points out that they don’t know if Runelandhs can do this, nevertheless they chose to make repeated purchases at Runelandhs e-commerce platform. This may give indications that they never wanted to change the products or functions, being satisfied with product range supplied. Thus, it seems not so important being able to change the product and its features, in the sense of the customer becoming loyal, at least in the sector Runelandhs is operating in.

5.1.2 Sharing information with the customer
By communicating with the customers directly from the e-commerce platform, the company can show concern for the customer. Providing information even before the customers know that they need it, contributes to the experience of using a platform. (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). According to the respondents, the company providing relevant information about the products as well as delivery terms in an accessible and simple manner is actually positive for making them return to an e-commerce platform, which is in alignment with the statement above. In terms of the company providing relevant information as the respondents demand, it must be easy for them to access the information in a simple manner before they even know that they need it (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008), otherwise some of it may be missed. In terms of FAQ being available on the platform, which provides convenience for the customer, this is something that many of the respondents for example have missed on Runelandhs platform. Even though it’s actually there. Pointing once again on the importance of providing information to the customer, in order to enhance loyalty (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008), which many of the respondents value for them returning to a platform.

Although, the company should not overwhelm their customers with information, instead they should tailor the message to fit customer needs as far as possible (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). Excessive customer care can actually create pressure on the customer, which result in the customer abstaining from doing a purchase. Instead, the company should inform the customer if there for example would be a delay in filling or completing an order (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). This is something that for example Runelandhs also practices through their e-commerce platform. The majority of the respondents claim that they are provided with satisfactory information through the whole purchasing process regarding their order. And once again, as mentioned before,
this is something they value. The company can, according to Urban, Amyxb and Lorenzon (2008) show that they are concerned about the customer’s rights and interests by providing the customer with information when problems arise in order to enhance loyalty (Urban, Amyxb & Lorenzon, 2009).

In addition to this, the company could also provide the customer with truthful information about its offerings (Urban, Amyxb & Lorenzon, 2009). Prices of products, delivery information, taxes, replacements guarantees and return policies should be easily accessible to the customer – in other words, information about the contract between the company and the customer (Shneiderman, 2000). This is an aspect that many of the respondents value high in order for them to return to an e-commerce platform to do repurchases. They push on the importance of the company keeping their promise to them, which they express through a number of ways. For example, if the platform claims it has certain products in stock, this should also be the case. Continuing, the product should meet the expectations built up from the platform and live up to quality that is visually corresponded. Last but not least, the delivery should also arrive at the promised time mentioned on the platform with the ordered items. According to 100 % of the customers answering on the survey, the delivery notes always match the order as they added on Runelandhs e-commerce platform. 96 % of the respondents also claimed that the stated delivery time for each product is consistent with the actual outcome. This suggests that Runelandhs always deliver what they promise on the e-commerce platform regarding delivery note and delivery time. According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra (2002) and Santos (2003), keeping promises is a driver of loyalty. As a number of respondents claimed above, they return to Runelandhs and e-commerce platforms in general just because of the company keeping their promise - this should therefore be considered as an important driver to become loyal.

It is also important that the customer have the possibility to speak to a company representative if needed (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005), since this increases the confidence in the selling company (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012) and has an impact on the value that the customer experience in this context (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). The respondents answering the survey value the simplicity to easy get in touch with a seller, especially through phone so they can speak with the seller directly. According to Sultan et al. (2002), when there are possibilities for customers to interact and communicate with the company via the platform, they feel a willingness from the company to satisfy them. This seems to be applicable with the respondents in this study. The respondents also value that they are answered quickly if they have any questions and requests as well as the sellers being very nice and willing to help them. This was for instance the case for many respondents shopping at Runelandhs e-commerce platform. So being available through telephone, as mentioned by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malholtra (2005) the company can help customers if they have any questions and requests.
5.1.3 Recovery actions

If a problem occur for example in a delivery or an order, it is essential that there is a willingness by the company to fix the defects or problems encountered by the customer (Noordewier, John & Nevin, 1990) and there should also be an “effective handling of problems and returns through the site” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005, p. 220). In other words, this is the company’s’ ability to solve problems (Yang & Fang, 2004). According to the respondents, the company being able to handling their problems in a simple manner is of importance for them to return to an e-commerce platform, for example by the sellers being easy to get in touch with to solve their problems, which was the case with Runelandhs. This is in alignment with Yang and Fang (2004) statement mentioning that loyalty can be enhanced by the company responding directly to for example phone calls and e-mail, thereby making the customer return to the company as in the case of the respondents in this study.

