



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT**

# Exploring branding practices of Swedish start-ups

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- Master Thesis -

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*We view this thesis as a collective project consisted of many pieces and therefore we want to express our deepest gratitude to all of the people who helped us along our path.*

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## Abstract

**Title:** Exploring branding practices of Swedish start-ups

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**Thesis purpose:** Brand management of start-ups is an under-researched area of study. The aim of this study is to uncover the branding practices of start-ups in Sweden and specifically to examine the perceived importance of branding, identify the brand identity creation process, reveal the brand positioning strategies employed by such firms and expose the most relevant brand building activities among the field.

**Methodology:** In order to understand the branding practices undertaken by start-ups and provide answers to the research questions, a qualitative study has been employed in the form of a multiple case study research.

**Theoretical perspective:** The thesis is based upon theories consisting of literature and academic articles within the fields of branding, entrepreneurship, corporate brand identity, corporate brand positioning, and corporate brand building. Additionally, the Brand Orientation Typology of Wong and Merrilees (2005) and the Schools of Positioning by Urde and Koch (2014) are being used.

**Empirical Data:** A qualitative approach was chosen whereby six semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted by interviewing five start-up entrepreneurs and a marketing manager. Additional qualitative data in the form of secondary data have been gathered from companies' websites.

**Conclusion:** The results show that start-ups value the benefits of branding however not all of them are keen implementing it in their growth strategy, especially the B2B companies. Brand identity seems to be a driving force for the B2C start-ups, although for B2B it is more of an obligation. Consequently, we found out that the former tend to be more brand oriented whereas the latter are positioned as market oriented. Lastly, the most significant ally for B2C start-ups seems to be social media in order to build their brand, while B2B rely on personal networks and WOM.

This paper provides new insights on branding practices of Swedish start-ups that have previously not been investigated. The authors stress the importance of branding in start-up practices, recommend the creation of a brand identity in order to enhance brand distinctiveness, and propose the most useful brand building tools between the two fields (B2C and B2B). We further offer the first view on brand positioning strategies of start-ups and propose a distinction on the examination of such companies in relation to their field, B2C and B2B. Finally, we provide several recommendations for entrepreneurs.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Branding has become an area of great interest for companies in the last decade since it is considered to be one of the most important facets for every enterprise that exists. Having a persuasive brand strategy gives the company a major advantage in an increasingly competitive market (Williams, 2014). As acknowledged by academics, branding is defined as a process of creating an organization's unique characteristics representing the sum of all organizational activities and beliefs such as core values, the behaviour of employees, all symbols, as well as internal and external corporate communication (Rode & Vallaster, 2005). According to Rita Clifton, the CEO of Interbrand, (as cited in Dogbevi 2009), "the companies that have succeeded in making their brands stand up to and win the competition do the following: they generate sustainable brand value, they are consistent about how their brands show up in all the adverts to their customers, and these companies are also conscious of how much of the brand they want to show. They are clear about what they stand for and they show leadership".

The concept of branding nevertheless is considered to be an affair of only big corporations and financially stronger medium-sized companies which can afford the marketing and branding practices (Merrilees, 2007). But as branding is an essential activity for the successful establishment of small companies and is indispensable to building a desired reputation (Bresciani & Eppler, 2010) it behooves to observe the process and importance of the latter in the start-up phenomenon. Over the past few years, the number of start-ups increased at an exponential rate (Clifford, 2013). There were approximately 305 million startups in 2014, of which approximately 100 million were newly established (Get2Growth, 2014). The increased interest in start-ups can be based on numerous reasons, such as the appearance of the credit crunch in 2008, the almost readily available funding, low-cost entry for start-up establishment and, the existence of social media leading to easier and cheaper options for promotion, etc. (Zwilling, 2013). Moreover, the workplace instability, business scandals and downsizing of workforce after steadfast years of service, made entrepreneurship seem less risky than corporate world (SSTI, 2014). People nowadays are motivated to seek new ideas on products or services, or simply improvements of already existing ones (Economics Focus, 2012).

As previously mentioned, the recent significant financial crisis of 2008 is one of the main causes, which created fruitful ground for the proliferation of newly established businesses

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(Cashman, 2012). Not only do they contribute to the decrease of unemployment rates, they also add to new production, in-migration and upsurge of regional productivity (Carree & Thurik, 2003; Fritsch & Mueller, 2004). But, due to increased competition among small businesses, start-ups are obliged to develop their products, more quickly, inexpensively and more comprehensively (Cashman, 2012). This has attracted the attention of governments which, since the beginning of 2010s, continuously show more support and interest in the private sector, especially new ventures (The Startup Team, 2012). This is especially recognized in some countries, such as Israel, USA, Singapore, Australia, and Sweden, (Dykes, 2013; Wauters, 2014), which also generate some of most successful and valuable start-ups (Dickey, 2014).

### 1.1. PROBLEM FORMULATION

Sweden is one of the countries known for the encouragement of innovation, support of entrepreneurship and creation of successful new ventures. Therefore, it is not through luck that, in 2014, it ranked as the leading country for innovation among EU members, according to the Innovation Union Scoreboard (Europa, 2015). With an impressive history of start-up successes, no one can argue the entrepreneurial nature of this nation. Between 2005 and 2012, Sweden was home to 6.5 %, out of all global billion dollar companies throughout the world, (Coleman, 2014). In addition, one of the country's main start-up hubs, Stockholm, has been acknowledged as the most prolific start-up hub after Silicon Valley in the U.S (Tung, 2014). Sweden is by far one of the best emerging tech countries, with new ventures such as Spotify, Wrapp, Tictail and Truecaller, to name but a few of the Swedish genius creations that have taken the world by storm (Business Region Skåne, 2015).

Start-ups in Sweden have great supportive government and institutions, such as Swedish Incubators and Science Parks (SISP) that are instrumental in helping develop innovative business ideas. Science parks and incubators prepare the ground for further development of the field of start-ups and the number of the latter is continuously increasing. Sweden's national association SISP has now a nationwide coverage of more than 70 creative environments (43 business incubators and 33 science parks). It provides space, offers business development and seeds capital funds for approximately 5000 companies within Sweden (SISP, 2015). All the above, underline the importance of Sweden in the global start-up scene

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and outline the reasons why Sweden is a great candidate, when it comes to research in the start-up field.

Conversely, branding of start-ups seems to be an under-researched topic and an area that has received little attention from researchers (Spence & Essoussi, 2010). Even though extensive literature on branding practices and entrepreneurship exists separately, the intersection of these studies combined appears under-explored (Rode & Vallaster, 2005). Merrilees (2007, p. 403) himself states that *"There seems to be little academic research on the role of branding in small business new ventures"*. He further argues that the already existing research suggests start-ups fail to perceive branding as a necessary tool for their growth, due to the entrepreneurs' difficulties in understanding the usefulness of branding. Usually, start-up founders are more focused on financial and production issues and only later do they recognize the importance of having a clear brand vision (Bresciani & Eppler (2010). However, Rode & Vallaster (2005) emphasise the necessity of start-up branding claiming that if a brand is not established within a short time after its founding, it will possibly disappear from the markets. Moreover, Hoeffler & Keller (2003) state that strong brands can lead to several marketing advantages and can increase companies' competitive strength.

### 1.2. AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Considering the flourishing picture of start-ups in Sweden, the current one-sided application of branding from large companies, and the scarce literature of branding processes in start-ups, we believe there is a need for investigation of the branding practices implemented in Swedish start-ups. As acknowledged by academics, a strong brand acts as a value creator and can add value to the products of a brand, can offer economies of scale, but also raise awareness (Melin, 2002; Witt & Rode, 2005). Therefore, we first want to examine the perceived importance of branding by start-ups so as to understand its level of appreciation for the development of such companies. Moreover, we pursue to identify the creation process of brand identity as it is the internal factor which shapes a corporate brand and acts as the starting point for a strategic brand building (Witt & Rode, 2005; Spence & Essoussi, 2010). Brand identity can guide brand decisions and guarantee consistency in marketing actions through time (Spence & Essoussi, 2010) by "sending a single message amid the wide verity of its products, actions and communications" (Kapferer, 2012, p.149). Moreover, the focus of this study is to understand the positioning strategy of start-up brands on the market. The paper

attempts to answer whether the identity of the brands' or customers' needs and wants, play the major role when positioning a start-up brand. Lastly, this study aims to identify what brand building activities start-ups employ, in an effort to gain insight on the type of external practices start-ups utilise in order to create awareness for their brands and build their brand reputation on the market.

### 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

Having defined the research problem, and the areas to be explored, the main research question has been formulated as follows supported by four sub-questions:

#### 1) **What kind of branding practices do start-ups in Sweden undertake?**

- a) How entrepreneurs understand branding, and how important do they think it is for the growth of their companies?
- b) In what ways do they create their brand identity?
- c) How do they position their brands on the market?
- d) What kind of external brand building activities do they employ in order to raise awareness?

The structure of the thesis is presented in the following way:

Chapter 2 explains the basic terms and definitions required in order to provide a greater understanding of branding and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it includes specific notions relevant to our research objectives and outlines the already available literature in the context of start-ups and SMEs. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology utilized for data collection and analysis, while chapter 4 demonstrates the empirical findings collected. The analysis of the primary data collected is presented in chapter 5, together with the discussion of our findings. Lastly, chapter 6 concludes and summarizes our findings, highlights theoretical and practical contributions, and also provides the limitations of our study and possible future research topics in this area.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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*This chapter discloses an overview of theoretical resources on which we built our theoretical framework that we used as a basis for our research. First we explain the nature of entrepreneurship, define the concept of a start-up and expose its differences in comparison to newly established companies. We further unveil general theories on brands and branding, more specifically on brand identity, brand positioning, brand awareness and brand building activities. Lastly, we conclude the chapter displaying relevant literature of branding in start-ups and small-medium sized companies.*

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### 2.1. THE NATURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

#### 2.1.1. Defining Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship has become the matter of many conversations in the last decade. Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Mark Zuckerberg, Anita Roddick, are just a few famous entrepreneurs (Le, 2013), who inspired the exponential growth of entrepreneurship (Clifford, 2013). However, when talking about a concrete definition on what entrepreneurship actually is, several authors cannot come to an agreement (Wickham, 2006; Blundel & Lockett, 2011, Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2013). The origin of the word entrepreneurship goes back to the seventeen century, when French called a person who "commissioned to undertake a particular commercial project by someone with money to invest", entrepreneur (Wickham, 2006).

Blundel and Lockett (2011, p. 7) define entrepreneurship as "the phenomenon associated with entrepreneurial activity, which involves a complex pattern of social interactions that extend beyond individual entrepreneurs to incorporate teams, organizations, networks and institutions". On the other hand OECD (2009, p. 9) interpret it as the phenomenon associated with "enterprising human action in pursuit of the generation of value through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes, or markets". In the bigger picture, the idea is that a person engaging in entrepreneurship, is someone who takes over a task of gathering "different elements of the organisation – people, property, productive resources, etc. –gives them a separate legal identity" (Wickham, 2006, p. 4) and is willing to take any kind of risk (Blundel & Lockett, 2011).

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When talking about start-ups, again, several authors and entrepreneurs cannot agree on the exact definition of what a start-up is. A common view is that a start-up is a newly formed organization, with an innovative business model, product or service (Blank, 2014). However, many agree that not every newly established company can be a start-up, nor are all the start-ups connected to technology, or receive venture funding. Furthermore, many believe that start-ups look for an unknown or innovative business model in order to disrupt existing markets, when their essential idea is growth (Blank, 2013; Blank, 2014; Khosla Ventures, 2014; Graham, 2012). Blank (2014) further explains the difference between a start-up and a newly established or already established company: start-ups search for a "repeatable and scalable business model", when company is "designed to execute a repeatable and scalable business model". Additionally not all entrepreneurs depend on funding attained from the so-called venture angels instead they have their own resources (Blank, 2014).

In the last few years there was a great emphasis put on distinguishing between social and business entrepreneurship, which differentiate in the purpose for setting up the new venture. While the latter focuses on building a business and gaining a profit, the social entrepreneurship works towards creation of social change (Madhukar, 2006; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Abed, n.d.). When looking upon different strategies on how to reach customers, business entrepreneurs focus more on how to sell their products or services fast and target customers' needs and wants. On the other hand social entrepreneurs play on people's emotions by using mostly storytelling (Madhukar, 2006). The distinction between the purposes of building a start-up can already indicate that founders apply different branding strategies when operating with their businesses.

Furthermore, in order to fully understand the idea of entrepreneurship and branding in an entrepreneurial context, one must also understand the difference between entrepreneurship and small business management. The major difference between these two approaches lies in the economic function. Both of them create new opportunities in different ways that result in "different challenges to economic policy makers" (Wickham, 2006, p. 39). There are three important components that characterise entrepreneurial venture from the small business: Innovation, potential for growth and strategic objectives. When it comes to innovation, entrepreneurs focus on significantly new ways of producing a new product or developing a new service. On the other hand, small business owners are usually just new to the market offering an already existing product or service. Small businesses operate in already

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established markets, where the potential for growth is very limited. On the contrary new ventures create their own market and therefore enjoy a great potential for growth (Wickham, 2006).

When discussing strategic objectives, such as growth targets, market development, market share and market position new ventures have most of the time an advantage over of small business. Nevertheless, the combination of mentioned characteristics combined, expose the main difference that distinguish new ventures from small businesses. Ultimately start-ups contribute to a better world through their innovative products and ideas (Wickham, 2006).

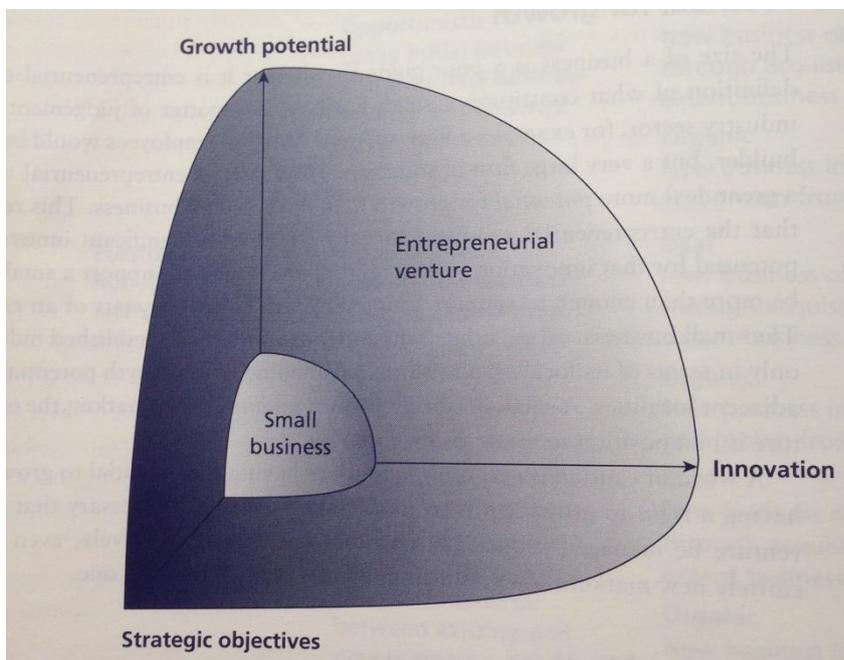


Figure 1 The difference between a small business and an entrepreneurial venture

### 2.2. THE NATURE OF BRANDING

#### 2.2.1. Brands and Branding

"Brands and branding" date to the times of the Greeks and Romans when carved signs were used in order to symbolize products or inform consumers of access points to shops. However, the first usage of the word "brand" occurred in England during the Middle Ages, referring to the process whereby using white-hot iron rods, animals were marked and, therefore, they were "branded". In both cases, branding served as a method of identification among different shops, or a distinction of property (Riezebos, 2003).

Similarly, nowadays, according to the American Marketing Association (AMA), cited in Keller (2008, p. 2) and Kotler & Keller (2011, p. 241), a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one or more sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". A brand thus, is more than a product or service, because it has dimensions that differentiate it from other similar products. These differences may be functional and tangible, related in the performance of the brand, or symbolic, emotional and intangible, related to what the brand stands for and represents (Keller, 2008). Brands are living systems made up of three poles, the name and logo of the brand, used in order to identify the brand, the actual product or service, without which the brand cannot exist, and the brand concept, whose role is to differentiate the brand through a unique set of attributes (tangible and intangible). Brands have the power to influence buyers by creating mental associations related to their products or services (Kapferer, 2012). These mental associations help consumers organize their knowledge about available products and services in a way that simplifies their decision making and, in the process, provides value to the firm (Kotler & Keller, 2011).

