Branding in Public Transportation: Campfires and Beyond

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study how organizations in public transportation are viewing branding. We aim for this thesis to acknowledge branding as a tool to create a strong brand. This thesis is of importance due to the influence public organizations within transportation hold for Sweden to reach their sustainability goals. By creating a strong brand public organizations could attract more consumers to use public transportation and ultimately decrease harmful gas emissions. We wish to bring forward potential challenges and advantages these organization are facing related to branding. To fulfil the purpose of this research four interviews were conducted with representatives from organizations in public transportation. Empirical material was gathered through the interviews concerning questions in the categories: marketing, branding, competition and consumers. When analyzing the empirical material, previous theories were taken into consideration to be able to explain the outcomes and increase validity of the findings.

The findings have shown that organizations in public transportation are in a process of realizing the potential benefits branding can bring to their organization. However, several challenges are also posed. Not forgetting advantages and opportunities if these organizations are able to incorporate efficient branding practices. The need for internal structure and creation of a brand personality and identity is urged for these organizations. Lastly, we would like to make a theoretical contribution to the existing research gap of branding in public organizations.

Keywords: Marketing, Branding, Public Organization, Transportation, Sustainability

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

One of the largest current threats that is challenging life how we know it is climate change (National Geographic, 2019). The disastrous effects of this phenomenon that have started to accelerate alongside increased heavy usage of fossil fuels needed to sustain our rapid development are caused directly by humankind's longing for comfort and profit (IPCC, 2018; NASA, n.d.; UN Environment, n.d.). One of the consequences of climate change is an increase in temperature which has been causing extreme weather, risk for the human- and wildlife, cost to the society and the economy as well as the melting of icecaps and glaciers (European Commission, n.d.a). The rise in temperature in turn is caused by the increased level of gas emissions that are needed to satisfy the energy levels we must support to power our infrastructure (NASA, n.d; National Geographic, 2019). These problems are caused first and foremost by humans (European Commission, n.d.b) and in order for the following generations to be able to live on this planet, the modern generation drastically needs to change their behaviour (Williamson, Satre-Meloy, Velasco, & Green, 2018).

The human activity of transportation equals 20.45% of the total amount of C02 emissions and therefore holds a considerable impact on the modern climate change (The World Bank, 2014; Ritchie & Roser, 2017). In order to reduce this number the amount of traveling conducted by car and airplanes needs to decrease and consumers are urged to choose a more sustainable alternative for transportation. In Sweden, domestic transportation equals approximately 30% of the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the country (Trafikverket, 2017). An initiative indulged by the Swedish parliament is to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions by 70% in the transportation sector between 2010 and 2030 (Naturvårdsverket, 2017). Along those lines, the EU has set common objectives of reaching a target of 20% of renewable energy consumption used for all transportation in 2020 (European Commission, n.d.c). However, in order for consumers to consider public transportation as the better option, these organizations need to motivate consumers to choose their service. Alongside educating the public of the consequences, frequent air and gas-fueled car travel have, the companies that operate the sustainable options need to indulge in promoting themselves as well. Due to companies needing to make a profit in our current economic system, the organizations that hold the reigns at this point will not just give up their position because it is better for the environment. This self promotion, which gives for example public transport organizations the necessary tools to compete, can be made possible through branding. Branding is a clever way for organizations to state who they are and what they stand for while defining why the organization is the better choice (Roper & Fill, 2012). Several industries have realized the benefits of marketing and branding. Big automobile companies such as Volkswagen or Volvo constantly fight for market share. Losing exactly this share or having to produce sustainable options themselves, is unfortunately not in the interest of their bottom line and therefore advocates of *"going green"* need to be able to compete on the same level when it comes to branding and marketing efforts.

In order to do so, train and bus companies can incorporate and develop branding practices to create positive associations towards their brand and make these organizations the obvious choice for consumers by creating favorable and positive associations and ultimately a strong brand.
Just as more *"traditional"* companies have realized the importance of marketing and advertising and have therefore established marketing departments filled with a great amount of employees to build as strong brands as possible to beat the competition, the sustainable options need to do the same, if not more (Gromark & Melin, 2013). Just because it is better for future generations will not be enough of argument to change people's behaviors. Clear and defined incentives need to be set the ultimately favor the 'green' choice without any question.

Considering the importance of the transportation industry in terms of its impact on the future and overall global sustainability, there is a clear lack of research in the field within branding and the public transportation sector. As this sector is heavily invested by governmental bodies, it directly showcases the efforts countries are making to make a change. Due to this fact, the sector that serves as the core for this research mirrors initiatives taken by governments to compete with the private sector.