Another option for the company to express the effective way of handling problems, is by giving the customer suitable options when returning not satisfactory products, handling their problems without delay and by the e-commerce platform informing the customer if their order is not processed. Notifying the customer if ordered products don’t arrive on promised time and picking up items from that the customer, is a way to compensate for problems caused by the company and the site itself (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005). In the case of Runelandhs, the respondents who experienced a backorder or a delay, 46 %, state that Runelandhs informed them about this by contacting them by e-mail telling them when the new delivery is expected. As mentioned by Noordewier, John and Nevin (1990), the company being willing to fix defects or problems encountered by the customer is essential, something that for example Runelandhs have achieved towards their customers.

In addition to this, there were expectations from the respondents after they did purchase. They wanted the order to be complete when arriving as well as no damage occurring to the products during transport. If there for some reason would occur damage or the order being incomplete, respondents who encountered this felt that Runelandhs compensated them for this by for example providing them with a new product or a price reduction. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malholtra (2005) compensating a customer for problems that may occur during the service process and to what degree that the company is able to do this have an impact on the loyalty dimension. Suggesting that this type of action made by Runelandhs actually strengthens the customers loyalty towards a company.

Continuing, there were none of the respondents that mentioned the company being able to compensate them as an factor for them to return to a certain e-commerce platform and do further purchases. Compared to the company keeping a promise, this aspect seems not as important. Many of the customers puts more significance in the company keeping the promise they have given their customers and fulfilling their part of the contract, than the company being able to handle problems afterwards.
5.2 Reputation

5.2.1 Corporate reputation on the market
A company's reputation serves as a perceptual presentation of the company in relation to other competing business available on the market. The reputation constitutes a type of market-validated information, which has a big impact on the customer's choice of company to make purchases from (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). In summary the reputation represents evaluations about the company's past performances that includes how well the company handles the customer's problems and requests (Doney & Cannon, 1997). The respondents mainly heard about Runelandhs through the catalog that the company continuously sends out and through searches on Internet via Google when they were in need of a specific product, making them interested in doing a purchase at Runelandhs platform. Several of the respondents had previous experience of Runelandhs because of former workplaces. A minority of the respondents had received recommendations of Runelandhs from colleagues and other people. Those respondents who had a perception of Runelandhs before they became customers were comprised of 29 %, and these had an idea of the company having a wide product range, good prices and quick delivery. Similarly, respondents had a perception that Runelandhs was a major supplier in its branch and were a serious company. The reputations of Runelandhs that respondents had came mainly from colleagues and other companies. The respondents had heard of and received Runelandhs recommended for themselves, and this only in a positive sense.

When a customer is facing the decision to make a purchase of a company, the reputation can be the decisive aspect. If the reputation is of a positive character, this can constitute a critical factor affecting the final purchase decision for the customer (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Wilson, 2001). Through the recommendations and the reputations that the respondents had about Runelandhs, this could be considered the predominant aspects for choosing to make a purchase from a company to begin with, i.e. to initially get a customer to a specific supplier and make a purchase. Many of the respondents had ideas about Runelandhs involving for example: product range, price and delivery. Runelandhs was in other words initially interesting for the respondents since they had the desired products that the customer was looking for in its range at the prices that customers demand. The opinions that come from other individuals or companies can be considered to have a greater significance than the company's word about themselves. This could thereby indicate that there is a confidence to the recommendations that come from the people and businesses that are in a similar context.