Even though we live in an era when technology allows competitors to duplicate manufacturing processes and when products' life cycles are rapidly decreasing, competitors cannot easily match the lasting impressions left in the minds of consumers by a successful brand (Kotler & Keller, 2011). As Melin (2002, p. 112) argues: *"A product is something that is made in a factory, a brand is something that is bought by a customer. A product can be copied by a competitor, a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated, a successful brand is timeless"*. Brands have the power to alleviate imitation problems by providing the advantage of differentiating themselves from competitors thus making access to new markets

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easier and providing high returns on investment (ROI). However, most significantly, if brands are managed and nurtured properly, they can give companies longevity and immortality (Riezebos, 2003). There are few strategic assets available to a company that can provide such a long lasting competitive advantage as brands (Kapferer, 2012). Creating a strong brand represents an eternal asset (Melin, 2002, p. 109), establishing a positive equity to the extent that consumers respond more favourably to a product or service with which the brand is identified compared to an unbranded one (Spence & Essoussi, 2010). In today's highly competitive environment, brands provide a differentiating statement and a competitive advantage. Kotler & Keller (2011) identify some marketing advantages of strong brands, such as improved perceptions of product performance, greater loyalty, less vulnerability to marketing crises, greater trade cooperation and support, etc.

Marketing Advantages of Strong Brands	
Improved perceptions of product performance	Greater trade cooperation and support
Greater loyalty	Increased marketing communications effectiveness
Less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions	Possible licencing opportunities
Less vulnerability to marketing crises	Additional brand extension opportunities
More inelastic consumer response to price increases	Improved employee recruiting and retention
Larger margins	Greater financial market returns
More elastic consumer response to price decreases	Improved employee recruiting and retention

Figure 2 Marketing advantages of strong brands

Melin (2012) further argues that brands can act positively in five ways, as an information carrier, a guarantee, a catalyst, a risk reducer and an image creator. Due to the identification and individualization of a brand, consumers can obtain information regarding price, function and quality. In addition, they can use the brand as a point of reference in order to compare and ascertain the most appropriate solution to their needs. In other words, brands can help consumers orientate themselves within the markets, making the search and decision process easier and further providing the possibility of understanding what product suits best. Moreover, a brand can guarantee consistent quality of its products or services to the point that the consumer knows what to expect. Brands cannot fluctuate in their performance since they inspire brand loyalty and, thus, they must deliver a stable quality. Consequently, brands help consumers reduce the risk inherent in purchases. When choosing an established, well-known

brand, consumers minimize purchase uncertainty, since through brand associations they have an already established opinion about the available products and services. Lastly, the symbolic meaning of a brand plays a crucial role in the brand's image which might be important for one's self-image or the image that the consumer wishes to communicate to others. For instance, a Porsche owner wishes to be identified as a Porsche owner (Melin, 2002). All the aforementioned characteristics of a brand ultimately create added value for it, which, in turn, develops consumer preferences and, in the long run, brand loyalty. Brand loyalty, according to Melin (2002, p. 115) "is worth pursuing since it creates conditions for a stable market share, high profitability and a long-term positive cash-flow".

### ***2.2.2. Brand Identity***

A brand is not simply a name or a logo of a company. According to Kapferer (2012), a brand is a vision that drives the company to create products and services under the name of the brand. The brand's vision and mission, the promise and its core values compose what is called brand identity. Corporate brand identity - by corporate the author designates the "whole organization" - means for a brand to be true to itself and its values, driven by a personal goal that is different from competitors and resistant to change (Kapferer, 2012). Brand identity is defined as what the brand stands for and what gives it the meaning, its "unique fingerprint which makes it one of a kind" (Melin, 2012, p. 120). While defining brand identity, Aaker (2010) emphasizes a unique set of brand associations which brand managers of organizations built and developed in order to establish a brand in the market as well as to convey brand promise to customers in order to build a relationship of trust with them. It is through the development of a specific brand identity that a company makes a brand unique, conveys its distinctiveness and leads to a positive brand image in the consumers' minds (Spence & Essoussi, 2010).

De Chernatony (2001) and Kapferer (2012) suggest that brand identity should be the starting point of the creation for any brand and, before communicating to prospective customers, a brand should know exactly who they are and what they want to project to the public. It is brand identity that specifies the brand's meaning, aim and self-image, and, therefore, it is essential that it is shaped before brand communications. Also, it is meant to guide all corporate brand decisions, and bring coherence throughout all marketing activities (Kapferer, 2012). While image is the façade of a brand and an element that could progress, change and

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evolve throughout the lifespan of a brand, identity is rooted deeply in the corporate brand's vision, essence and core values are difficult to change once established (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2012). Melin (2002) advocates on the necessity of building a brand identity since it personalizes the brand and consumers draw mental associations according to its personality. As a result, if consumers' behaviour nowadays is likened to the selection process of friends, consumers will most probably choose a brand only if it confirms or reinforces their self-image (Melin, 2002).

Failing to establish a sound brand identity, however, can put a brand into unwanted positions. Companies without a clear idea of what their own brand identity is tend to imitate competitors and suffer from a lack of originality. Others might become embroiled in the game of building an appealing image that will be perceived favourably by all, which will end in insufficient differentiation, and, thus, competitive advantage. Lastly, many companies might create a fantasized identity that, unfortunately, will not coincide with what the brand actually represents, therefore, diluting the brand's real identity (Kapferer, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, three very distinctive features of brand identity are, the *vision* and *mission* of the brand (De Chernatony, 2001; Collins and Porras, 1998), its *brand essence* or *brand mantras* as usually referred by Keller (2008), and the *core values* of the brand (Urde, 2009; 2013) or *kernel traits* (Kapferer, 2012).

The corporate mission is valuable to the brand's identity since it explains why the organization exists and what motivates it to function, besides making profit (Collin and Porras, 1998). A clearly defined vision, on the other hand, is one of the brand's cornerstones. In order for a brand to thrive it "needs a clear vision giving a well-defined sense of direction" (De Chernatony 1999, p. 166). A company's vision shows what inspires the brand to move forward and which path it should follow. According to Urde (2009) a brand's mission and vision are sources of commitment to the brand's greater purpose and, especially in brand oriented companies, they are the starting point of the definition for the brand identity. However, little is known on whether this applies to start-ups as well. It is unclear whether vision and mission are an important part of the brand identity creation, or as Rode & Vallaster (2005) suggest, those notions are fluid and unstructured on a start-up setting and only exist in the minds of the entrepreneurs.

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Brand essence on the other hand, is the heart and the soul of the brand. It is the core promise of the brand that encapsulates its commitment to the public (Urde, 2009). "A brand promise is the marketer's vision of what the brand must be and do for consumers" (Kotler & Keller, 2011, p. 245). Keller (2008, p. 122) describes the term brand mantras as "three- to five-word phrases that capture the irrefutable essence or spirit of the brand positioning". The purpose of the mantra is to ensure that internal and external partners of the brand comprehend what it represents for consumers and, therefore, act accordingly (Kotler & Keller, 2011). Brand mantras can provide guidance regarding new product introductions to the brand, marketing related decisions which should be consistent with the brand meaning, and other organizational decisions such as employee telephone manners etc. (Keller, 2008).

Lastly and most importantly, Kapferer (2012, p. 40) stresses that the absence of core values implies to a brand which is not "real", since it is them that give substance. The existence of true core brand values comprises the solid foundation for the creation and the continuation of a true brand. Knowing what the core values are, what the company stands for, and what values consumers appreciate in the brand is vital for its management (Urde, 2009). Core values are tangible or intangible, and have the power to positively influence people and their perception towards a product or a service (Kapferer, 2012). However, a brand value cannot appeal to everyone since individuals also have different values and cannot identify with the values of every brand (Riezebos, 2003). Nevertheless, once core values are established, they should permeate all marketing activities, from product development to marketing communications. For instance, Volvo's three core values - safety, quality and environmental care - accompany every activity of the company (Melin, 2002). For core values to function optimally, they should "be valuable for and communicable to the consumer, as well as unique and difficult to imitate for competitors" (Melin, 2002, p. 121). On the contrary, values that are unclear and dishonest can be proved destructive for a company, as the credibility and legitimacy of the brand can be severely challenged (Urde, 2009). To conclude, brand identity according to Kapferer (2012) is the brand's tangible and intangible characteristics that make the brand what it is, and, without which, it would be something different.

The two most known mechanisms utilised by brand managers to ascertain the identity of any brand, are the Brand Identity Prism from Kapferer (2012) and Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix.

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Kapferer's (2012) hexagonal identity prism consists of six facets: *Physique*, *Personality*, *Relationship*, *Culture*, *Reflection* and *Self Image*. Each facet represents something distinct however the model was also created in a way where the combination of two facets indicates a certain aspect. The first two, *Physique* and *Personality*, portray the picture of the sender since they imply the physical attributes of the brand, plus its human characteristics. *Reflection* and *Self Image*, on the other hand, depict the receiver's side, since they entail the image of the brand's target audience and the way the brand is perceived by the consumers. Finally, *Culture* and *Relationship* indicate the values and the code of conduct of the brand, and, thus, the connection between the sender and the receiver (Kapferer, 2012).

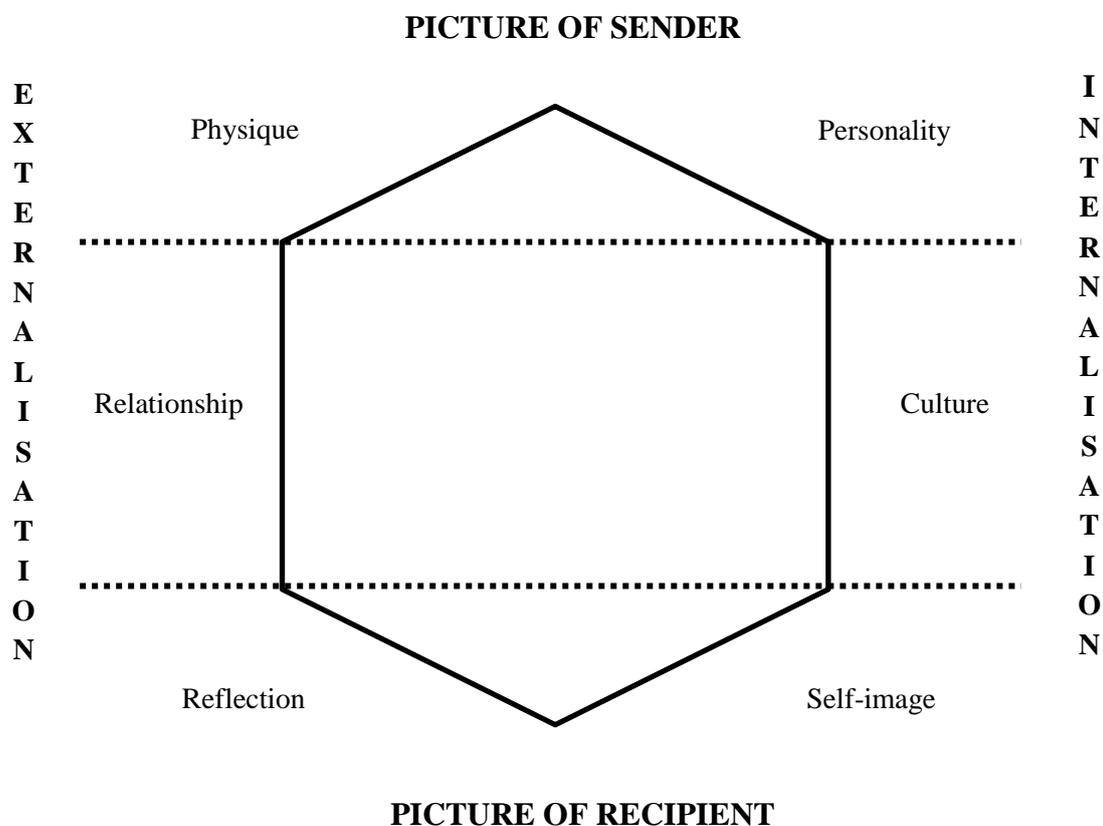


Figure 3 Kapferer's Identity Prism

Urde's (2013) Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) is slightly more extensive than the Brand Identity Prism however, it is based on similar logic. The CBIM consists of nine constituent elements spread in a three-by-three matrix, where the bottom row represents the internal (sender) component of the corporate brand identity, the upper row is the external (receiver) component. Finally, the middle row encompasses three elements that are both internal and external. In the internal aspect of this framework, the elements describe three

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characteristics of the organization: the *Mission and Vision*, the *Culture* and its *Competences*. The external aspect of the matrix comprises the *Value proposition*, *Relationships* and the *Position* of the brand. However, the internal and external elements of the model show the *Personality* of the brand, the visual and verbal *Expression* of it and the brand core which consists of the brand promise and the supporting core values, which are the heart of corporate brand identity (Urde, 2013).

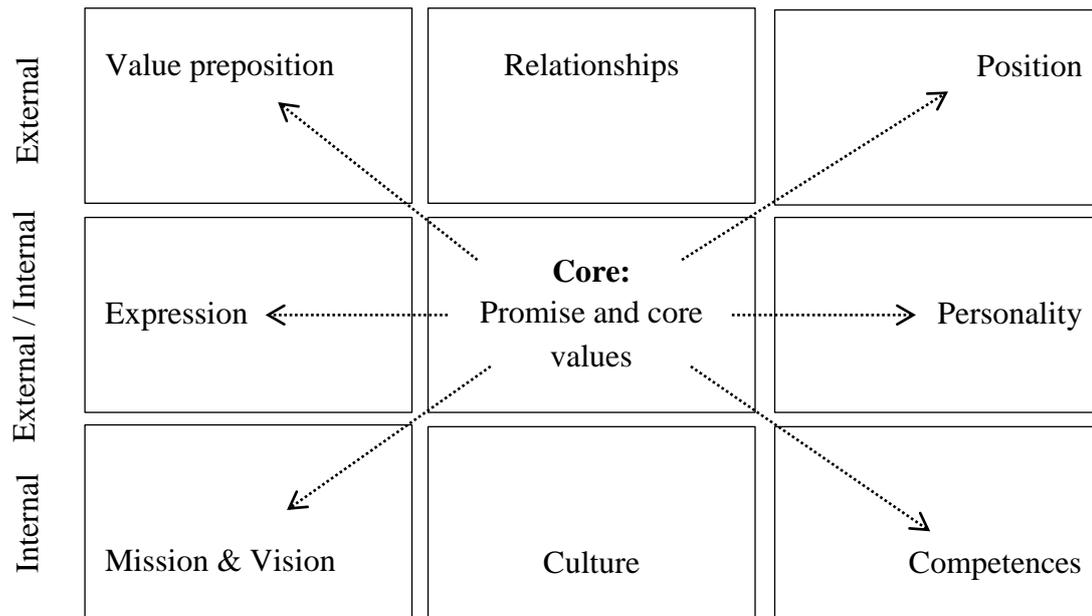


Figure 4 Urde's Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

### 2.2.3. Brand Positioning

Even though academics and practitioners suggest that positioning is an element of greater importance for marketing, branding and strategy development, the various definitions of this term throughout the years lack a common understanding in regards to what it means as well as when and how it should be applied. A commonly held belief, however, is that brand positioning statements are made typically to support brand's values and show how internal and external stakeholders should perceive the brand (Urde & Koch, 2014). Kapferer (2012, p. 152) suggests that "positioning a brand means emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors and appealing to the public".

An important fact Urde & Koch (2014) emphasise in their study is that all the activities and choices taken from brand owners can affect the position of the brand and, thus, a positioning

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process should be consistent, following by a certain approach. Furthermore, they explain that three perspectives of positioning are evident: marketing, branding and strategy. Certain common elements were detected which allowed for the identification of two approaches that promote a better understanding of positioning. The difference between these two approaches is whether positioning is seen from an outside-in perspective and is, thus, market oriented or from an inside-out perspective, and is, therefore, brand oriented. Urde (1997) first conceptualized these two approaches in one of his studies in 1997 where he created the egg model (see figure 5). The egg model demonstrates a continuous relationship among the organization, the brand, and stakeholders - customers and non-customers.