1.2 Problematization

Branding is a relatively new concept within the public sector which has been incorporated from the increased focus emphasized importance of consumer-influence on organizations and the need to remain competitive. In the past, public organization has not had the same need to implement and work with branding practices, let alone implement them and motivate employees within the organization due to monopoly-positions within the market for example. Currently, these organizations are beginning to realize the benefits of implementing practices from the private sector while at the same time understanding the need to earn financial revenues, as well as create competitive advantage to hinder consumers from choosing other travel options such as planes. While bearing in mind, public organizations in general but also within transportation have been faced with scrutiny and negative associations from consumers. Therefore there is existing a need for these organization to create positive brand image and associations to attract more consumers.

This topic is important to study considering a marketshift within the public transportation sector. From this shift, a need for the organizations has been created to get their marketing and branding activities aligned and become more centralized around consumers (Gromark & Melin, 2013). The organizations need to increase revenues and attract consumers and ultimately contribute to reaching the goals set by the Swedish government concerning sustainability. Emphasizing, public transportation is one of the most vital aspects in order to lower gas emissions for a sustainable future for society. From this, it will be studied and presented how organizations within this sector are viewing and implementing branding in order to create a positive brand image and associations from consumers and related stakeholders. It will also be studied if and how these organization are working internally to create a positive external image of their brand.

Research question:

RQ 1 : *How are organizations in public transportation viewing and manage branding to create a brand image from the public?*

RQ 2 : *What possible challenges and advantages are these organizations faced with concerning branding?*

1.3 Research Purpose

Organizations in public transportation hold power to influence climate change and sustainability by increasing the number of consumers utilizing their service. We wish to acknowledge that this research holds several purposes. Firstly, the purpose is to increase our knowledge of branding in public transportation. Secondly, study the potential advantages and challenges organizations of this character are facing concerning branding.

Lastly, contributing to literature concerning branding in public organisations and additionally influence these organizations to acknowledge the positive effects from branding for the organization.

1.4 Aimed Contribution

This research aims to make a theoretical contribution to the field of branding in public organizations. From presenting existing models and literature it is aimed to contribute to existing theory with perspective from organizations in public transportation. Bearing in mind, there is a gap in research in the above mentioned field. Moreover, we would like to contribute by presenting how public organisations can incorporate practices from branding-literature to create a strong brand to ultimately become a desirable and obvious choice for consumers. Moreover, it will be presented what these organizations are currently doing while proposing areas of improvement which would account for the practical contribution of this research. Considering if organisations within this sector were able to brand themselves in a way that raises additional awareness about the current climate-situation then it is possible that consumers increasingly would opt for public transportation-options. Mainly, this study seeks to contribute with how public transportation organizations can create a desirable brand image in the minds of the consumers in order to increase travelling with public transportation instead of planes or cars.

1.5 Delimitations

The main delimitation of this research is focusing solely on organisations within public transportation in Sweden. Moreover, the four organizations that were chosen for this research was based on their influence over the Swedish public transportation sector and sustainability goals. We chose to gather empirical material from managers within the organizations that work with marketing, branding and/ or communications. Therefore we sought to acquire opinions from representatives knowledgeable of both the described topic held from an organizational viewpoint.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010, p. 26), marketing is *"managing profitable customer relationships."* Furthermore, marketing aims to create value for the customer and thereby gain benefit in return (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). To add to Kotler and Armstrong's (2010) definition, Forsey (2019) definition entails a deeper understanding of the concept. Forsey (2019, p. 1) defines marketing as *"the process of getting people interested in your company's product or service. This happens through marketing research, analysis, and understanding your ideal customer's interests. Marketing pertains to all aspects of a business, including product development, distribution methods, sales, and advertising."*

Marketing and branding are often confused since they overlap in several ways. Both marketing and branding should be integrated to receive the best results. If the two concepts are not fully supported by another, then neither is fully effective. (Silva, 2019) Silva uses an example that explains the correlation between the two sufficiently:

"Think of the brand as the foundation of a house. The steadier the foundation, the stronger the house will be. Put down a weak foundation, and the house will fall over. Put down a strong foundation but no house… you are homeless."