A company and an e-commerce platforms reputation is important in several aspects, both when it comes to acquiring new customers as well as delivering value and keeping the customer as the company already has a relationship with (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008). An expectation that the respondents had after their first purchase of Runelandhs was mainly about the whole shopping process being managed smoothly by the company. For example, there were expectations that the delivery would be quickly
managed, and that the delivery would be full and complete, i.e. no damage to the delivered products or any backorders. A large part of the respondents had expectations that the ordered products would meet the expectations that have been built up through e-commerce platform according to existing images and description, and that the products should consist of good quality. This could be considered factors that a company continuously should work with to keep current customers and deliver value to them. The reputation is highly significant as it is about the company and its ability to acquire new customers, but also to retain existing customers and deliver value to them, and for that reason it may be relevant to live up to customer expectations in order to maintain a good reputation, thereby strengthening the loyalty of already existing customers.

The fact that a company has a good reputation is based on previous customers perceived experience that has been spread further on the market. A company that has a good reputation can be seen as an asset to the company as it may mean that customers can trust the company in a wider extent than a company without reputation of a positive character (Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Wilson, 2001). When respondents initially chose to make a purchase at Runelandhs on the basis of recommendations and reputations, these could be regarded as an asset for Runelandhs as well as customers on the basis that customers can rely on Runelandhs meeting their expectations. Given the expectations that the respondents had after the first purchase of Runelandhs, it could be considered that those expectations were met.

5.2.2 Perceived size of the company
It has been shown that customers have greater confidence in larger companies for the reason that they are considered to have the skills and resources to manage an e-commerce platform as well as completing customer service, in terms of variety of products and large stocks of goods (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Hung Cheng & Chen, 2012). The majority of respondents felt that Runelandhs perceived company size did not have any significant impact, but rather it is the product range and quality of the product that is essential for choosing a company in question. Likewise respondents felt that it was important that the company had been available a long time on the market rather than that it was a large company. Additional opinions from customers were that it was more important that the company was available whenever there was a need for this than the perceived size of the company.

The few respondents who felt that a company’s perceived size influenced their choice of e-commerce platform of some extents, was mainly because these types of companies were considered to possess more resources as well as the ability to store larger volumes and products. A further aspect was that a business of a larger character creates a sense of security among customers when they make purchases. As mentioned by Hung, Cheng and Chen (2012) the perceived size of a company has an impact on the reputation that a certain company's, which is the customers idea of the company's size. This could in this case be considered to demonstrate that the company's perceived size does not have any direct influence on the choice of e-commerce platform but rather on
the range, quality and availability of the company, which makes the customer becoming loyal.

5.2.3 Recommendations and guarantees from other parties
One way to communicate the company's past performance towards both new and existing customers is to show previous customer's feedback after a purchase on the e-commerce platform or e-commerce platform (Schneiderman, 2000). According to the majority of respondents, there are no reviews from previous customers’ experiences shared on Runelandhs e-commerce platform, but unlike the respondents perception this could actually be observed on Runelandhs e-commerce platform. This could mean that they are not clearly presented on the e-commerce platform. Customers can not get any face-to-face contact with an e-commerce platform and therefore according to Sivasailam, Kim and Rao (2002), recommendations from colleagues and other business customers have a strong impact on building an initial trust towards the e-commerce platform and further build loyalty (Sivasailam, Kim & Rao, 2002). On the other hand, this could mean that previous customers' experiences do not have any major influence on whether a customer returns to an e-commerce platform or not, as customers who did not identified this on the platform still returned to Runelandhs platform. This factor could therefore be considered not as relevant when it comes to returning customers and thereby them becoming loyal. The same goes for a third party certification such as AAA (Soliditet Credit Rating System). A customer can chose to purchase from a company because of the use of guarantees, and a third party can provide this kind of guarantee in the form of a certification that shows that the e-commerce platform lives up to a specific standard (Shneiderman, 2000). According to the respondents, half of then considered it to be important that Runelandhs had a third party certification (AAA Soliditet credit rating system), and the remaining half felt that it was not of great importance. This could therefore be considered to demonstrate that a third party certification to ensure a certain standard is of relative importance when it comes to choosing a company to make further purchases with.