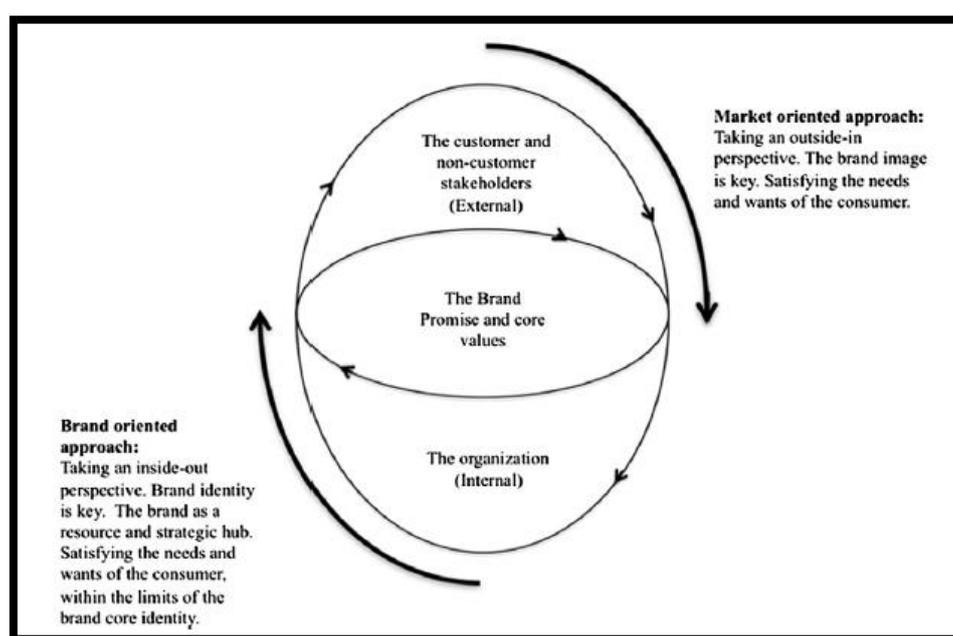


Figure 5 Approaches to positioning

In the market oriented approach, the image and the various stakeholders are essential in the formation and position of the brand. However, in the brand oriented approach, brand identity and values come first, which, of course, does not indicate that customers' needs and wants are neglected. More extensively, Urde, Baumgarth & Merrilees (2011) argue that the principle of a market oriented brand is the satisfaction of customer's needs and wants. In this situation, brand image is the key element and the way the brand works is to respond to needs and wants in its market. However, they stress if this strategy becomes the essence of the brand and the brand morphs into an unconditional response to customer needs and wants, difficulties in managing the brand may arise. Lastly, they argue that market orientation is the default setting

of every brand's positioning strategy and especially of new brands still involved with product development and forging their way into the markets (Urde et al. 2011).

Conversely, in a brand oriented brand, although the wants and the needs of the customers are relevant, they are not to the extent that they guide the development of the brand and shape its identity. "Brand orientation is an approach in which the process of the organization revolves around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an on-going interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands" (Urde et al. 2011, p. 3). Customer satisfaction is not the only motive for companies which are also concerned with building a strong brand, allowing for satisfaction to appear within the framework of the brand. Concepts such as brand's core values, promise and mission & vision function as the guiding light for developing an organizational culture, behaviour and strategy. Brand orientation means that all decisions are made inside-out and that the integrity of the brand is paramount (Urde et al. 2011). Urde (1999, p. 118) more specifically distinguishes in regards to the difference of these two approaches: "market orientation is on a more uncomplicated, short-term, and fundamental level. If an organization is only market oriented, then it's still in the discussion about products and markets. Brand orientation is an additional degree of sophistication. To be brand oriented is market orientation plus".

Nevertheless, market and brand orientation are not the only alternatives when it comes to selecting an appropriate approach in brand positioning. Urde & Koch (2014) identified five different schools of thought in regards to brand positioning each of which has a different proportion between the initial market and brand orientated approaches (see figure 6).

First, the classical market oriented positioning, is identified as the *puzzle* position, because it is shaped by customer needs and wants to fit into a specific demand. This is followed by the *wordplay* position, a market-brand oriented hybrid position, where brand identity is recognized as part of the positioning strategy. However, the creation of *wordplay* in an effort to form positive associations in the customer's mind is the first priority. Next, the *wild-card poker* is considered to be a mixed method where market orientation and brand orientation are of equal importance. Fourthly, the *chess* position, a brand-oriented position, combines the key elements of brand resources, brand identity, customer insight and segmentation studies and sets the objectives of long term relevance and differentiation. Last but not least, the *domino*, a brand oriented position, is where the brand identity represents the brand's competitive

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strength and position in the market. It is the core values, brand essence and vision that allow the brand to differentiate from competitors, build brand equity and create a strong brand (Urde & Koch, 2014).

Approach	Market Oriented (Outside in)					Brand Oriented (Inside out)
	Puzzle	Wordplay	Wild-Card Poker	Chess	Domino	
Positioning Metaphor	<i>Finding lacking pieces in the market puzzle and matching them with existing ones.</i>	<i>Exploiting the meaning of words to reach desired brand associations.</i>	<i>Identifying and creating uncontested market space by creativity and innovation.</i>	<i>Strategizing to create fit with competition, market demand and company resources and capabilities.</i>	<i>Matching identity with selected market positions.</i>	
Objective	Optimization: To identify and exploit unmet customer needs and wants.	Communication: To find mental space to position the brand's message in the minds of customers.	Innovation: To find new, untapped, market space and bypass competition.	Coordination: To find a fit between the business strategy and the brand strategy.	Selection: To select market positions based upon brand identity and to fortify them over time.	
Typical Techniques and Concepts	Image Pattern matching Perceptual mapping Gap spotting	Cognitive psychology Customer insights Advertising effectiveness Rhetoric	Economics Socio-cultural studies Innovation Cultural myth	Strategic planning Industry analysis Resource management Capabilities	Identity Brand values Track record Authenticity	

Figure 6 Five schools of positioning

Taking into the account Urde et al.'s (2011) claim of a default market orientation position setting for new brands (start-ups), we find it extremely relevant to find out whether this is the case or not. It is also our aim to uncover, what is the most prominent brand positioning strategy on start-ups nowadays, if market oriented position is not set as a default for newly created companies.

### 2.2.4. Brand Awareness

Having established a solid brand identity and having selected the most appropriate positioning strategy, the first step for building a brand is to create brand awareness (Kapferer, 2012) since a brand should first exist in people's minds in order to create a brand-consumer relationship (Temporal, 2002). According to Keller (2008, p. 51), "brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in an individual's memory, which we can measure as the consumer's ability to identify the brand under different conditions". Brand awareness consists of two stages; brand recognition and brand recall (Kotler & Keller, 2011). The former is the consumer's ability to recognize a brand once they have been exposed to it (i.e. inside a store or through an ad) while the latter is when a consumer is able to retrieve a brand from his/her memory when called to make, or exposed to a purchase decision of the brand's category (i.e. he/she wants to buy a car, he/she thinks of BMW). However, in order for a brand to be in consumers' minds, it should raise its brand awareness so as to increase the likelihood of belonging to the consumer's brand consideration set which is "that set of brands that are considered at a prior stage in the choice process, often portrayed as having its origins in the retrieval of information from memory" (Kuan-Yin & Yin-Chiech, 2010, p. 82). To establish high brand awareness, nonetheless, a brand should increase the familiarity of the brand through repeated exposure. If consumers see, read, hear, and think about the brand, it is very likely that this brand will be registered in their consideration set. To achieve this, brands should employ brand building activities, such as advertising, sponsorship, events, public relationships, online marketing, etc. (Keller, 2008). When these activities succeed in creating favourable association to the brand, then the brand image is also enhanced (Keller, 2008).

Factors, such as trust, reliability, credibility and responsibility can be the key elements for a favourable corporate reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012). Having increased awareness, familiarity (Keller, 2008) and a favourable corporate reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012) provides a competitive advantage and augments brand equity which "occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favourable and unique brand associations in memory" (Keller, 2008, p. 53). This is advantageous since brand equity means that products and services of a certain brand acquire more value once associated with the brand name due to the brand's associations (Spence & Essoussi, 2010). This said brand awareness and equity are very important concepts as they give an understanding on

why brands should undertake brand building activities and what should be the aim behind them.

### 2.2.5. Brand Building Activities

In order for a brand to position itself in the market and in the minds of prospect customers, people should first be aware of its existence. To achieve that and create brand awareness in practical ways, companies should employ brand building activities which can help them construct a recognizable brand (Keller, 2008). Depending on the aim of the brand and whether it wants to position itself, project the brand's products and services, create brand awareness, or a combination of the above, brands should utilise different strategies and tools. However, whatever brand-building tool is employed, Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) suggest that a brand should consistently communicate its brand identity in order to create brand awareness and establish consistent brand associations. In a previous study conducted by Bresciani & Eppler (2010) where brand building activities on start-ups were one of the main points of the study, some of the most frequent tools that start-ups used were identified as:

– Advertising	– Public Relations (PR)
– Events	– Online Marketing
– Sponsorship	

In his study in a start-up context, Krake (2005) emphasised the importance of entrepreneur's relationships in creating brand awareness, but also, how crucial it is for the brand that he/she makes its existence known by communicating it. Thus, Word of Mouth (WOM) seems also to be critical and worth mentioning as another brand building activity. Lastly, in their suggestion of six branding tools for Business to Business (B2B) companies Kotler & Pfoertsch (2006) include exhibitions as a way to increase brand awareness. Therefore we have decided to modify Bresciani & Eppler's (2010) list of brand building tools by adding WOM and exhibitions, merging events and sponsorship as they are defined by Kotler & Keller (2010). The brand building tools selected to be analysed in this section are:

– Advertising	– Public Relations (PR)
– Events and Sponsorship	– Online Marketing
– Exhibitions	– Word of Mouth (WOM)

Unfortunately none of these tools have been examined in regards to their application in a start-up context and how they might differ in such in such a setting. Therefore, we analysed those concepts following general theory in order to give an understanding to the reader of what each of those tools means and how they are being applied.

### *Advertising*

Advertising is “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor” (Kotler & Keller, 2010). Advertising grew alongside mass media, and it is the only medium that can reach mass markets and can create massive figures of brand sales (Smith & Taylor, 2002). It is a powerful means of creating strong, favourable and unique brand associations but also elicit positive judgments and feelings (Keller, 2008). Some of the many mediums where advertising can be utilised are print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (radio, television, cinema), digital media (websites, online ads, mobile ads) and display media (billboards, signs, posters) (Kotler & Keller, 2010; Keller, 2008). The most expensive medium is television while the most inexpensive are newspaper ads. Naturally, the reason behind it is that television is more efficient in reaching large number of consumers, while newspapers have more limited audiences. All forms of advertising are appropriate for creating brand awareness but also for enhancing brand image or strengthening a brand (Keller, 2008).

### *Public Relations and Publicity (PR)*

Varieties of programs established by the organization are utilized so as to promote and protect the brand’s name and products or services and are classified into two categories: public relations and publicity. Public relations include a brand’s public affairs, fund raising and membership drives, lobbying, annual reports etc., while publicity entails non-personal communications such as press releases, press conferences, media interviews etc. (Keller, 2008). Public relations and publicity are much more reliable than any other brand building tools because they offer visibility to the public. They provide almost accurate insight, not only into the ethics of the company, the code of conduct and social responsibility activities, but also on the product development process (Smith & Taylor, 2002). PR has greater credibility than advertising because it is perceived to be written by an editor or journalist and not an advertiser who is trying to sell and generate profit (Smith & Taylor, 2002), a perception which

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increases PR's advantage over its rival activities. This credibility bestowed on PR leads to an authenticity factor which makes PR such an effective brand building tool (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Additionally, PR is highly cost effective since the cost of drafting a press release, for example, is much lower than buying advertising space. Also, occasionally newspapers and magazines can offer completely free publicity by writing an article about a brand (Smith & Taylor, 2002). If the brand story is appealing, media will discover it and write about it. The results of effective public relations and publicity activities can be translated into high brand awareness and a favourable media reputation which eventually lead into better performance of the brand (Keller, 2008).

### *Events and Sponsorship*

Event marketing is public sponsorship of events or activities related to sports, art, entertainment, or social causes" (Keller, 2008, p. 259). However, for a marketer to choose an appropriate event to sponsor, not only must the event meet the marketing objectives of the brand, but also match the target audience of the brand. It must also provide sufficient awareness for the brand, possess a desired image and also create favourable associations in the consumers' minds for the engagement of the sponsor (Kotler & Keller, 2010). Although a sponsorship can be a cost effective tool - when sponsoring a corporate event - reaching a particular audience, which can otherwise be difficult to reach, it could also be very expensive in cases such as sponsoring the Olympic Games or the World Cup (Smith and Taylor, 2002). However, an event offers creative opportunities since the audience is engaged in a relaxed and positive atmosphere. According to Kotler & Keller (2010, p. 524, 525), the advantages of sponsoring an event can be one of the following:

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To identify the brand with a particular target market or lifestyle

To increase awareness of the corporate or product brand name

To create or reinforce consumer perceptions of key brand image associations

To enhance corporate image dimensions

To create experiences and evoke feelings

To express commitment to the community or on social issues (cause related marketing)

To express commitment to the community or on social issues (cause related marketing)

To entertain key clients or reward key employees

To permit merchandising or promotional opportunities

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### *Online Marketing and Social Media*

Online and social media marketing provide yet another cost effective tool for building brand awareness. A main advantage of marketing on the web is the level and degree of customization it offers. Online mechanisms recognize consumers' needs and wants and are able to provide information only relevant to their preferences (Keller, 2008). Online ads are more targeted and SEO tactics are effectively designed to guide consumers directly to what they are looking for. Online marketing can keep customers very close, forming relationships with them and keeping them happy while online (Smith & Taylor, 2002). Additionally, social media provide an immediate and interactive forum which can be used by the brands in order to start dialogues and build recognition around their brands (Armellini & Villanueva, 2011). Given the long periods of time people nowadays spend on social media, conventional channels can encounter difficulties in conveying brand messages. However, upon joining the social media scene, brands were able to share their brand stories and also interact with their customers on a daily basis (Nadaraja, & Yazdanifard, n.d.). Fodor & Hoffman (2010) further argue that if a social media strategy is well designed and implemented, it can become viral and generate increased brand awareness.

### *Exhibitions*

Exhibitions according to Smith & Taylor (2002) are unique since they are the only medium that brings buyers, sellers and competitors under one roof for few days. Products and services can be seen, demonstrated and tested, opportunities can be seized and relationships can be strengthened. Exhibitions are a powerful brand building tool as a brand can generate sales, launch new products, maintain its presence in the market, reinforce relationships, enhance PR, but also gather competitor intelligence (Smith & Taylor, 2002). By being part of exhibitions, a brand can generate brand awareness which will establish it into the market (Smith & Taylor, 2002).

### *Word of Mouth (WOM)*

Word of Mouth is another cost effective brand building tool, based on spreading messages facilitated by personal recommendations (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). No amount of advertising or experts' opinions could compete with a colleague or friend recommending a product or service (Smith & Taylor, 2002). As stated in Keller (2008, p. 265) "Ultimately, the

brand benefits because an accepted member of the social circle will always be more credible than any other communication that could ever come directly from the brand". This is the reason why brands nowadays seek to find opinion leaders and already satisfied customers that can further spread the word about their products so as to ultimately gain a more favourable reputation (Smith & Taylor, 2002). The nature of WOM, which comes out of personal facts, opinions and experiences, makes it a highly influential tool to increase prospects (Kotler & Keller, 2010). Besides the traditional WOM, which is face-to-face, word of mouth can also occur electronically and is, thus, called E-WOM (Kotler & Keller, 2010). Internet accelerates the speed of sharing messages through chat rooms, forums and viral posts impressively increasing the influence E-WOM has (Smith & Taylor, 2002).