Silvia further explains that living in the house will be more enjoyable, and it will become even stronger, the more effort a company spends on branding and marketing. It is common that companies go straight to marketing in order to increase sales immediately and in the process, the organization either bypass or spend minimal effort into branding. Creating marketing without a brand is extremely difficult because then the organization has no clear voice, message, focus, or differentiation compared to others. Spending money and time on marketing without a clear brand will only produce inefficient marketing with most likely no result. However, the same applies when creating a brand without marketing. If marketing is not integrated, then consumers will never have the ability to recognize the brand. (Silva, 2019)

2.2 Brand Definition

In today's marketplace, consumers are faced with several choices, which puts pressure on companies. It is no longer enough to provide high qualities, excellent value, and availability to its consumers to secure sustainable success in the long run. Branding can give value to the consumers and assist an organization in differentiating it from competitors. To be able to achieve related advantages of branding, it is vital to understand what a brand is and its importance to the

modern-day business. The creation of brands has seen a significant rise in importance because it aims at quantifying the intangible value that is associated when choosing products or services. (Roper & Fill, 2012) Due to the relatively recent emergence of this concept, multiple definitions and interpretations are considered in this thesis with the aim to provide the reader with a clear view of what a brand means.

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) a brand is *"A name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors."* (Maurya & Mishra, 2012, p. 123). Whereas this definition provides a good overview of what aspects are included to create a brand, it shows a view that several other authors interpret differently. Kapferer (2012, p.7) states that *"brands are intangible assets, assets that produce added benefits for the business."* Additionally, he explains that a company's brand is a crucial part of its assets, and it should be exploited as a critical component in every strategy (Kapferer, 2012). Authors agree that an essential part of a brand is to differentiate its products from competitors (Roper & Fill, 2012). From having a strong brand, it provides the products or services with an individuality that separates it from competitors (Roper & Fill, 2012). If a brand does not face direct competition in its own product category then the brand can still face indirect competition in a broader category, even though they do not hold the same product-attributes (Keller, 1993). For example, trains may not hold direct facing competitors, but indirectly, they might compete with other types of transportation, such as cars and airlines (Keller, 1993).

The definition that we considered to be most relevant for this thesis is supported by Christensen and Askegaard, mentioned in Rode and Vallaster (2005, p. 121), who determines that a brand is the: *"Total sum of organizational signs that are being transferred to its various audiences: through the core values for which the organization stands, the behavior of employees, through all sets of symbolic representation regarding graphic designs and finally, via all corporate communication toward internal and external stakeholders of the company."* Since this definition stresses the importance and co-existence of all stakeholders involved in brand creation and because the public transport sector offers high complexity regarding stakeholder involvement. It is determined that this is the most applicable view of branding.

All shown definitions above conjointly stress the necessity of a brand when distinguishing a company's competitive advantage and uniqueness within the marketplace. The brand is, therefore, more than just a product or service, but it represents a collection of both tangible and intangible factors that reflect the business (Roper & Fill, 2012; Clifton & Simmons, 2003). A brand consists of both visual and non-visual aspects that are equally important. Visual aspects could be the following: name, logo, design, symbols, color, and typeface, and if these are coherent, then it is easier for a consumer to recognize the brand. However, there are also non-visual aspects of branding which comprise of aspects such as employees and the working environment. With the help of marketing and communication, a common perception and understanding of the values can be created in the minds of the consumer. (Clifton & Simmons, 2003) Successful brands can meet customers' expectations and deliver trust (Roper & Fill, 2012). If the buyer is satisfied, then a promise is kept, and trust is generated (Clifton & Simmons, 2003).

2.3 Brand Equity

Brand Equity is introduced in this thesis because it explains a brand's value in terms of consumers attitudes and associations. This value is determined by the level of positive or negative associations that the consumer have with the brand. A significant reason for why organizations should take brand equity into account, is because the investments made into marketing and branding could improve their position in the market. From this, organizations can centralize the consumer and create successful marketing activities. (Keller, 1993)

The effectiveness of marketing communications can increase through obtaining high levels of brand awareness and a positive brand image. Moreover, the success of a marketing program is reflected in the creation of favorable brand associations, which means that consumers consider the brand to have attributes and benefits that is according to their preferences and needs. From this, a positive brand attitude is formed. Customer-based brand equity has occurred when a consumer holds strong, favorable, and unique associations to a brand. (Keller, 1993)

2.4 Brand Attitudes

Brand attitudes are explained as a function of associated attributes and benefits that is salient for a brand (Keller, 1993). The different brand attitudes consumers hold towards the attributes of a product or service can be related to beliefs as well as the functional and experiential benefits (Zeithaml, 1988). Moreover, brand attitudes held by consumers can also be referred to personal beliefs about attributes that are not related to the product itself but holds symbolic benefits (Keller, 1993). Attitudes can serve as a value-expressive function and allow individuals to express their self-concept (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, associations can differ depending on their favorability, strength, and uniqueness (Keller, 1993).