5.3 User online experience

5.3.1 Technical experience of the e-commerce platform
As mentioned by Hung, Cheng and Chen (2012) the e-commerce platform should possess technical features to provide convenience to the customer. According to the customers answering the survey, it is clear that the technical experience is not considered as important when compared to for example the functional experience of the e-commerce platform in order to return to the platform for further purchases. Although, feeling safe when completing a purchase online is considered to be a part of the simplicity aspect of a platform, in terms of it being easy to navigate on and so forth, therefore providing convenience to customer as Hung, Cheng and Chen (2012) suggests as part of the technical experience of an e-commerce platform.

Security as discussed above, as well as privacy are important features when it comes to e-commerce and can have an impact whether a customer choose to keep purchasing
with a certain company (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005; Yang & Fang, 2004; Santos, 2003). Increasing the technical experience of the e-commerce platform can be done by providing order tracking (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). Looking at Runelandhs and their platform, there are possibilities to track an order. The majority of the respondents are aware of this possibility existing on the e-commerce platform. Although, 12 % argue that no such possibility exist. So, for the majority aware of this possibility, this can contribute to the technical experience of the platform, which in the end can increase the overall loyalty to the e-commerce platform in question. If a customer is aware of the security and privacy of the platform visited, Lwin and Williams (2004) as well as Hung, Cheng and Chen (2012) argue that the customer will be able to understand that the risk of leaving private information online is reduced (Lwin & Williams, 2004; Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012). For the remaining 12 % of the customers who answered the survey on the other hand, there would be one component less that possibly could have reduced their perceived risk-taking, lowering the overall loyalty in this sense.

Continuing, none of the customers participating in this study pressed the importance of feeling comfortable to provide private information to the e-commerce platform in question (Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012; Shneiderman, 2000), as a significant factor for them returning to a platform and repurchase products of any kind. Another factor that was not mentioned either as crucial for returning to an e-commerce platform, is about the company informing customer how their personal information will be used (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006; Zhang et al., 1999), such as sharing personal information with any unauthorized third party. Likewise, it should be easy for the customer to request the company to erase the private information that they possess about this customer in their systems (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). Even though these factors were not mentioned directly in this context, many of the customers claimed clear stated information as an important factor, which could even apply in this case. Returning once again to Runelandhs e-commerce platform, the researchers could not find any information clearly stating how the customers’ personal information would be used. The interesting part is that 80 % of the respondents still feel that they are provided with information concerning the usage of their company’s personal information, while 20 % did not. Continuing, the majority of the respondent also felt that there was a possibility to change their personal information such as shipping address and billing address directly on the e-commerce platform. So, even though some parts of the technical convenience were absent, the customers still felt that they got a safe handling of their personal information. When the customer’s expectations regarding a company’s safe handling of private information, Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) as well as Lwin and Williams (2004) argue that the customers perceived value against the company and e-platform will increase, which seems to be the case here.
5.3.2 Functional experience of the e-commerce platform

In comparison to the technical experience of an e-commerce platform, the functional experience seems to be very crucial according to the respondents for returning to an e-commerce platform to make further purchases. The functionality of an e-commerce platform is about the speed and ease with which a customer could access and navigate on the platform (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malholtra, 2002; Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012) as well as “the overall organization and accessibility of displayed information” on the platform (Wang & Emurian, 2005, p. 116). Both when it comes to returning to an e-commerce platform in general as well as returning to Runelandhs e-commerce platform, the ease to navigate and access information on the platform is crucial according to respondents. Many of the respondents talks about simplicity on the e-commerce platform, meaning; easy to make a purchase, find what you are looking for and placing an order as well as the company providing relevant information. Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) as well as Novak, Hoffman and Yung (2000) state that when a platform is easy to use and easy to navigate on, arousal can be enhanced, which is about being stimulated and excited when surfing on the platform. Obviously, this a statement that is in alignment with the respondents of this study, which stresses the importance of ease of use on an e-commerce platform for them to return to it, thereby making them becoming loyal.