### ***2.2.6. Branding Start-ups and SME's***

The pre-existing literature with regards to branding and start-ups is relatively scant (Merrilees, 2007; Rode & Vallaster, 2005; Bresciani & Eppler, 2010; Witt & Rode, 2005). Not only have there been very few studies focusing particularly on start-ups and branding, but also others that have studied branding in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) – a category which can be said start-ups are a part of – are limited (Krake, 2005; Merrilees, 2007; Abimbola, 2001; Wong & Merrilees, 2005; Inskip, 2004, Juntunen, 2012; Spence & Essoussi, 2010). In particular, we have identified approximately 10 studies as relevant to the notion of branding in either SMEs or a start-up setting. Each of them has been focused on a different branding perspective and purpose, however, several similarities can be observed in their findings and results.

In the following section we display a brief view of each study in an effort to dispel the mist cast by previous research and identify what notions might be useful for our research. Furthermore we highlight which notions among these studies ultimately helped formulate the research questions, and we explain the basis on which we chose to undertake this specific research. Lastly, we created a summarizing table in an attempt to depict the purpose of each study and their end results so as to offer a cumulative view of the field.

Abimbola (2001), in one of the earliest studies on SME branding, explored the role of branding as a competitive advantage. He specifically argued that due to the fewer resources of this type of companies, SME brands should have a greater focus and be more effective by

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concentrating on inventiveness, innovation and creative flair. For example, Ambibola (2001) suggested that SMEs should do more targeted campaigns and focus on the corporate brand or one to two product brands, and that an entrepreneur's public relations should also be encouraged.

In a completely different setting, Inskip (2004) tried to explore why B2B SME brands in the UK do not exploit branding in their everyday practices. She discovered that the majority of the CEOs in the companies investigated found it difficult to frame what they want to say about their brands, a situation which often led them to seek external help from consultancies. The results of this study indicate that B2B SMEs should comprehend that branding encompasses more than a logo and a name and they should alter their attitude towards it, which can eventually provide long term benefits for the brand.

Krake (2005) also offered another perspective on SMEs branding by developing a "funnel model" for successful brand management, which was approximately based on similar guidelines to Ambibola's (2001). However, he also concluded his study with some recommendations to entrepreneurs, highlighting branding's importance to SMEs. Among these, he listed the creation of brand associations the internal encouragement of brand passion, the investment into the entrepreneur's potential to achieve brand recognition, and also the inclusion of alternative brand building activities such as sponsorship and PR.

Wong & Merrilees (2005) provided a useful typology of branding for SMEs in order to recognize the extent of applied branding practices of each company. The typology consisted of three types, starting with the "minimalist" approach where branding and marketing is at very low levels. Then, the "embryonic" approach refers to brands that have a good understanding of marketing however, branding is not well developed. Lastly, the "integrated" branding approach indicates both stronger marketing and branding activities with a clearer understanding of customer needs.

Type	Branding activities	Brand distinctiveness	Brand orientation	Brand performance
<b>Minimalist</b>	Low-key marketing across the board	Low	Low	Low
<b>Embryonic</b>	Stronger marketing but not branding; very informal branding; seen as optional; narrow promotional tools; word of mouth	Low/Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Integrated</b>	Stronger marketing and branding; either informal or formal branding; branding integral, not an option; wider promotional tools	Medium/High	High	High

Figure 7 Brand Orientation Typology by Wong & Merrilees

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Furthermore, Rode & Vallaster (2005), whose work focused on the early stages of start-ups, summarized the connection between corporate identity and corporate image and illustrated the necessity of these two for the growth of such ventures. The findings revealed that start-ups had a vague idea of their business concept, core values, and positioning while brand communications were problematic and brand identity and culture were in principal unstructured. In line with their three ending propositions, Rode & Vallaster (2005) suggested that companies with a sound brand identity achieve greater success, that consistent communication of the brand's identity offers a clearer and more differentiated image and that a clear identity builds a stronger corporate behaviour.

Witt & Rode (2005) similarly stressed the importance of brand identity for corporate brand building in start-ups, and particularly, they stressed that internal (identity) and external (image) branding are equally important. Both activities should be considered when building a brand, and the brand's corporate culture, behaviour, design and communications should always be consistent.

Another very important study conducted by Merrilees (2007) led to a theory model for start-ups. Ten case-studies give credibility to eight propositions by Merrilees (2007) and serve as essential guidelines for the development of new ventures. Among the propositions, Merrilees (2007) suggested that branding not only can help start-ups as an integrated tool for the entire development process, sharpens the business model, increases access to suppliers and new venture capital, but also increases customer acquisition.

Bresciani & Eppler (2010), in one of the most recent studies, specifically investigated start-up and entrepreneurial-specific branding issues in the 15 biggest start-ups of Switzerland. Their focus was on understanding the perceived relevance of branding for the entrepreneurs, to identify the brand creation process and also to examine the brand building activities employed. The results of this study indicated that most of the companies perceived branding as an important tool for their business; brand creation was mostly a process of a documented and protected name and logo, and, finally, the brand building activities mostly employed were events, newsletters and internet domains with the same name as the brand. Surprisingly, a very limited use of online marketing and PR existed despite of being two relatively inexpensive mediums for creating brand awareness.

Spence & Essoussi (2010) moreover, conducted a qualitative study examining the brand identity creation process in SMEs and the way SMEs manage brand equity. The findings of this research revealed that the founder's values are the main source for developing a brand identity however there are also secondary brand associations from the country-of-origin, which influence it. They concluded that the multiplicity of incremental innovations and an integrated and focused communication strategy provide a differentiation statement for the brand and support brand equity management. Finally, the study by Juntunen (2012) examined how managers and employees understand corporate branding, where he noted that branding is not a new concept among SMEs and start-ups contrary to Inskip's (2004) views. He also suggested that brand co-creation can emerge with all the stakeholders of a brand at different phases of its development.

Most of the studies mentioned above have alluded to the central role of the founder/entrepreneur in the branding process, and, in particular, in the formation of the values, behaviour, communications and identity of the corporation. Thereby, the authors attempted to interview the founder of the company in all of the cases except one where they interviewed the marketing manager. Furthermore, having studied Merrilees's (2007) extensive propositions, all of which argue the importance of branding in start-ups and SMEs, we assessed the need to understand whether the interviewees share the same views. To have a clear picture, we also attempted to define which approach the participants adopt according to Wong & Merrilees' (2005) typology. Another important facet of this research emerged after examining the studies of Rode & Vallaster (2005), Witt & Rode (2005) and Spence & Essoussi (2010). They all supported the importance of brand identity in start-ups and therefore we also acknowledged it as an important aspect to investigate since little is known on how start-ups actually form their identities. However, two of these studies also focused on the balance of identity and image and how equally start-ups should invest in them. Nevertheless, we were more interested in ascertaining the extent start-ups' identity influences their image/communications, and, thus positioning. In particular, we were highly concerned in determining the degree to which their positioning strategy is inside-out (brand oriented) or outside-in (market oriented), according to Urde & Koch's (2014) schools of brand positioning. Additionally, we would like to ascertain whether Breciani & Eppler's (2010) findings regarding brand building activities employed by start-ups in Switzerland will also be validated in Sweden.

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Authors & Nature of study	Purpose	Contribution/Results
<b>Abimbola (2001), Conceptual study</b>	To highlight the appropriateness of branding practices to SMEs in order to create a competitive advantage.	Emphasises certain guidelines that will help SMEs to build a strong brand.
<b>Inskip (2004), Qualitative study</b>	To investigate why branding is neglected by UK B2B SMEs.	Recommendations for B2B SMEs in order to change their attitude towards branding.
<b>Krake (2005), Qualitative study</b>	To create a model for successful brand management by examining general literature of branding and with the investigation of 10 case studies.	Created a new model for successful brand management in SMEs and provided several recommendations for entrepreneurs.
<b>Wong &amp; Merrilees (2005), Conceptual &amp; Qualitative study</b>	To investigate the role of branding strategy on SMEs.	They developed a ladder brand orientation typology for SMEs, consisting of three alternatives: minimal, embryonic, and integrated.
<b>Rode &amp; Vallaster (2005), Qualitative study</b>	To identify the connection of corporate brand identity and corporate image and to indicate its relevance to start-ups.	They discovered that most of the entrepreneurs had only a vague idea about their business concepts and unstructured brand identities. Therefore, the researchers developed three propositions that can help reverse the situation.
<b>Witt &amp; Rode (2005), Conceptual &amp; Qualitative study</b>	To create a structural model for brand building in start-ups, consisting of various brand identity and brand image factors.	They tested the model in 311 German start-ups and proved the importance of well-balanced internal and external brand building activities and their equal significance.
<b>Merrilees (2007), Conceptual study</b>	To understand how branding can facilitate business development for start-ups.	Created a theory model consisting of eight propositions showing how important branding is for the development of a start-up.
<b>Bresciani &amp; Eppler (2010), Qualitative study</b>	To shed light into branding approaches and branding practices of Swiss start-ups.	Established an overview of branding practices and brand building activities and proposed a framework and key guidelines for branding in start-ups.
<b>Spence &amp; Essoussi (2010), Qualitative study</b>	To investigate how SMEs create their brand identity and manage their brand equity.	Five propositions including entrepreneur's role, use of the country of origin image, brand diversification, functional & symbolic brand associations, multiplicity of innovations.
<b>Juntunen (2012)</b>	To examine how managers and employees understand corporate branding and to reveal how brand co-creation is executed in start-ups.	Branding is not a new concept among SMEs and start-ups and brand co-creation can be developed by all stakeholders of a company by engaging in four sub-processes, one of which takes place before company's establishment and three after it.

Figure 8 Summary of existing literature on branding in start-ups and SME's

### 3. METHODOLOGY

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*In this chapter we unveil the reasons behind our methodological approach and reasoning. First, we explain how our philosophical stands, namely ontological and epistemological, led us to the decision of selecting the most appropriate research strategy, method and research design. Furthermore, we discuss data collection and sampling method. Then, we argue upon the selection criteria for our participants and how interview has been designed and carried out. Continuing, we disclose the process of analysis of the collected data. Lastly, we touch upon ethical and political considerations. The topic regarding research limitations is discussed under chapter 6.*

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#### 3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

In order to completely understand how we attained the end results and applicability of our research, we applied certain research philosophies, which had affected the whole process from data formulation up to analysis of collected data. As Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012) suggests, with the understanding of philosophical issues, one can easily define research design and consequently apply the most suitable for the research. The most debated philosophical issues are referred to the matter of ontology and epistemology.

Primary concern of ontology is the nature of social entities, particularly "the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality" (Bryman & Bell 2011, p. 20, Easterby-Smith et al. 2012, p. 60). In order to research the attitude of entrepreneurs towards branding within the field of start-ups, we undertook a constructionist ontological stance. As the latter acknowledges social entities as objective entities, which are built by the interactions and perceptions of other social actors that are constantly changing (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith, 2012), it seems the most suitable approach. Constructionism sees reality, not as an objective entity, but as a socially constructed one, given meaning by people (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Easterby-Smith et al (2012) further elaborate that the aim of research, in a constructionistic view, should be to increase general understanding of the investigated situation. Moreover, a constructionist view better complements researches where lesser and more specified cases are used in sampling, and when generalizations are achieved through theoretical abstraction rather than statistical probabilities.

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When describing the process of attaining knowledge, we commonly refer to it as epistemology. Epistemology distinguishes between positivism and interpretivism. The first notion implies that social sciences should be studied in a similar manner with natural sciences, whereas the second rejects this thought and separates the social world from the natural, since people are included. In other words, interpretivism is about understanding of human behaviour, while positivism is about explanation of it. Hence, in order to answer our research questions we applied interpretivist's stance, as our main goal is to understand entrepreneurs' ideas behind their decisions on branding practices. Since interpretations are always subjective, and our future interviewees will see the world from a different angle, we can only report their unique perceptions. Consequently, no universal laws are planned to be drawn from this study, but rather insights from this very specific context will be gained (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Bryman & Bell (2011) further argue that interpretivism presents indeterminate knowledge with surprising findings arising through the process, when executing research among several participants and when diversity between the participants and their attitude is important. As start-ups cannot be separated from the founders of these companies, it is visible that the interpretivist approach can be assessed as the most suitable choice for our research.

### 3.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY

To fully embrace the branding practices founders of start-ups apply into their business strategies, we undertook an exploratory study that helped us identify the boundaries of the environment in which the question resides. It also helped identify the "silent factors or variables that might be found there and be of relevance to the research" (van Wyk, 2012, p. 8).

The exploratory study is supported by implementation of qualitative research, as its aim is to have a comprehension of a problem and to investigate and gather information by the close involvement of the researcher with the people being questioned. The purpose of qualitative research is to gain insights into specific questions through the thoughts and perceptions of the interviewees. This can later on lead the researcher in a deep understanding of the world through their eyes (Bryman & Bell 2011).

Qualitative method is considered as a method of research that is used in numerous academic disciplines, especially in social sciences, in business research and other similar contexts (Creswell, 1994). The nature of reality in qualitative research is personal, subjective and

socially assembled, as explanations of social aspects of the world are usually built on word analysis and detailed views of information (Creswell, 1994). Additionally qualitative research offers different approaches to investigate the human perception, experience, motivation and behaviour (Creswell, 1994), given that the use of language is one of the main means for social interaction, which discloses an "insight into social and organizational realities" (Easterby-Smith et al 2012, p. 242). Consequently, other observations, such as emotions expressed and behavioural attitude during interview, are included in the analysis, which can reveal real attitude towards research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The focus of the thesis is to gain insights rather than testing fixed hypotheses and this is why other investigatory methods, such as observation or surveys, were not perceived as applicable.

### **3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of branding practices in start-ups, we decided to undertake the case study research. Bryman & Bell (2011) recognize the case study approach as a very popular and widely used research design in business research. They further argue, that the employment of such design is most common when the researcher wants to focus on a geographical location and seeks to generate an in depth investigation of a case. The implementation of case study method, allows us "to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4).

Due to the limited results of a single case study to a case itself and not to the investigated field as a whole, we decided to adopt a multiple case study approach. The advantages of doing a multiple case study research is that they can be a powerful means to create theory, since they allow the researcher to compare and contrast the findings deriving by each case and thus, find what is unique and promote theoretical reflections of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover, discovering the usage of multiple case study design on previous researches that are dealing with branding in start-ups and SME's, positively influenced us in our decision (Breciani & Eppler, 2010; Merrilees 2007; Spence & Essoussi, 2010; Wong & Merrilees, 2005). Furthermore, with this research design we will improve generalization, support theoretical replication with strong argumentation and avoid criticism and scepticism (Yin, 2009).

### 3.4. DATA COLLECTION

When it comes to qualitative research, in which the objective is to gather rich information, Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) highlight in-depth interviews as the best practice. According to Thompson, Pollio and Locander (1989, p. 138) "interview is perhaps the most powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of another person's experiences". Furthermore, interviews are suitable in cases where a person's opinions, beliefs and actions need further elaboration (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012). For this purpose, we decided to conduct interviews, as a face-to-face interaction allowed us to understand completely the interviewees' state of mind (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover Kvale (1996, p. 14) argues, that "the qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge" as it is literally "an inter-change of opinions on the same topic between two or more persons.

There are three types of interview that exist, and these are divided into: highly structured, semi-structured and unstructured. It is the aim of the research that appoints how structured the interview should be (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012) For the purpose of this research we conducted a semi-structured interview. Bryman & Bell (2011) argue that semi-structured interviews are also the most likely to be used in multiple case studies, since they ensure cross-case comparability. In semi-structured interviews the researcher often refers to a list of questions on specific topics to be covered, often named as an interview guide. The interview guide helped us attain the answers in order to tackle our research questions, as well as it allowed us to create a smooth interview flow (Bryman & Bell, 2011). At the same time however, semi-structured interview allowed a great freedom on the interviewees' answers and provided us a clearer picture of their thinking. The interview process was relatively flexible, and questions which were not included on the guide were also asked, so as to enhance researchers' understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This technique therefore guaranteed that all key objectives were covered, and it also helped to embrace the entire perspective of investigated cases. In addition the interviews were video-recorded, in order to ensure that all ideas and insights of the interviewees were noted accurately. Furthermore, other sources were utilized, such as companies' own websites, in order to get a better understanding of their practices.