What makes the customers return to e-commerce platform, is also something they value when they shop online. Once again, simplicity is mentioned, where the e-commerce platform should be easy to navigate on, including good search capabilities as well as clear pages. Another valuable factor is speed, which means that it should be quick to make a purchase on the e-commerce platform. In addition to this, clearly stated information on the e-commerce platform, information regarding products, prices and delivery is crucial. Which is something the respondents feel that they are getting on Runelandhs platform in this case.

Nielsen (1998) points out many of the above mentioned factors as important. All pages should look and function the same, in order to keep it simple so that the user do not have to learn everything over again for every new page. According to Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Malholtra (2002) and Santos (2003) it should also be easy for the customer to find what he or she is looking for as well as to get anywhere on the site. In addition to this Santos (2003) also mentions that there have to be possibilities to search by product, feature or keyword on the platform (Santos, 2003), which also is in alignment with the respondents’ statements.

Continuing, it seems that providing a searching tool and clear pages is a way to go in order to contribute to the functional experience, something that for example Runelandhs has done. About 77 % use Runelandhs searching tool on a regular basis. In addition to this, 77 % of the respondents find the structure in the form of headings on every product category on Runelandhs platform to be of help in order to find what they are looking for.
5.3.3 Graphical experience of the e-commerce platform

A professional e-commerce platform and its web design does not only have an aesthetic function, it also sends signals to the customer that the company has high ability through its graphic and content dimensions, which has an impact on the loyalty towards the e-commerce platform (Schlosser, White & Lloyd, 2006; Wang & Emurian, 2005). Looking specifically at the images at Runelandhs platform, 91% of respondents felt that this provided a professional impression of the company, which then serves its purpose as mentioned by Schlosser, White and Lloyd (2006) as well as Wang and Emurian (2005). According to the respondents, the graphics on the platform helps the user to easily navigate on it. This could be connected to the functional experience of the platform, where the graphics seems to play an intermediary role in the functional experience. Also, 53% meant that the color scheme of Runelandhs e-commerce platform eased the navigation on the platform.

Many of the respondents mention Runelandhs platform to have an “airy and light feel” which gives it a pleasant experience, pushing once again on the concept of simplicity. About the platform serving as a way for increasing the emotional experience, or more precisely the pleasure that the customer gets from visiting the platform as mentioned by Steenkamp and Geyskens (2006) seem to be applicable in this context. Pleasure is about the customer feeling happy and pleased when surfing at the platform, which for the most customers seems to be the case here. Pleasure can be enhanced by visual material such as layout, color scale and high quality pictures (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006). These are aspects that seem to bring pleasure to the respondents when visiting the platform in this case. The respondents mentions the product images, which according to the majority respondents are presented in a good way on the platform, showing the features of the products well.

One factor that many of the authors mention, is the importance of not packing the platform with content that is not relevant to the customer (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006), such as overusing pictures, graphics (Wang & Emurian, 2005; Zhang et al., 1999) and outdated incorrect information (Zhang et al., 1999). According to the respondents, this is something that Runelandhs has succeeded with in the broad sense compared to their competitors. The respondents are satisfied with the use of fine, large images and clear texts as well as the major boxes with usable facts along with the large fonts gives the site an “airy and light feel”. So, the overall perception of the platform is in line with the criteria given by the authors mentioned above.

But even if the graphical experience of Runelandhs platform is overall positive in terms of images, color scheme and so on, this is not something that the customers mentioned as a crucial factor for returning to Runelandhs or any other e-commerce platform. One respondent even argued that the platform is satisfactory, but not crucial to carry out a purchase. But on the other hand, the graphical experience seemed to have an intermediary role in the functional experience, when it comes to navigating on it, where the graphical experience in other words contributes to the overall experience of the platform.
6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the purpose is fulfilled. The given purpose for this thesis was explore the factors that drives customer loyalty in a business-to-business context, in order to facilitate the number of sales on e-commerce platform.