### 3.5. SAMPLING METHOD AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

In order to avoid the limitations of time, geographical dispersion, and accessibility of the researchers, we employed convenience sampling approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). With convenience or so-called haphazardly sampling, we selected "those cases that were easiest to obtain for the sample" (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 241). The sample was limited on the Skåne region, more specifically to the Lund city, and it is therefore assessed that start-ups from Ideon Science Park, were the best candidates in order to gain insights relevant for the research question. We selected start-up companies that were created in a time range of one to four years ago and are located in Ideon start-up Incubator from very beginning of their founding day. Due to not knowing, which start-up company would be willing to participate in the interview, we followed the selection process of convenience sampling, which is being continued until the chosen size of the sample is reached (Saunders et al, 2009). We sent emails to all 27 start-ups listed on Ideon's web page under section Incubator companies. Only dozen of them replied, six out of those were with positive feedback. Three companies work in Business to Customer sector and the other three are in Business to Business sector.

The sample size was chosen according to the study's purpose (Kvale, 1996), which is to investigate the attitude towards branding practices in start-ups in Sweden. Kvale (1996) recommends conducting up to 10 interviews however one must at the same time also think about different resources, such as time and money that are available. This said we performed six interviews, which was also compatible with the time limitations for completion of the thesis and the availability of preferred interviewees. We furthermore argue that quality is more important than quantity (Kvale, 1996) therefore, we believe the amount of conducted interviews was suitable.

Three interviewees decided to stay anonymous and they requested anonymity for their companies, therefore we modified all companies' and interviewees' names in order to reassure consistency. The companies were named after the category of the sector they operate in, complemented with the word "enterprise", while the participants were given random names.

COMPANY	INTERVIEWEE	DATE	PLACE	LENGTH
<b>Engineering Enterprise</b>	Tamara	08/04/2015	Ideon Science Park	40 min
<b>Application Enterprise</b>	Peter	15/04/2015	Skype	45 min
<b>Baby Products Enterprise</b>	Noah	16/04/2015	Ideon Science Park	40 min
<b>Extreme Sports Enterprise</b>	Patrick	17/04/2015	Ideon Science Park	35 min
<b>Software Enterprise</b>	James	20/04/2015	Ideon Science Park	50 min
<b>Consulting Enterprise</b>	Sabrina	29/04/2015	Malmö	35 min

Figure 9 General data about conducted interviews

### 3.6. DESIGNING AND CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Most of the interviews we performed were conducted in the premises of the companies, except one that took place through an online medium, due to the entrepreneur’s absence abroad. We ensured that interviews took place in unthreatening and relaxed atmosphere (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012) as well as that they complied with interviewees busy schedules. During all six interviews both researchers were present as well as one interviewee.

Kvale (1996, p. 95) argues that researchers should consider what, why and how questions when planning the interview. Questions “what” help obtain “pre-knowledge of the subject matter to be investigated”, questions “why” should clarify “the purpose of the study” and questions “how” display the way a process of a subject escalates and evolves. In order to thematise the interview we explored the existing theory on brands, branding processes and entrepreneurship that served as a basis to the interview process (Kvale, 1996). The reviewed literature therefore acted as an inception for the development of the interview guide that was then used as a general navigation during the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We divided our questions in four categories, in a way that they answered the main research question, as well as the four research sub-questions. The decision to divide the interview guide on four parts was made in order to have an easier identification of themes that further assisted us

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during the analysis of data. The sections were segregated on: Brand Importance, Brand Identity, Brand Positioning and Brand Building Activities (see Appendix 1).

In order to obtain good and reliable information, we tried to establish safety and trust from the very beginning of the interview (Kvale, 1996). We opened the interview with introduction questions that disclosed general biographical information about the interviewees and their connection to the company (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, at the very beginning we thanked the participants for taking their time and also asked for their consent to video and audio record. Additionally, we informed the participants that they have a right to request the final version of the report.

Following the introduction of the interview, we continued conversation with a relaxed pace, including as many questions as it was possible from the interview guide. The questions were open-ended, as it is recommended by many authors (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al, 2012; Kvale, 1996; Yin, 2009), and by that we allowed interviewees to elaborate with their response. We consciously decided on not using questions that could be answered by "yes" or "no" as they would not reveal the deeper meaning behind the interviewees' responses. Furthermore, we often used challenging probes and topics as a stress tool, to reassure the accuracy of respondents' answers (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012).

The interviews were recorded with both, camera and voice recorders, in order to ensure that all the information were properly stored. We purposely decided to use video recording tool to be able to identify interviewees' reactions and their behaviour during the interviews. Furthermore, Kvale (1996) argues that "a videotape provides richer contexts for interpretations than does the audiotape". The recorded material was afterwards transcribed into written file, in order to make the analysis easier and more accurate (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al, 2012; Kvale, 1996).

### 3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Generating large amount of data is attractive for its richness (Miles, 1979), therefore, since we are looking for a deeper understanding of the branding practices among entrepreneurs, we undertook a "general inductive approach" to analyse the data conducted through the interviews. This approach is "a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data, in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

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Adopting a general inductive analysis, a researcher summarizes a great amount of data in short summary format. Furthermore, it builds up "clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings and ensures that the links are both transparent and defensible." Additionally, the researcher develops concepts, themes or model through interpretations, using detailed readings of raw data (Thomas, 2006, p. 237). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) "the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from data," when deductive approach on the other hand, compares weather analysed data is consistent with previously made assumptions, hypotheses or theories, constructed by the researcher.

As a first step towards analysis, we transcribed video recordings, which were obtained through face-to-face interviews. Afterwards we conducted the process of inductive coding. Coding is one of the first steps of data analyzing, after the data is collected through the interview (Saunders et al, 2009). As presented by Yin (2009) coding provides the researcher with the opportunity to "begin moving methodically to a slightly higher conceptual level". Through the process of inductive coding, we evaluated the objectives of the research, which helped us identify themes we needed to investigate. In order to identify the most relevant themes, we carried out multiple readings and interpretations of raw data (Thomas, 2006). Data was constantly compared in order to reassure that there was a close connection between data and conceptualization, which furthermore contributed to preservation of correspondence between concepts and categories with their indicators (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Some authors may argue that the inductive approach of analysing data is not as strong as the other approaches in the area of qualitative data analysis. However, as it is a straight forward approach for acquiring findings connected to the research questions (Thomas, 2006). Therefore, we strongly believe that analysing attained data following general inductive analysis helped us clearly explain the empirical findings and also deliver strong theoretical and managerial recommendations.

### **3.8. ETHICAL AND POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

When performing a research, there are many external factors affecting the research process from the beginning and consequently affecting the end results. Even though most of researchers try to stay independent, sometimes they cannot avoid being manipulated or forced to adjust their research. Personal experience, subject of study, academic stakeholders and

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corporate stakeholders might have strong influence, on decision of research question as well as on the whole process (Easterby-Smith et al 2012). Our research was carried out without influences by political factors, either by academic or corporate stakeholders. Moreover, the research was not influenced by the university or our supervisor as they could have argued about the nature of the topic and the research objectives and therefore they allowed us to conduct the research the way we have visualized it from the early beginning. On the other hand, corporate stakeholders, meaning the owners of the start-ups investigated, were extremely collaborative and they did not denied access to the important information that could have damage research objectives (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012). In order to ensure a harmonious procedure of interview, we made the intentions of our research clear from the beginning. By that we ensured that the stakeholders were on the same line and did not negatively influence the process or the results.

Political dimensions bring on surface many ethical issues related to influencers affecting research process. According to Esterby-Smith et al (2012), there are several key research principles that need to be considered when the research is implemented. As far as ethical considerations are concerned, the researchers ensured that the interviewees were treated with honesty. We informed the participants about their rights during the interview and made it clear that at any point they could refuse to answer a question or leave the interview room. Furthermore, in order to avoid deception, participants were be assured of the purposes of the research and can also receive the final copy of the thesis, as well as the transcripts from their personal interviews if requested (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Confidentiality and anonymity were also taken into consideration and were in particularly applied when companies asked for anonymity. In addition it was explained to them that the recorded videos will only be used for the analysis of the research and if they refused video recorded, we would proceed with an audio recording (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Lastly, we obliged ourselves to obey the 10 principles of research ethics, suggested by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012).

Ensuring that no harm comes to participants.	Protecting the anonymity of individuals or organizations.
Respecting the dignity of research participants	Avoiding deception about the nature or aims of the research.
Ensuring a fully informed consent of research participants.	Declaration of affiliations, funding sources and conflicts of interest.
Protecting the privacy of research subjects.	Honesty and transparency in communicating about the research.
Ensuring the confidentiality of research data.	Avoidance of any misleading or false reporting of research findings.

Figure 10 Ten principles of research ethics by Easterby-Smith et al.

### 4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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*The chapter provides the reader with a projection of the empirical findings collected by the start-up companies participated in the study. The most significant data observed through the interviews and most relevant to our research questions are being reviewed. The chapter is divided in two fields, Business to Consumer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B), as the sample is consisted of three companies of each field. This decision was enhanced as patterns and similarities were expected to be discovered.*

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#### 4.1. BUSINESS TO CONSUMER START-UPS

##### 4.1.1. Application Enterprise

Application Enterprise is a software development company, which was created by Peter and his co-founder in 2010 as a hobby project. However, the firm was officially registered in 2012 as a Swedish private limited company. Back in 2010 Peter and his partner thought of developing an app for, at the time revolutionary, operating systems of smart-phones.

*"We came up with the idea: what if we could control our computer from our smart-phone. For example when I am sitting on the sofa and want to change the volume of my music, or change what I am watching. Also control the mouse and keyboard".*

The two partners worked on this project and the first release of the app (which also shares the same name as the corporate brand) came rather quickly in the form of a free version. Surprisingly for Peter and his partner, the app got a very good response out of the first release with a lot of downloads and positive feedback. Hence, in 2011 they decided to release a more complex paid version, where the users can remotely control more computer programs than the initial one. The hope behind this move was just to make some extra money for their everyday costs. Again, the response was quite impressive and the app got very high rankings among the app-stores, where it was available. Since then the company grew and nowadays it is consisted of five people, where one person, Peter, is working full-time and the other four are working on a part-time basis.

Peter further revealed that his company perceives branding as an important part for their development. However, he admitted that even if branding was always in the back of their head, it was only since last summer that they understood how they can benefit from its usage.

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An intern's suggestions helped them discover how they can use their already existing social channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) more efficiently in order to create brand awareness and build their brand. Peter continued that they now see themselves as a brand and they believe there is a value in it, which could possibly be exploited by creating brand extensions in the form of new apps. Especially since their ranking on the app-stores are really high. However he also acknowledged the fact that it is very difficult to create a brand as a start-up, particularly if someone compares them with the magnitude of big brands like IKEA or Coca Cola.

*"What I think is quite interesting is that Google is quite good at identifying brands. I am sure that you are aware that if you google 'Ikea' in the sidebar on Google, you get the brand page. Obviously we don't have that, so according to Google we are not yet a brand".*

Talking about the brand identity of the company, more specifically about the vision and mission of the brand, Peter revealed that they all share a vision since the beginning however it is not officially defined.

*"Sort of a vision with our products has always been that we want to create a remote control for everything [...] If I would define what is the principle behind our brand, I would say it is the concept of being able to remote control everything from one app".*

Until now the app is able to control computers, the vision however, is to be able to control all the electronic devices within a house, such as the light bulbs, the thermostat, the Smart-TV, the speakers etc. Discussing the core values of the brand, it was clear that they weren't defined as well however Peter confessed that being flexible and adaptive is important for them.

*"I guess part of our internal values has always been to move quickly, which is of course very important for a start-up, we are trying to become more reactive, trying to make decisions quicker and being agile [...] But I wouldn't necessarily say that we have any defined values going outwards".*

Moreover Peter added that one of the brand's values dating back since day-one was to listen to their users' feedback and using this information for shaping the app's features. Discussing upon the differentiation of their brand against the competitors, he stressed the key activity,

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which differentiates them is that they somehow leave the app "open" in order for their users to develop new features. For example when the app is compatible with X programs (Spotify, VLC, iTunes) other developers/users can make the app function with other additional programs, such as Media player and PowerPoint, as well.

After stressing the importance of their users' opinion in the development of the app, Peter revealed that they are trying to shift away from this situation and be less influenced by the market.

*"We have been very active listening what are users requesting, what problems are they having and really using that information to help shape the new features(of the app) that we work on but also the improvements. It is something that has been a bit of a driving force in our decision making. But I think that is something that we are starting to move away from now".*

Peter stressed an uneven balance in the decision making where consumers had the first say. Nevertheless they now understand this discrepancy and are trying to base all decisions according to the brand's identity and their vision as a company.

*"I think that the balance right now is a bit uneven as too much focus has been on features rather than maybe optimizing our business or optimizing the existing features. So, right now we are in a phase, sort of where we are saying no more new features. We are allowed to optimize and move in reducing the complexity (of the app), make the experience simpler and easier to use. So, I guess we are going through a bit of a shift there".*

To justify this choice he explained that in the early stages of a start-up, where traction is needed with the consumers, one of the easiest ways to achieve it is to listen to them and satisfy their needs. However now, when this traction has already been built, a user-base has been created and a stronger brand identity has also been developed, they have the power to shift this situation and take more decisions regarding the development of the brand, rather than letting consumers decide of its fate.

Regarding the various brand building activities that Application Enterprise have used or are planning to use, in order to create brand awareness, Peter disclosed they have been very active with their website and various social media that they are part of. In addition they have also gained a lot of free recognition and publicity due to their high rankings on the app-stores.

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Android websites and other related media to their field picked up on them due to their successful rankings and wrote articles about the brand. Additionally, Peter recognized the fact that they have been promoted a lot through WOM, where people suggested their app to friends, relatives and other users. As well as, through E-WOM where users shared their app in their channels/pages or created YouTube videos demonstrating the set-up and the functions of the app.

Discussing upon advertising, Peter revealed they have never employed traditional advertising, however they ran a very small size test ads through Facebook. He continued saying they have analysed how users find them and noticed that the most common way was through "search" either in the app-stores or Google. Therefore, it would make more sense for them to advertise through Google AdWords or by employing SEO tactics. He further elaborated on traditional advertising means, disclosing he finds them very expensive but also a bit of irrelevant for their product. As the target market of Application Enterprise is just any person in the world who owns a smart-phone, it means that the target audience of the brand is very diverse and possibly from every corner of the globe. Therefore, Peter seems to confront with distrust the effectiveness of traditional media and their ability to capture a significant portion of his target audience. Conversely, he thinks that video ads through YouTube might be a very good opportunity for them since it can reach a global audience. Additionally, a visual representation of their "product" would offer an easier comprehension to the prospect users regarding the function of the app, in comparison with print or radio advertisements.

### ***4.1.2. Baby Products Enterprise***

Baby Products Enterprise is a company, developing premium baby products. The company was launched in late June of 2014, hence Noah, the founder of the company, disclosed that he and his co-owner were developing the idea from early 2013. Company's main product is a baby carrier, named BabyCarrier. The main idea behind the BabyCarrier, and also all the other products is, apart from baby's comfort, to encourage and increase the interaction between parents and babies, and bring families closer. The company is comprised from two persons however, it has very complex organizational network, since it collaborates with many companies that supply the materials for BabyCarrier. Furthermore, they collaborate with a company, which is in charge of promotional activities as well as designing of the packaging.

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Noah and his partner were aware of branding even before the launch of the company and it seems that it constitutes a very critical part for their business development.

*"Yes, we focus very much on branding, as it represents around 80% of our business. Branding and positioning is extremely important for us as a brand".*

The BabyCarrier is a product, which contributes to children's' health and development, therefore Baby Products Enterprise was facing challenges when practicing branding. Due to recognition of its health benefits by children psychologists, BabyCarrier could easily be perceived as a clinical product, consequently operating in a very small target market. However, as the company perceive themselves as the developer of an exclusive lifestyle product, branding strategy had to be very carefully cultivated.

Noah acknowledged that company has core values, mission and vision, which are internally rooted in the organization and represent a driving force for the company's business development. Despite the fact that their core values are undefined, Noah kept referring to products that are sustainable, functional, aesthetic and with premium quality.

*"The company vision is to be top of mind for baby products with smart design. And smart is sustainable and clever function and nice looks. And company's vision is to make interactive product and bringing families closer to each other".*

Touching upon brand positioning, Noah revealed that they put their identity up front and it is their primary focus when positioning themselves on the market. Identity has the main role when matching their brand position and not customers' wants and wishes. However he stressed that they actively listen to what the market says.