The reputation of a company serves as an initial factor for making the customer recognize the company’s e-commerce platform compared to other competitors, in other words not something that directly drives the customer to become loyal. Instead, recommendation from others as well as guarantees from third parties function as a first filter for making the customer interested in the company to begin with. Although, factors such as the given range of products that the company offers and the quality of these products, makes the customer considering to do a first purchase.

In other words, the reputation serves as a beginning of the relationship between the customer and the company owning the e-commerce platform. The factors that then drive a customer to become loyal are connected to the customer experiencing how the company and their e-commerce platform serve them. One key concept that is recurrent is simplicity. It is clear that the customers demand simplicity both on and outside the e-commerce platform in terms of; the graphical layout, the navigation on the platform, the handling of problems, the purchase process and the support from the company. In other words, the customer wants it to be ease to do business on the e-commerce platform and the company behind it, which is a major driver of loyalty.

Another major driver of loyalty among the customers, which stands out in the study, are the factor about the company keeping the promise they have given to their customer. This can for example be expressed through the company delivering the promised items on the promised time as well as providing the customer with truthful information about its offerings on the site, which is in alignment with the actual outcome. In other words, the company fulfilling their promises is an important factor for the customer becoming loyal. It is also clear that the customers value the company seeing to their requests from the start and fulfilling them, rather than the company being able to handle problematic well afterwards.
7 Managerial implications

In order to provide tangible benefits to Runelandhs AB, recommendations are presented in this chapter regarding improvements that can be made on their e-commerce platform. This chapter is partly based on the materials and conclusions that the study resulted in, but also on other things that the authors have seen during the study.

Looking at Runelandhs e-commerce platform, a number of improvements points have been found:

• A number of customers miss the categorization from the old platform that Runelandhs distributed, where the different product categories were graphically presented in different colors. One tip to Runelandhs would be to place additional product- or new tabs on the top of the website. Making it available at first glance for the customer when using the e-commerce platform.
• Currently, the products on the platform are only presented from the front, where it could be advantageous for Runelandhs to even show the whole product. This could be made by actively being able to “turn” the product in a virtual tool.
• In the current situation, some of the products lack measurements. This is something that should be completed on all products in the range.
• As many respondents did not find the FAQ, this should be placed in a clear and accessible place.
• Recommendations from other customers should be made clearer on the platform, since this gives an idea of Runelandhs as an organization and how they act towards their customers.
8 Reflection

In this chapter, the authors' thoughts and reflections is presented, including what might have influenced the study's result, what could be done differently and other interesting findings outside the purpose of this thesis.

There are mainly two aspects that the authors feel might have influenced the result of the study. The first aspect is about the chosen theoretical framework. Since the study has a deductive approach, the theory used sets the frame for the given result. Depending on the chosen theory, a study gets a certain result. If another theoretical framework had used as starting point in the study, this would probably have yielded a slightly different result. There are other aspects that also builds loyalty, but in this study the focus were on three main fields; reputation, online user experience and concern for the customer.

The second aspect that could have influenced the result of the study is the final selection of respondents that answered the survey. The total response rate was not as high as the authors had hoped for, which of course influences the result. The reason why the response rate was so low may be due to different reasons. On one hand, the authors could have done the reason and the benefit of answering the survey even more clear than what was done. The authors feel that the respondents had enough time for answering the survey och do not believe that the response rate would have been higher even if more time had been given. One other aspect that could have played a part in the response rate, is the fact that many companies sends out surveys resulting in a “survey tiredness” with the respondents. In the end, it comes down to how motivated the respondent is in answering the questions, a dimension that is out of the control of the authors of this thesis. When doing a for example a structured interview, the respondent has no choice but to answering the given questions.

It is worth mentioning that the response rate increased by the double when an offering of a 15 % discount was added as a reward for answering the survey. If the customers are this price sensitive as was the case when adding the offering, what does this say about them? One can speculate what causes this behavior. As mentioned in the problem discussion by Reichheld and Schefter (2000), being sensitive to changes in prices, regardless of the service quality being good or not, is a trait of disloyal customers. Is this a sign of the customers being disloyal or is it just a result of ”survey tiredness”? Maybe, maybe not. It is possible that the offering added was the motivation they needed to answer the survey. Although, it is worth to mentioning that the remaining half of the respondents answered the survey without any “carrot” to motivate them. So, these persons answering the survey probably felt that they would get something out of answering the survey, since this helps Runelandhs to serve and help them better than before. In other words, the relationship between Runelandhs and the customer in question gets strengthened.
References


## Appendix 1 - Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Operationalization definition</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Loyalty    | Adapting to customers need. | - Flexible to customer requirements.  
- Customize information for the customer by providing personalized login page. | 2.  
3.  
4a.  
4b. | Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006;  
Sultan et al., 2002;  
Noordenwier, John & Nevin, 1990;  
Hansen, Samuelson & Silseth, 2008. |
| Loyalty    | Showing concern for the customer. | - Provide information through the whole process.  
- Sharing information that might influence on the day-to-day performance.  
- Keep the promise given to the customer.  
- Provide support to the customers; telephone, online representatives, live-chat.  
- Provide customer with support – user guideline and FAQ (Frequently asked question) and help pages on the website. | 5a.  
5b.  
6.  
7.  
8a.  
8b.  
9.  
10. | Hansen, Samuelson & Silseth, 2008;  
Kohli & Jaworski, 1990;  
Hung, Cheng & Chen, 2012;  
Urban, Amyxb & Lorenzon, 2009;  
Shneiderman, 2000;  
Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2006;  
Sultan et al., 2002;  
Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005;  
Ratnasingam & Phan, 2003;  
| Loyalty    | Recovery actions. | - The company’s ability to solve problems – suitable options when returning products, handling the problems without delay.  
- Compensating customers for problems that may occur. | 11.  
Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malholtra, 2005;  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- Previous customers perceived experience of the company that has been spread on the market.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perceived size of the company.</td>
<td>- Customers generally have a greater confidence in large companies, perceive to have skills, resources, stock and many products.</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Hung, Cheng &amp; Chen, 2012; Doney &amp; Cannon, 1997; Jarvenpaa et al., 1999.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Recommendations and guarantees from other parties.</td>
<td>- Feedback from previous customers on the e-commerce platform.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Informing customer how personal information will be used, such as not sharing information with a third party.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Should be able to change and erase personal information.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Functional experience of the e-commerce platform.</td>
<td>- Same-looking and functioning pages.</td>
<td>22.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Possibility to search by product, feature, keyword.</td>
<td>23.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- High-quality pictures/Well-chosen images – half of total screen.</td>
<td>25.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Correct and updated information about products and their price.</td>
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Appendix 2 - Survey

Del 1

1. Hur många gånger har ni handlat på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform under de senaste två åren, från april 2013 till april 2015?
   \textit{Ange antal gånger.}
   
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

2. Hur pass flexibla är Runelandhs att ändra, lägga till eller ta bort produkter från en redan lagt order?
   
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
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   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

3. I vilken utsträckning har Runelandhs möjlighet att förändra en befintlig produkts utseende eller funktion om ni som kund har ett behov av detta?
   
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
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4a. Anser ni att det är positivt att det finns möjlighet att skapa ett eget användarkonto på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform i samband med köp?
   \textbf{Ja} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Nej}

4b. Om ja på föregående fråga, på vilket sätt är det positivt?
   
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

5a. Förser Runelandhs er som kund med information under hela köpprocessen? \textit{Exempelvis genom orderbekräftelse och leveransaviseringar.}

   \textbf{Ja} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Nej}

5b. Om ja, i så fall vad?
   
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
   ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

III
6. Finns det tydlig information om exempelvis användarvillkor och leveranstider i anslutning till ett köp via Runelandhs e-handelsplattform?