*"What we try to do really much...we try not to ask questions, but we try to look and listen. It's different [...] My opinion is that you can't ask the customers what they want, because they don't know. You can listen to what they are angry about and try to get a little bit something out of it".*

Furthermore, the company is currently in the transition from being recognized by the name of the product BabyCarrier, to changing it and proceed by projecting the corporate's name, Baby Products Enterprise.

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*"When we started we had one product and we wanted the product to go all the way. Right now we are in the position when we will probably have more products and the name of the company will have a much larger spectrum on the packaging".*

The company also has a unique strategy on how they communicate their message towards customers. As their belief is that family consists of both parents, and is not only a matter of women, they use men models with different racial background. Noah argued that this strategy helped them with recognition especially on international level. Furthermore, the company puts a lot effort on design, logo and packaging.

In the process of putting themselves on the market and raise their presence, one can see how branding truly plays a big part in their branding strategy. Noah revealed they focus on social media and blogs to communicate with customers. They are also present on Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram, where through storytelling videos they portray the vision and mission of the brand. Furthermore, the company established collaborations with blog writers, who present the product on their blogs. Concerning print advertising, Noah added that they do not think about it, as it is immensely expensive, and it is not as effective as it is through previously mentioned channels.

*"No, we do not do print advertising, because it costs crazy amount of money. Compared to the spread that you can get through blogs [...] We get tons of new followers and we get a lot of people talking and thinking about "I want this kind of product". It is much more effective".*

However, if an opportunity arises for a free interview or a newspaper article, they do not hesitate and grab it. Several Swedish newspapers and magazines covered the story of the company and their main product BabyCarrier. He further revealed that too much notice in media can be bad for the business, as it in the end attracts more and more counterfeit products to the market.

Noah acknowledged they were able to afford implementing branding practices, because he and his partner were able to invest money from the beginning. To conclude, he argued that having educational background in business and work experiences from sales, helped him realise that good aesthetics help companies to be better, as most people are visual, and therefore sell more products.

*"We were also lucky, just getting the colours and the logos and the web page... we invested an amount of money when we started the company. A lot of companies don't have that today. If we didn't have that money, we wouldn't be that interested for branding and marketing. [...] I've always felt that if you look better, you are more prone to succeed".*

### **4.1.3. Extreme Sports Enterprise**

Extreme Sports Enterprise is a company consisted of people with great love for extreme sports, who are also engineers, entrepreneurs, industrialists and financiers. Their goal is to keep revolutionizing action sports with radical innovations, and provide high quality and low environmental impact products. The company was founded in 2012 by Patrick, who was also a Lund University student. Since then, the company was mostly dealing with the research and development of their products, as they are developing pioneering products that require technical expertise. It was only during the last year that the brand has been officially exposed to the markets. Their first and only product, which is also expected to be launched this summer, is the "Water Board", a wakeboard running by electric power without the need of wind or waves. Extreme Sports Enterprise however, aspires to develop and produce much more extreme sports-related products and not be related only to water sports.

Patrick sees branding as a highly important part of the company. He revealed that the company has a specific budget for branding practices and they consider branding as a helpful tool, which can help them generate sales, if it is applied properly.

*"It is really important how we are perceived, how we work with the brand, the logos or the packages".*

Furthermore, he stressed that together with his colleagues, they have thought about branding from the early stages of the company, where they defined a vision about what they want to become in the future and made sure to follow it. Discussing brand's mission, Patrick revealed that the company tries to provide people with a lot of fun products in high quality with as much limited environmental impact as possible.

High quality is really important for the brand as it is one of the aspects that they invested in, so as to differentiate themselves from competition and establish it as their competitive advantage. The core values of the company were not defined, however they all shared the idea

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of being efficient so as to develop the company, and make quality and lasting products. Furthermore they all share a motto, which represents the company's core promise: *"Work hard, Play hard"*.

In relation to positioning strategy, Patrick argues that it is their identity (vision & mission, values and brand essence) that influences it the most. Despite knowing the market very well, he still emphasizes that identity is their driving force.

*"Well, we have pretty close ties to distributors and know the market fairly well. But yea, we kind of do what are passions are as well, we follow our passion. We only do products that we would love to use ourselves basically".*

Furthermore, he complemented that they do listen to the customers' needs and wants at certain subjects such as rental places for their board, but they try not to get influenced when it comes to the development of the brand.

In relation to brand building activities, Extreme Sports Enterprise mostly creates awareness through social media and its website, where they publish videos about their products and the brand. In addition, they extensively use PR in an effort to create and maintain relations with several news agencies and other media. Patrick acknowledged that their videos gave them a lot of free publicity as well, since some of them became viral throughout the world and led into having several TV channels, newspapers and magazines interviewing or writing about them. Being the most active of all the start-ups we interviewed, Extreme Sports Enterprise also attends a lot of exhibitions -boat shows in specifically- around the world in order to build their brand name. However they also rely on WOM and e-WOM through which, people are sharing their story. Furthermore, Patrick revealed that their plan is to organize many events this summer and also sponsor extreme sports athletes in a way to further build their brand. Lastly, Extreme Sports Enterprise disclosed that they have not employed any traditional advertising yet, however they have found extremely beneficial the use of online ads such as Facebook ads.

### 4.2. BUSINESS TO BUSINESS START-UPS

#### 4.2.1. Engineering Enterprise

Engineering Enterprise was established in 2012 in Lund, Sweden. It is "an innovative company that develops intelligent engineering solutions with the mission to optimize the use of resources and provide environmentally friendly system". The company develops an intelligent street lighting system, which is comprised from hardware and software. With the system, a street pole is able to adopt its working regime according to the activity happening on the street." They produce hardware for street light luminaire and software that enables to remotely monitor the light.

Tamara, who is the marketing manager of the company, understands branding as a way to communicate what the company is about. In that way the company can create an image, which is reflected between the employees and to the public. Furthermore, she revealed that Engineering Enterprise is not perceived as a brand, as she believes that company becomes a brand, when the value of the brand becomes significant. Branding was not considered as a part of their business strategy from the beginning, nor does it play a big part in it now, three years after the foundation of the company. Nevertheless, they sometimes exercise parts of branding willingly or not, just because all the employees believe that they have to.

As for the company's values, vision and mission, Tamara similarly revealed that the company has the values written down because they felt obliged to do it. However, discussing the vision and mission, the situation is more unclear. Both are not defined, nevertheless they are shared among the employees. As there are many similar solutions on the market, most of whom appeared soon after Engineering Enterprise launched its first model, the company's mission is to design better technology, with lower power consumption, more dimensions etc. in order to differentiate from the competitors. The vision shared on the other hand is to provide the solution, however not to become the next multinational giant.

*"Regarding the brand we do not have mission and vision, no. So, it is very...we have certain knowledge of the problem that we want to solve, but we do not have an ambition to become next Phillips or something similar".*

The field that Engineering Enterprise operates in is a very rigid one, and therefore the company had to design a lean way of approaching the customers and projects. In lightning

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industry not many companies allow branding among partners and therefore, Engineering Enterprise has to be very strategic when establishing partnerships. They position themselves as a market oriented company, whose main driving force is to seek satisfaction among the customers. Moreover, they are young and flexible company and are aware that, if there will be a need to change their strategy due to market changes or similar, they will do that.

*"Yes, we are young and passionate and flexible... But this is also not something carved in stone, because market is changing, requirements are changing, and we might look at it differently in a year time".*

In order to build up brand awareness and get their brand out on the market, Tamara revealed that the company currently relies on network connections and word of mouth. She exposed that there are specific places, such as exhibitions and fairs, where people from the industry meet. Moreover, European projects, joint projects and pre-procurement meetings with city councils are also tools being used to spread the word. In addition, Engineering Enterprise also attends different start-up competitions and is a member of two CleanTech clusters in Malmö and Copenhagen, which help them gain more connections for possible future business.

Tamara furthermore confessed that they do not use their website actively, and despite their presence on Facebook, they have never exploited it for building the brand. She believes the only thing that helps them at sales in this exact phase is the connections the company has and will establish in the future.

Reflecting upon marketing and marketing budget in a newly established company as Engineering Enterprise is, Tamara revealed that they cannot afford to employ marketing activities in a way big corporations do, due to the large amount of money needed.

*"The thing is again that it is very expensive and we do not have money to invest in it. We do not see much value in it. I think here start-up aspect comes in. We do not see value in marketing today. With our resources and being a young start-up, we have been considering that we have first have the technology to prove".*

### **4.2.2. Software Enterprise**

Software Enterprise is a newly established start-up, whose reason for existence is to help companies drive innovation and improvements through efficient crowdsourcing and handling employee's ideas. The company is developing software, in particularly a web app, that helps

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customers use their employee's ideas in an effort to summarize collective intelligence and strengthen their business. The software is customizable for each customer, depending on its organisational culture, its current work with innovation, and of course their prospective wishes, needs and goals. The main idea behind the software is to first motivate the generation of ideas from employees, second, to sort these ideas out and lastly to work with them so as to drive improvements and innovation for the company. Software Enterprise was launched in January 2015 and since then it is stationed in Ideon Science Park in Lund, Sweden.

Being a very young company, James and his co-workers did not think much about branding yet, as they are at this moment focused on the development and improvement of the software, as well as on finding their first customers through their already existing personal networks. Nevertheless, James sees branding as a useful process for business, as it can provide the advantage of portraying a consistent image of the brand across all of its various stakeholders. He also acknowledged that they are probably unconsciously implementing some parts of branding.

*"I am sure we have done many things considering branding, but to be honest, we haven't been working that efficiently on it. Basically we have an image of what we want to be, what kind of company we want to be, what we think is a nice company and we just try to make everything as we think is the best possible way".*

Brand's mission and vision are not defined, however one can easily recognize them since James is consistently repeating that they want to be the best in their field and satisfy their customers. Discussing core values, James further acknowledged that they have not yet defined them and there is nothing concrete due to their short time of existence. However he also believes that by being such a small company it is easier to share the core values among co-workers without having them written down. Additionally they all share an unofficial core promise, which makes it easier for them to move towards the same direction.

*"We have kind of slogan: "we care about good ideas". [...] For us the most important thing is to make good tools and we think it is really fun and we are passionate about it".*

As previously mentioned, Software Enterprise is very eager to satisfy customers' needs and wants, and their main priority is to ensure customers' satisfaction. This mentality is also transferred in their positioning strategy as James confessed that he vividly communicates his focus on the customization of the product to the wishes of his customers.

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Advertising and PR are currently, at this early phase of the company, placed on the sidelines because they are not seen as a priority for James. Wanting to be the best known company in the field, James's plan is to start writing the company's own blog on how to work with innovations, different challenges and just share some news and concepts that they find interesting.

Social media is for James also seen as not of a great importance, especially due to the fact that the company operates in the business to business area.

*"Of course Social media can be useful, but not in B2B sector. For example, many companies use social media just because they are supposed to have it. And then you look at their Twitter account and they have only 200 followers. How many people will see their actual tweet"?*

Our respondent sees a company's blog as their best weapon, where they will write on how to work with innovations, different challenges and new things they believe are important in the industry.

Currently our interviewee uses his existing network connections to build up his company. But he also believes that by being the best in the field and having an innovative product will automatically help them to spread the word.

*"In the long run, I hope that our first project will be very successful, because, if we are so successful, then the companies will be contacting us".*

### **4.2.3. Consulting Enterprise**

Consulting Enterprise is a one-person company owned by Sabrina and was established in August 2014. The main function of the company is to work as an external partner for recruiting agencies, dealing exclusively with the research process of finding the most appropriate candidates. Consulting Enterprise is trying to match potential candidates to companies in order to offer a win-win situation for both sides. Additionally Sabrina engages in professional coaching, which is at the moment practised on the side.

Touching upon branding it became apparent that Sabrina has a mixed understanding. First, she stressed that one way of practicing branding, is by communicating what the company stands for, towards all of the company's stakeholders. But then she added that her way of

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doing branding is to differentiate herself by choosing a very niche field of activity, instead of following her previous working experience and establishing a recruitment company. This shows that she is confusing the differentiation strategy among competitors with the choice of niche market.

*"People ask why don't you do a recruitment company. No, because everyone does it. So, that is my thinking, so, it is kind of branding, how I should fit in the market".*

Sabrina is aware of the importance of branding for business growth in general, and she further professed she finds it very important for her business since there is a great confusion of what exactly she is doing. A clear message of what she stands for would be very valuable for her since most of the times people believe that she owns a recruitment agency.

Being in a process of changing the company's business strategy, Sabrina admits that the company does not have defined values however she knows what values she wants to portray to her customers and tries to communicate them. In addition, it was clear that Consulting Enterprise does not have a defined vision and mission neither has something similar to those notions in an unstructured form. Sabrina emphasized that she is not willing to have a bigger company than herself or any employees. However, she is open for partnerships with other similar companies in her field.

Differentiating her company from the competitors does not seem to be a concern for her as Sabrina delivered a rather interesting thought:

*"I don't have competitors in my world"!*

She was only aware of another person doing the same job, whom she contacted and now are actually working together, trying to undertake bigger assignments as a team. She believes that synchronized cooperation with competitors is a better way for her to grow the business. Nevertheless she admitted that if there is someone who is not willing to cooperate, she is always ready to compete.

In regards to the brand's positioning strategy Sabrina confessed that her brand is not really out there yet. Still, since the whole brand is in a way personified on her personality, she often speaks her heart and might reject an offer that does not suit her. Nevertheless, due to the nature of her business it seems in the end, it is all about satisfying customer's wishes.

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When it comes to brand building activities, Sabrina revealed that the company mostly relies on her personal network and the various connections that she had built throughout her previous working experiences. For her, personal contacts that lead into references are the best way of getting brand awareness. Additionally, she admitted that WOM has helped her significantly to get her name out on the market. On the contrary she does not see any value in advertising, since she would rather utilize online tools to advertise herself.

*"I think more on the internet, try to do SEO, actually I have thought of that and I want to do it, when I will have more money. So, it is more about surviving right now than putting money".*

Sabrina lastly disclosed that she owns an online website for the company, however she is not using it actively but it rather stands as an online business card. Therefore, she acknowledged that there is space for improvement. Similarly, she is present on certain social media, but again not using them actively. The reason for not being particularly active when it comes to the building of her brand is because she is now in an exploratory stage and is experimenting with various business strategies. For her, it is really important that she first has a clear brand message and is sure of what she wants to communicate before she proceeds.

### 5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

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*Chapter five provides the analysis of the empirical findings in an effort to answer the study's research objectives. The analysis is based on our theoretical framework, and entails an iterative process of moving back and forth between theory and empirical findings. The analysis as such is broken down in five theoretical categories, each divided in B2C and B2B sections. The structure of the analysis is formatted as follows: Firstly, we analyse the importance of branding according to the entrepreneurs and appoint companies in one of the three categories of Wong & Merrilees (2005) typology, in respect to their answers. Moreover, we identify the brand identity creation process in relation to mission and vision, core values and brand promise. Then, we assign the companies under Urde's & Koch's (2014) five schools of brand positioning and further discuss various brand building activities that they employ. Lastly, we present similarities and differences between B2C and B2B companies. The three businesses to consumers firms are: Extreme Sports Enterprise, Application Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise. Whereas the business to business companies are represented by: Engineering Enterprise, Software Enterprise and Consulting Enterprise.*

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#### 5.1. IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING

##### *B2C*

Through the analysis of the three B2C companies it became evident that all of them are in line with Merrilees (2007) and perceive branding as an important tool for the growth of their company. All of them acknowledged the fact that branding can help differentiate themselves and make them stand out from their competition (Spence & Essoussi, 2010). Nevertheless, it seems that each company had a different understanding of what branding actually is and how it can help them. In particular, Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise have both a very strong feeling about their identity, which serves as a guiding light when it comes to their branding practices. However, instead of further cultivating and developing their identity, it seems that they are mostly concerned in creating a favourable image of their brands and products that would in turn lead them to increase sales. Both of these companies have thought about branding practices before the conception of the company and have a clear understanding of what they want to achieve (Rode & Vallaster, 2005). On the other hand Application Enterprise has not thought of branding since its inception and it was only after an

instigation of one of its interns two years later, which made them recognize branding's utility on creating brand awareness (Keller, 2008). From that point on, Application Enterprise understands the necessity of branding and is therefore trying to include it in the company's business strategy. However, according to Peter it is difficult building a brand on a start-up context in comparison to worldwide brands, due to financial limitations. Similarly, Baby Products Enterprise would not be as active as it is, regarding the company's branding activities if they did not have an existing capital for the development of their brand, when launching the company.

Following Wong & Merrilees (2005) brand orientation typology, the obtained results of the interviews show that two of the companies examined, Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise, are following an "Integrated" approach. This approach designates the understanding of the firm's competitive advantage and their overall brand distinctiveness, as well as how important and active the brand is, when it comes to their marketing activities (Wong & Merrilees, 2005). On the contrary and despite the good understanding of branding practices, Application Enterprise follows an "Embryonic" approach, since the company is still on a shift to a more brand oriented approach. At the time even if the company uses the brand's name as a competitive advantage and sees the value in it, the brand orientation of the firm is still on limited levels (Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

### *B2B*

After the analysis of the three B2B companies, we noticed that all of them perceive branding as an important tool to achieve business growth (Merrilees, 2007) however, two out of the three, found it currently not significant for their business practices. They all acknowledged its importance as a concept however the application in their business seems rather ambivalent. Tamara from Engineering Enterprise seems to have a great understanding of what branding is and how it can help to communicate the identity of the brand, internally and externally. However except of some minor parts they are using "willingly or not" she cannot see its value in these early stages of the firm contrary in to what Rode & Vallaster (2005) suggest. In the meanwhile, for a B2B company as Engineering Enterprise, the first priority is to prove themselves "technologically". Similarly for James, branding is an important notion, as it has the power of sending signals to the company's stakeholders and portraying what a brand is about (Kapferer, 2012). Nevertheless, he does not see value in branding for his business at the

moment, as product innovation is the top priority for the company at this stage (Breciani & Eppler 2010). Moreover, Sabrina from Consulting Enterprise is the only one who thinks of branding as an important aspect of her business and is willing to invest in it.

*"I want to have a clear message of what I stand for, because of what I do is not so common and people often confuse me for a recruitment agency, which I am not. So, I think branding is important for my business, just to have a clear vision, have a clear message". – Sabrina*

However her knowledge upon the real aspects of branding seemed somehow limited throughout the interview, as at one point she referred to practicing branding by differentiating through choosing a niche sector of activity, but not differentiating her brand within the sector and among competition.

Reflecting upon Wong & Merrilees (2005) brand orientation typology model, we noticed that all three B2B start-ups examined fall into the 'Minimalist' approach. Two of the three companies, namely the Software Enterprise and Consulting Enterprise, seem to be short-term focused regarding their strategy and as implied by Wong & Merrilees (2005) more survival oriented. This appears reasonable taking into account the young age of both companies that is limited to less than a year. Finally, Engineering Enterprise seems also to justify the selected approach considering that Tamara exposed that the company operates into the so-called 'white labelling', where the brand of a product is of no importance.

### 5.2. THE CREATION OF BRAND IDENTITY

#### *B2C*

Rode & Vallaster (2005), Witt & Rode (2005) and Spence & Essousi (2010) have all stressed upon the importance of creating a brand identity while being a start-up company. This was a major drive for us in order to analyse whether the examined companies adopt the same opinion and whether identity is being created in the same way as general branding theory proposes. Therefore we examined the companies under the most prevalent features of brand identity, namely, mission and vision, core values and brand promise (De Chernatony, 2001; Collins and Porras, 1998; Urde, 2009; 2013; Keller, 2008; Kapferer, 2012). In accordance to Rode & Vallaster (2005), Witt & Rode (2005) and Spence & Essousi (2010) brand identity

was indeed an important aspect for all three B2C companies. However, contrary to Rode & Vallaster's (2005) findings, the brand identities of our sample were not fluid and unstructured but in most of the cases defined or relatively structured in the minds of the entrepreneurs.

Specifically and in regards to our first examined notion of mission and vision, two of the companies, Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise, had worked upon them and defined them in a very early stage. In addition Extreme Sports Enterprise is the only one projecting them through their online website. Positively for both companies, mission and vision are playing a major role for the company's development, and the persons working within the companies are actively living under their guidance (Urde, 2009; De Chernatony, 1999). On the other hand, even if Application Enterprise has not defined the mission and their vision, they have a clear understanding of what they aspire to become and what they are willing to achieve. Interestingly we noticed that all three companies are using their mission and vision as sources of commitment to the brand's greater purposes, as it has been suggested by Urde (2009).

Regarding the core values of these brands, the picture is relatively different, where none of the companies has defined them yet. Nevertheless, it is apparent through the interviews of what their brands stand for and what are the values that they want to communicate. Extreme Sports Enterprise was consistently referring to quality, efficiency, environment and fun, while Baby Products Enterprise talked about functionality, family, sustainability and aesthetics. Lastly Application Enterprise addressed to the importance of actively listening to their customers, but also being flexible and agile. Core values seemed to be undefined, (Rode & Vallaster, 2005) however solid in the minds of the entrepreneurs and visible enough, permeating all marketing activities of the companies (Melin, 2002).

Reflecting on the third and last notion examined regarding brand identity, namely the brand promise, it seems to be absent in two out of our three B2C companies. It is only Extreme Sports Enterprise that indeed has a brand promise, which portrays the brand's commitment to the public and also captures the spirit of the brand (Urde, 2009; Keller, 2008).

*"Well, basically we have a quote: 'work hard, play hard'. So, we work really hard but we also have a lot of fun". – Patrick*

### *B2B*

Similarly with the B2C section this part investigates the mission and vision, core values and core promise of the companies, in order to analyse in what ways they create brand identity. Several authors (Rode & Vallaster, 2005; Witt & Rode, 2005; Spence & Essousi, 2010) emphasize on the importance of start-up companies having a strong brand identity. Furthermore, Rode & Vallaster (2005, p. 124) find it crucial as "the opportunity to enter a market and to position a start-up in the competitive environment exists only within a relatively short window of opportunity." On the contrary, all three examined B2B companies are in line with Rode's and Vallaster's (2005) findings, which argue that the brand identity in start-ups is unstructured, fluid and unclear.

Mission and vision seem to be not of great importance for any of the examined companies. Both, Engineering Enterprise and Software Enterprise have shown that they have an unstructured idea of why the organization exists (Collin and Porras, 1998) and an unformed sense of direction (de Chernatony, 1999). However, none of these notions has been defined and used as a guiding light for the development of the company (Rode & Vallaster, 2005). Dissimilarly Consulting Enterprise admittedly does not have an established mission and vision since it is in a transition process of changing business strategy.

Despite Urde's (2009) acknowledgement for core values being the most essential part of building a strong brand identity, we see that only one of the companies, Engineering Enterprise, has established and implemented core values in its business strategy since the very beginning. Apparently this was done only due to a sense of obligation that the employees' of the company had. Surprisingly, however, they now use them as an internal tool in order to stay on the same page and understand the purpose of the company (Urde, 2009).

*"Hmm... That has been also defined quiet early, because we felt like we almost have to. We have to be on the same page in the team". – Tamara*

On the other hand neither Software Enterprise, nor Consulting Enterprise felt the urge to develop core values. Still, both had several times mentioned words, such as innovation and efficiency or partnership and integrity respectively, which can be viewed as a non-defined but present core values.

Lastly, none of the interviewed companies has established a brand promise, apart from Software Enterprise. It is the only B2B company that had an undefined but existent brand promise and is using it so as to describe the spirit of the company.

*"We have kind of slogan, we care about good ideas". - James*

### 5.3. BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGY

#### *B2C*

Brand positioning was the third facet of this research and was really interesting since there have not been any past studies examining this concept on a start-up setting. The analysis of the research revealed that two of the three B2C companies, Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise, are purely brand oriented and are therefore assigned under the "Domino" school of thought according to Urde & Koch (2014). Such companies are interested into satisfying the needs and wants of customers, only within the boundaries of the brand identity and with brand clarity being of a paramount importance (Urde et al. 2011). Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise describe brand identity (mission and vision, core values, brand promise) as the key factor in positioning their brands (Urde & Koch, 2014). Protecting their beliefs and ideas is beyond question and the only way to advance. For Extreme Sports Enterprise the most important thing is to follow their passion, do products that they would love to use, and perceive themselves as such. In a similar manner Baby Products Enterprise, follows its ideas and employs an inside-out perspective when it comes to positioning (Urde et al. 2011). The market could have very easily led them into a clinical products niche market however they strongly resisted this alternative and position themselves according to their identity. It is very easy for someone to notice the values of Baby Products Enterprise, such as family or functionality, in their packaging and this is what they do since the early beginning. For both companies it seems very significant to differentiate through their brand and achieve a long lasting competitive advantage (Urde, 1999).

Being in the middle of a transition strategy, Application Enterprise is currently focused on a more brand oriented positioning strategy as well, however signs of its previously market oriented approach are still visible. Therefore the company has been assigned to a hybrid oriented school of thought, named the "Wild Card Poker" approach. Their mindset is currently

brand oriented however their actions show that they haven't yet managed to utterly change the internal and external activities within the firm and thus their positioning strategy. As Urde & Koch (2014) described, this approach entails that a "Wild Card Poker" company will navigate into uncharted waters and try to establish new differentiated positions disrupting product categorization.

*"The thing that we are really pushing towards now is that we try to brand ourselves more as a platform rather than just an app. Which is what differentiates us from our competitors, we provide tools around our app that makes it possible for other developers and other users to build upon what we already have". -Peter*

A very interesting finding is that according to Peter, being a clearly market oriented company at the beginning and satisfying the needs and wants of the customers has given the Application Enterprise a great opportunity for building the brand. Although now that the company established its brand, it can make a shift into being a more brand oriented company. This will help them expose its brand identity and solely make the decisions for the development of the brand. The thinking of Peter seems reasonable however we are not certain whether this assumption can be established as a general term.

### **B2B**

As mentioned in the B2C section, no previous research has been conducted regarding start-up positioning before, and therefore it was very captivating to discover that all three companies operating in B2B area are market oriented. Moreover we recognized that all of them are purely market oriented and they thus, fulfil all characteristics of being positioned by the "Puzzle" school of thought. Such companies position themselves on the market as the perfect "fit" to customers' demands, "finding the lacking puzzles and matching them with the existing ones" (Urde & Koch, 2014, p. 18). All three companies try to find and provide the solution for niche and underserved markets (Urde & Koch, 2014).

Being a lean start-up Engineering Enterprise acknowledges that the main focus of the company is to react on market's feedback and needs. This is in accordance with Urde and Koch (2014), who argue that in market oriented companies the brand image is defined from outside-in, in an effort to satisfy customer's needs and wants. Following that it is very

interesting to note that Engineering Enterprise abides by this approach to the extent, where they customize their solutions like LEGO blocks.

For Software Enterprise bringing value to the costumers is the main concern and a driving force to the operation of the company. To support its customers, employees try to combine customer's wishes and needs with their beliefs and expertise, in order to fill the missing piece of the puzzle (Urde & Koch, 2014).

In the similar manner Consulting Enterprise provides a solution for its customers by connecting them with suitable persons, in order to cover their needs. Currently the company follows a market oriented, approach however it seems in the future it is willing to become more brand oriented by applying the founder's strong identity in a bigger extent (Krake, 2005).

### 5.4. BUILDING A BRAND

#### *B2C*

A glance at the synoptic table (Figure 11) shows that all of the B2C examined start-ups employ various brand building activities. It is obvious however, that certain activities are being repetitive among all three companies, while some are only being practiced by one of them. The most common activity which also reinforces Breciani's & Eppler's (2010) findings on Swiss start-ups is the use of online means. In particular, all companies are extensively using various social media platforms (Nadaraja, & Yazdanifard, n.d.), such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. In addition they also actively use their websites by posting videos or relevant information of their products. In addition, Application Enterprise uses its own blog in an effort to attract customers interested in the field of their expertise as well as to create trust for the brand (Armellini & Villanueva, 2011), whether Baby Products Enterprise is very creatively using bloggers for the creation of brand awareness and ultimately sales. Conversely, again in accordance with Breciani & Eppler (2010) the least favourable and employed medium is advertising. All three start-ups assessed advertising as a very expensive medium (Keller, 2008) and in the case of Application Enterprise, a medium with no use since they compete in a global market.

*"We have never done any active advertising". – Peter*

*"It costs crazy amount of money". – Noah*

For Application Enterprise, the most appropriate form of advertising in their case would be through YouTube ads. They already tested Facebook ads in the past, however the results were poor. On the contrary, Extreme Sports Enterprise employs Facebook ads and finds them to be working really well for their prospective market. Another significant brand building tool we noticed through the analysis, is that start-ups count a lot on WOM (Krake, 2005) and e-WOM respectively, since it is the most cost effective way to create brand awareness (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Extreme Sports Enterprise finds e-WOM as an extremely important tool since a lot of their videos are shared through social media by their prospective customers (Fodor & Hoffman, 2010). Specifically re-sharing was a reason they got a tremendous online hype, which offered them great publicity all over the world and gave them a stepping stone for appearing in many TV networks (SKY, FOX etc.) and newspapers (Daily Mail). This publicity offered them a lot of contacts for future distribution of their product as well as for collaborations. Similarly, WOM and e-WOM are appreciated by Application Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise where based on, online and offline noise, their brands receive a significant level of awareness. Furthermore against Breciani's & Eppler's (2010) findings, Public Relations (Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006) seem to be another activity that Swedish B2C start-ups cherish, however only in the form of personal relationships and free publicity.

All companies enjoyed free publicity when they were picked up by magazines and newspapers, and articles have been written about their products and brands. An action which can according to Smith and Taylor (2002) result in high brand awareness and favourable reputation. Furthermore, Extreme Sports Enterprise and Baby Products Enterprise take the advantage of their networks and through personal relationships try to enhance their brand building efforts. Nevertheless, it is very important to stress that Baby Products Enterprise finds PR as a potentially dangerous practice when it comes to press conferences and press releases, as it may draw unwanted attention from emerging competition or multinationals to the very vulnerable state of start-ups. Additionally, another not very popular activity, but rather creative, is the product giveaways employed by Baby Products Enterprise. The company gives away products through competitions so as to create a buzz in the market.

*"We get tons of new followers and we get a lot of people talking and thinking about 'I want this kind of product'. It is much more effective". – Noah*

Lastly, Extreme Sports Enterprise finds some value in exhibitions they attend, in particular boat-shows, but they also plan to sponsor events and athletes in the short term future. Application Enterprise on the other hand believes that SEO tactics and an investment in Google AdWords should be their next brand building activities. Similarly, Baby Products Enterprise finds value in online practices since they are confident that their target group most probably finds them through the web.

### **B2B**

Reflecting upon the brand building activities employed from the B2B companies of our sample, the analysis shows that the most powerful tool for brand growth is the network of the entrepreneurs in the form of personal connections/contacts. On the only previous study examining brand building activities by Breciani & Eppler (2010), personal network is not mentioned at all. Consequently, it seems of a great importance that all three companies have mentioned it as their major brand building activity and source of creating brand awareness.

*"It's all about the personal connections I must say. Even, if you don't have personal connections, you must make one". – Sabrina*

For two of the companies, network is also mainly important due to its use as a source for achieving positive WOM. Engineering Enterprise and Consulting Enterprise are in total agreement with Krake's (2005) suggestions, and rely on their previous/future relations and personal connections as a way of building their brand name to the market. Software Enterprise on the other hand, hopes that if the business becomes successful, WOM will eventually help them grow the brand as well.

*"Yes, WOM, and I know a lot of people as well. This is my profession you know. A lot of people know me, as it is a small-small world". – Sabrina*

Another common characteristic the analysis reveals is that unfortunately none of the B2B companies is actively using their websites, a very cost effective and highly customizable brand building tool (Keller, 2008). In a similar manner, Engineering Enterprise and Consulting Enterprise are passively using the social media channels, Facebook and LinkedIn respectively, without creating any value to the brand. A fact also reinforced by Software Enterprise as it states social media is mostly a tool, which can be exploited by B2C companies

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

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and can difficultly offer value to a B2B firm, unless the company is big and has time and resources to really invest in them.