Ja
Nej

7. När ni gjort ett köp på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform, har den angivna leveranstiden på respektive produkt stämt överens med det faktiska utfallet?

Ja
Nej

8a. Upplever ni att följesedeln stämmer med den order som ni lagt?

Ja
Nej

8b. Om nej på föregående fråga, hur hanteras detta av Runelandhs?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

9. Hur enkelt är det att få tag på er ansvarige säljare?

Mycket enkelt
Enkelt
Svårt
Mycket svårt

10. Finns det något frågeforum på hemsidan (FAQ), dvs. där de vanligaste ställda frågorna och svaren finns angivna?

Ja
Nej

11. Om en produkt blir restnoterad eller försenad, hur hanterar då Runelandhs detta gentemot er som kund?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

12. Vilken typ av kompensation får ni som kund om någonting är fel mer er order?
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Del 2.

13. Vad var det inledningsvis som fick er som organisation att handla på Runelandhs?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

14. Vad hade ni för uppfattning om Runelandhs innan ni blev kund hos dem?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

15. Vad hade er organisation för förväntningar efter ert första köp hos Runelandhs?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

16. På vilket sätt påverkade Runelandhs företagsstorlek ert val av dem som leverantör?

Ofta finns det en föreställning om att företag av större karaktär skulle inneha mer resurser och större förmåga att driva en e-handelsplattform jämfört med ett mindre företag, då större företag tros ha större kapacitet i form av fler lagerförda varor etc.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

17. Finns omdömen från tidigare kunders upplevelser av produkter och service att ta del av på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform?

Ja
Nej

18. Hur hörde ni som organisation talas om Runelandhs?

Exempelvis genom kollegor, tidigare kunder hos Runelandhs etc.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

19. Vilken betydelse har det att Runelandhs besitter tredjeparts certifieringen AAA (Soliditets kreditvärderingssystem) att ni som organisation ska fortsätta handla hos dem?

Mycket stor betydelse
Stor betydelse
Liten betydelse
Mycket liten betydelse

20. Vilka aspekter var avgörande för er organisation att återkomma till Runelandhs och deras e-handelsplattform?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Del 3

21. Finns det möjlighet att spåra er order efter att ni har beställt från Runelandhs e-handelsplattform?

Ja
Nej

22. Finns det i samband med köp via Runelandhs e-handelsplattform information om hur ert företags information hanteras av dem?
Exempelvis information om fakturerings- och leveransadress.

Ja
Nej

23. Finns det möjlighet att ändra i era kunduppgifter, exempelvis leveransadress och fakturaadress, via e-handelsplattformen?

Ja
Nej

24. Är strukturen på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform konsekvent?
Exempelvis: Sidorna på e-handelsplattformen fungerar likadant.

Ja
Nej

25. När ni beställer produkter via Runelandhs e-handelsplattform, upplever ni att rubrikerna till produktkategorierna är till någon hjälp för att finna det ni söker?

Ja
Nej
Delvis
26. I vilken utsträckning använder ni er av Runelandhs sökfunktion på deras e-handelsplattform för att finna de produkter ni söker?

   Mycket stor utsträckning
   Stor utsträckning
   Liten utsträckning
   Mycket liten utsträckning

27. Ger bilderna dig ett professionellt intryck vad gäller; färgsättning, komposition och skärpa?

   Ja
   Nej
   Delvis

28. Underlättar färgsättningen att navigera sig på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform?

   Ja
   Nej
   Delvis

29. Hur anser ni att produkterna presenteras i bild på Runelandhs e-handelsplattform?

   Mycket bra
   Bra
   Dåligt
   Mycket dåligt

30. Får ni en klar bild över hur produkterna ser ut givet de bilder som Runelandhs använder på sin e-handelsplattform?

   Ja
   Nej
   Delvis

31. Hur upplever ni det grafiska helhetsintrycket av Runelandhs hemsida?

   *Spekulera gärna fritt.*

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________