Moreover, only Engineering Enterprise identifies events and exhibitions as a way to build their brand. Specifically they take part in various start-up competitions from their field, municipality contests, where they pitch-in about their product and attend exhibitions of their sector, which provide them with the opportunity to build their brand and maintain their presence on the market (Smith & Taylor, 2002). Consulting Enterprise on the other hand, builds the brand by engaging in co-branding with another firm, so as to attract bigger assignments and portray trustworthiness and a synergistic image. Advertising in addition seems to be the forbidden fruit for all the companies of our sample, as it is once more perceived as very expensive medium (Keller, 2008).

*"The thing is again that this (advertising) is very expensive and we do not have money to invest in it". – Tamara*

As future brand building activities for the newcomers, Software Enterprise and Consulting Enterprise, the most prominent means to strengthen their brands are online practices. In particular for Software Enterprise it is to create a blog however, both of them highly appreciate SEO tactics. Finally it is significant to note that Engineering Enterprise and Software Enterprise, in accordance to responses of other B2B companies in Juntunen's (2012) study, believe that product quality and functionality will provide them with the means to grow their brands in the future.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

<u>B2C</u> <u>Companies</u>	Branding Importance*	Branding Typology	Brand Identity			Brand Positioning Strategy	Brand Building Activities
				Defined	Undefined		
Extreme Sports Enterprise	III	Integrated	M&V	✓	-	Domino	Social Media, Website, E-WOM, PR and Free Publicity, Online ads, Exhibitions, Free Publicity
			C.V	-	✓		
			B.P	✓	-		
Application Enterprise	III	Integrated	M&V	-	✓	Wild Card Poker	Social Media, Website, WOM/E-WOM, Free Publicity
			C.V	-	✓		
			B.P	-	-		
Baby Products Enterprise	III	Embryonic	M&V	✓	-	Domino	Social Media, Website, WOM, Bloggers, Network, Product Giveaway, Free Publicity
			C.V	-	✓		
			B.P	-	-		
<u>B2B</u> <u>Companies</u>							
Engineering Enterprise	I	Minimalist	M&V	-	✓	Puzzle	Network, Website, WOM, Competitions, State Contests, Events
			C.V	✓	-		
			B.P	-	-		
Software Enterprise	I	Minimalist	M&V	-	✓	Puzzle	Network, Website, WOM
			C.V	-	-		
			B.P	✓	-		
Consulting Enterprise	II	Minimalist	M&V	-	-	Puzzle	Network, Website, WOM, Co-Branding,
			C.V	-	✓		
			B.P	-	-		

Figure 11 Differences in branding practices among B2C and B2B companies

- \* Branding Importance is being graded on three level scale, from not important to very important. Every scale represents a proportion about the perceived importance of branding from the entrepreneurs for the growth of their business. I = Not Important, II = Important, III = Very Important

### 5.5. A COMPARISON BETWEEN B2C AND B2B START-UPS

Conducted analysis brought up several similarities and more importantly many differences regarding branding practices among B2C and B2B companies. Firstly, even though each respondent has a different understanding of branding, some of them limited, all of them agree on its importance. Furthermore, they all believe that if used correctly, it can greatly contribute to the growth of the business and recognition on the market. Nevertheless, the examined B2C companies also seem to find branding useful for their personal growth, whereas B2B companies disagree. This is also reflected on the placement of the companies according to Wong and Merrilees's (2005) Brand Orientation Typology where the B2C companies fall into "Embryonic" or "Integrated" approach and all B2B are placed under the "Minimalist" approach.

The analysis also indicates a few remarkable differences in relation to the brand identity creation process. Contrasting the two parts of B2C and B2B it became evident that the former were more concerned in structuring their identity as it is implied by the literature (Kapferer, 2012; De Chernatony, 2001; Melin, 2002), in an effort of implying it in their business strategy, but also in order to become an integral part of their differentiation strategy. On the contrary, for B2B start-ups, identity is a notion that exists within the minds of the entrepreneurs and their partners, but not defined or structured. It might play a role in the development of the company, however this occurs in an unconscious way and it cannot be taken for granted.

The most interesting finding regarding brand positioning is how highly opposite oriented B2C and B2B companies are. The former are mostly brand oriented, while the latter market oriented. Moreover it is fascinating how, with the exception of one B2C company, which is currently in a transition strategy, both groups fall into the same school of positioning. Specifically we see that B2C start-ups are positioned under the "Domino" approach and B2B under the "Puzzle". Both of these positions are on the two opposite sides of the scale and no company is placed among the other three schools of thought by Urde & Koch (2014).

Finally, the cross-sectional analysis of the employed brand building activities by B2C and B2B companies revealed several similarities, but also various differences. Throughout the examination of the empirical evidence it becomes apparent that the reason for these differences lies in the distinctness among the nature of both industries. First, we notice that all

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

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of the companies appreciate the usage of WOM and e-WOM, in order to gain free recognition on the market. Moreover, all of them perceive advertising as a very expensive tool and instead try to embrace others more cost-effective solutions. The major difference among B2C and B2B companies is when it comes to the most appreciated tool for creating brand awareness and eventually building up their brand. B2C companies value social media channels as the most powerful way to bring them closer to the market and customers, but also the active use of their websites in an effort to mirror their achievements, stay in contact with the customers and keep them up to date. On the other hand, B2B companies see no benefits in social media, as they believe that their prospective customers are not present there and therefore it does not justify the investment. Network and personal connections seem to be the most prominent tools as they provide them with the means to spread their message directly to the audience.

### 6. CONCLUSION

In order to answer our main research question, four sub-questions were employed. The first sub-question, where we examined the perceived importance of branding for the growth of the examined start-ups, has been used as an introductory question, in an effort to understand how aware our respondents were with the concept of branding and to what extent their responses were valid. The following three sub-questions have an exploratory nature and the purpose of them was to provide a deeper understanding on whether Swedish start-ups build their identity in a similar manner as it is proposed by the general branding theory that suggests defined mission and vision, core values and brand promise; in finding out which approach do they follow regarding their brand position strategy; and to uncover what kind of brand building activities do start-ups find as more valuable in order to create brand awareness and eventually brand equity.

Touching upon the perceived importance of branding on a start-up context, the results seem to be very encouraging since the majority of our sample identified branding as an important tool for the development of the company. This constitutes a great indicator, as Merrilees (2007) also recognizes the importance of branding and suggests that it can help start-ups with customer and capital acquisition, sharpness of the business formulation but also by its use as an integrating tool for the entire new venture process.

Moreover, our research shows that not even the half of the examined start-ups meet the conditions for a defined brand identity similar to what the literature review suggests. Therefore we find it critical to mention the necessity of start-ups in building a sound brand identity during the early stages of their operation, as it will provide distinctiveness to the brand, consistency in all of the communicating activities, guidance for business development and an "eternal" asset to the company (Kapferer, 2012; Melin, 2002; Rode & Vallaster, 2005; Aaker, 2010; De Chernatony, 2001). On a start-up context, Rode & Vallaster (2005) further argue that brand identity can provide overall success in the brand, but also disappearance from the market if not established.

Regarding brand positioning strategy, empirical evidence demonstrate a very unique phenomenon where all of our B2B firms belong to a genuinely market oriented approach and the majority of our B2C companies are part of a truly brand oriented one. Justifying this distinctive result, we assume that the main factor of this phenomenon could only be the nature

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of the industries as such. In the B2B field, companies mostly try to bridge a gap on the market and provide a solution. Thus, a market oriented approach seems more suitable. On the contrary in the B2C field, differentiation through the identity/personality of the brand seems as a one-way street. Competition among B2C brands is fierce and due to product imitation problems, brands are in a constant struggle of getting on top of the mind of their prospective customers. Hence, a brand oriented approach appears to be the most appropriate way of positioning and solving such problems.

Finally, the study suggests that the most promising brand building activities are again dissimilar depending on the industry. In particular, B2C companies are making use of more creative and inventive activities such as social media and PR. Whether, B2B companies undertake less fancy activities and they compromise on the power of personal relations and possible WOM (Krake, 2005).

### 6.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In such a limited area of study as branding on start-ups, our research comes to add one little piece to the mosaic of this very under-researched field. Theoretical contributions of this study attempt to add something new and different from the already existing research in the field of branding in an effort to build up theory. Despite the fact that no new model or framework has been created throughout our research, the aim is to shed light and provide a deeper understanding of branding practices in a start-up context. In particular, our goal is to provide knowledge in concepts such as the importance of branding in start-up companies, the brand identity creation process, the brand positioning strategy and the brand building activities utilization of such companies.

First, we reinforce the existing literature from Breciani & Eppler (2010) and Merrilees (2007) by showing that a part of our sample (B2C) finds branding as very important for their growth. On the other hand, Inskip's (2004) findings are also reinforced, showing that B2B companies see no value for branding in their business sector, even though it is highly appreciated as a general concept. Similar with Inskip (2004) we argue that limited knowledge of the entrepreneurs regarding branding, might be the reason behind this situation. Furthermore, working with the existing brand orientation typology model from Wong & Merrilees (2005),

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it is reinforced that B2C companies seem to be more active in regards to branding employment in comparison to B2B firms that neglect it.

Second, our research supports the claims of Rode & Vallaster (2005) that argue for the importance of brand identity on start-companies. Nevertheless, this is the case for only the half of our sample (B2C firms), since the other half (B2B firms) bolster partially the findings of Rode & Vallaster (2005) where brand identity on start-ups is unstructured, but not fluid. Therefore we stress on the difference between the two "forms" of start-ups and we propose that in future researches should be handled differently.

Third, our findings regarding the brand positioning strategy of start-up enterprises give the foundation and a solid ground to a notion that has never been examined before. A clear distinction is evident in our findings showing that B2C companies are mostly positioned as brand oriented, whether B2B companies are purely market oriented. In the case of B2B firms, theory from Urde et al (2011) is also fortified as it has been proved that market orientation is the default setting for newly established brands.

Lastly, in accordance with previous literature (Breciani & Eppler, 2010) our findings indicate that start-ups do not make use of traditional media, but rather prefer other innovate and cost-effective means. Being verified by both researches these patterns might serve as a foundation for establishing theory in brand building activities on start-ups. On the B2C context social media and active web pages are the main tools followed by PR, WOM and other online means. Whether, B2B companies are dependent on personal networks and positive WOM (Krake, 2005; Breciani & Eppler, 2010).

## 6.2. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research study contributes to entrepreneurs and people with entrepreneurial mind on several levels and we believe that they can benefit from our research in order to grow their business.

First, our study serves as a notification for entrepreneurs in order to remind them that if branding is explicitly incorporated into their business strategies, it can provide a valuable and enabling force for the growth of their brands.

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A second significant implication, displays the importance of having developed the three main elements of brand identity – mission and vision, brand promise and core values. Our thesis brings to awareness that even though most of the companies do not have defined all elements of brand identity, they do share them among each other within the frame of their practices. This helps them follow the purpose of the brand and ensure consistency. We further suggest that B2C companies should work on defining their core values as it was shown that they exist in an unstructured form but not defined, and this can create confusion within the organizations when the number of employees will grow. Meanwhile B2B companies should work on developing all three elements and abide by them in order to achieve coherency in all of their activities.

Furthermore, our research provides a significant base of comparison for entrepreneurs regarding employed brand positioning strategies. Entrepreneurs should be aware that the way they project themselves in public, has an effect on their customers' perception of the brand. Their image should therefore be consistent with the values they are willing to portray for their brands. Start-ups can benefit by understanding the alternatives in positioning their brand, but can also compare with how other start-ups (our sample) of their field position on the market and get a better idea of direction.

Recognised patterns among the two examined fields (B2C & B2B) in brand building activities are another important managerial implication. The recognized activities for B2C and B2B areas can be used as a guiding light for entrepreneurs so as to easily spread the word about their existence and build awareness for their brands. In addition, they can also identify the most cost-effective tools in an effort to maximize the yield of their already limited budget. For B2B we also suggest to make a more active and creative use of their websites as web-pages create the first impression to prospective customers when they search for the brand. Lastly, both industries should take the advantage of creative and innovative activities such as creating events, launching online campaigns through social media and employing SEO tactics to build up their brands and to be found easier within the web.

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Finally, we want to point out some additional recommendations for entrepreneurs and start-up founders, in an effort to help them having an easier management of their brands and their business models:

- People are mostly visual creatures and are therefore attracted to appealing products that can be associated with their personality. Branding can provide you with the advantage of having more distinctive products that differentiates from the competitors.
- Branding is more than a logo and a brand name. Take some time to learn about it before you launch your business. It can provide you a long term competitive advantage and an eternal asset for your company.
- Internal branding is not an expensive process in which you need to invest capital. It just needs organization, good structure and communication within the company.
- Use already established models for the creation of your brand identity, such as Urde's (2013) CBIM and Kapferer's (2012) Brand Identity Prism that will ensure consistency in brand's communications and guidance across all branding and marketing activities.
- External branding is not only advertising, you can start with a good packaging and also employ other more affordable activities such as WOM, social media, events etc.
- Make sure you always brand your products and do it consistently. It is a missed opportunity when selling your products without communicating the brand.
- One of the examined start-ups is now facing the problem of re-branding by being a "product brand" to a "source brand". If you imagine having more than one product from the beginning, try to establish your corporate brand first.

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- Write down the values you have in your mind about the brand and communicate them as much as possible. If they are only in your mind they can never help you. Externalizing them however, can eventually create associations between these values and your brand.
- Examine the possibilities of cooperating with a bigger brand that can help you engage in bigger projects but also bring you a greater recognition.
- When engaging in a global market, think about advertising online through YouTube or Facebook ads. Such channels can offer you a greater range of exposure than traditional advertising.

### 6.3. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

We believe that our thesis has come up with very interesting findings regarding the branding practices of Swedish start-ups however we acknowledge that the study also has its limitations. First of all, our sample was limited to the region of Skåne and specifically to start-ups being part of Ideon Science Park in Lund. Therefore as Bryman & Bell (2007) suggest, the findings of our research are being constrained and no conclusions can be drawn for a general population. Additionally, the most well-known problem in qualitative research is that the findings cannot be generalized (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Taking in the account that only six start-ups from a specific region of Sweden have participated in our study, seems difficult to speak on behalf of all the existing Swedish start-ups. Further research can expand on the topic by increasing the sample to an extent where definite patterns can emerge. Additionally, selecting start-ups from the same industry might reveal industry specific motifs in a bigger scale than our study and allow a clearer distinction among two fields (B2C and B2B start-ups).

Moreover, we believe that a part of our sample might have portrayed a different image of their companies in relation to their branding practices, so as to project a more favourable image. Also, one of the companies requested a definition of branding before we started the interview which might have served as guiding force in the answers of the specific participant.

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In relation to the selection of brand positioning strategy, we believe that further research should be employed so as to have a vivid picture of the situation and be able to suggest the most prominent positioning school of thought in relation to the brands' nature and field (Urde & Koch, 2014).

The subjective interpretation of the analysis of the data that solely relies on our personal understanding of empirical evidence might also be considered as somehow biased and therefore limit the validity of our research (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Last but not least, we suggest an investigation of Swedish start-up branding practices on different life cycle stages, as we assume that the examined companies might have a different approach towards branding if they were on a different stage of their existence. For example we noticed that one start-up of our sample is on a transition strategy regarding brand positioning, so we assume that their responses might have been different one year earlier or later. In addition two other companies were operating less than a year therefore we expect that their perceptions in regards to branding practices might not be the same in the following years. Investigating branding practices on different phases of a start-up, from the early existence up to its late maturity, could reveal patterns for a more successful brand management for each phase and therefore provide a better guidance to aspiring entrepreneurs.

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### 8. APPENDICES

#### 8.1. APPENDIX 1

##### INTERVIEW GUIDE

###### *Branding Importance*

How would you define terms such as “brand” and “branding”?

What do the words brand and branding mean to you?

Do these concepts play any role on your business strategy and if, how?

How important are they for the growth of your firm?

###### *Brand Identity*

What is this that your company/brand stands for?

What is this that it makes you unique, and different from your competitors?

What does it motivates you to function besides making profit?

Does your brand have a vision?

Is there a brand promise that guides organizational decisions?

Which are the core values that differentiate you from your competitors?

###### *Brand Positioning*

According to which factors do you position your brand?

To what extent your brand identity guides your decisions?

To what extent consumer’s views and wishes shape your decisions?

###### *Brand Building Activities*

How do you create brand awareness for your brand?

Which are the activities that you undertake?

In which ways are you building your brand?

Do you have a certain routine on your brand building activities?