2.5 Corporate Brand and Product Brand

In this section, the central concept of a corporate brand as well as the difference between a product brand and corporate brand will be discussed. Organizations in the public transportation sector and other industries can choose to market the individual product or service they are providing, or the organization as a whole. Therefore, it is essential to understand these differences when directing marketing and branding activities. Product branding and corporate branding are related in that corporate brands add economic value to a product or service offered by the business. In corporate branding, every aspect, from employees attitudes to supply chain management, reflect on the brand and thereby the business. Product branding, on the other hand, only focus on the product and its related attributes. (Hatch & Schultz, 2003)

Another different aspect between product and corporate branding is the difference in the relationship it tries to create with customers in terms of attraction and support. Product brands tend to be targeted at consumers or customers, whereas corporate brands also play an essential role in the image that an organization holds towards community members, investors, and all other stakeholders involved. Instead of focusing on the consumer through a variety of separate products and services with different product names, corporate branding combines all of the stakeholders affected by relating their products and services provided to the corporation's overall image. (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Balmer, 2001)

According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), a corporate brand need sophisticated organizational practices compared to product branding. The product brand can be handled in the marketing department, while corporate branding needs organization-wide support. Furthermore, a product brand emphasizes a short term strategy to attract customers through the present image the company portrays. A corporate brand, on the other hand, is determined by a long term strategy that pulls from both the past and future of the organization to ultimately create lasting relationships with stakeholders. Finally, a corporate brand can increase the company's recognition, visibility, and reputation in ways that are not possible by a product brand. (Hatch & Schultz, 2003)

2.6 Branding in The Public Sector

The interest in branding in both private and public sector has increased in recent years (Gromark & Melin, 2013). Public organizations can be defined as organizations that are established, owned, and financed by the public and typically serves a public interest. In recent years there has been a shift towards an increased focus on performance and results in the public sector. (Leijerholt, Biedenbach, & Hultén, 2018) It is stated in the article by Leijerholt et al., (2018) that public organizations are often more dependent on the quality of their service they provide, but also how they manage to live up to values such as equality and security. Moreover, public organization has often been scrutinized for its operations and business processes. (Leijerholt et al., 2018)

Gromark and Melin (2013) describe in their research-article how principles in the private sector can be implemented into the private sector. However, because of differences in the public and private institutions, a market-orientated approach can be complicated. For example, in public organizations, customer satisfaction is not necessarily a value to them, but the contributed long-term value for society is more emphasized. (Gromark & Melin, 2013) Additionally, it is also highlighted by Brewer (2007) that the public sector can benefit from consider citizens, not only as customers, but in a stakeholder-role.

A vital stakeholder-group to consider is the consumer and the values they hold in order to build a strong brand. The society and its citizens continuously evaluate the organizational operations in the public sector, and therefore, it is vital to take into account what attitudes they hold towards

the brand. It is further explained that consumers value a product or service that can benefit them on a personal level rather than the society as a whole. If an organization's directions are not defined and harbored, the risk of wasting resources on brand building is increasing since the process of building a brand may create uncertainty both externally and internally. (Gromark & Melin, 2013)

2.7 Dimensions of Brand-Building

In the section below, brand personality, brand identity, brand image, and corporate reputation will be explained. A model made by Roper and Fill (2012) will outline how the different parts are interrelated to create a strong brand. Furthermore, this model is presented through two figures to explain the same concept, although in a complementing way to understand the dimensions of the concepts more accurately. Figure 1, demonstrate the blocks necessary to create a desired reputation and ultimately a strong brand. The figure also emphasize in what end an organization need to start with for the process to work efficiently. Each dimension will be explained below beginning with brand personality. This model refers to building a corporate brand, therefore the terms stated as corporate personality, for example, occasionally referred to as brand personality throughout the thesis.
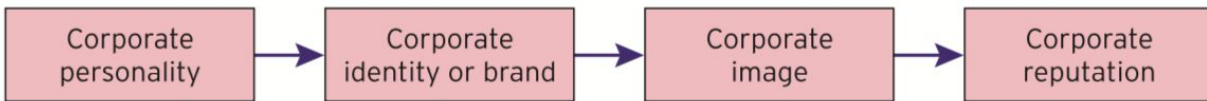

Figure 1. The building blocks of corporate reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012).

Figure 2 showcase how brand identity, brand image, and reputation are related. However, this model also includes one more block, a person's prior experience and values within the particular industry, and together with corporate image form reputation.
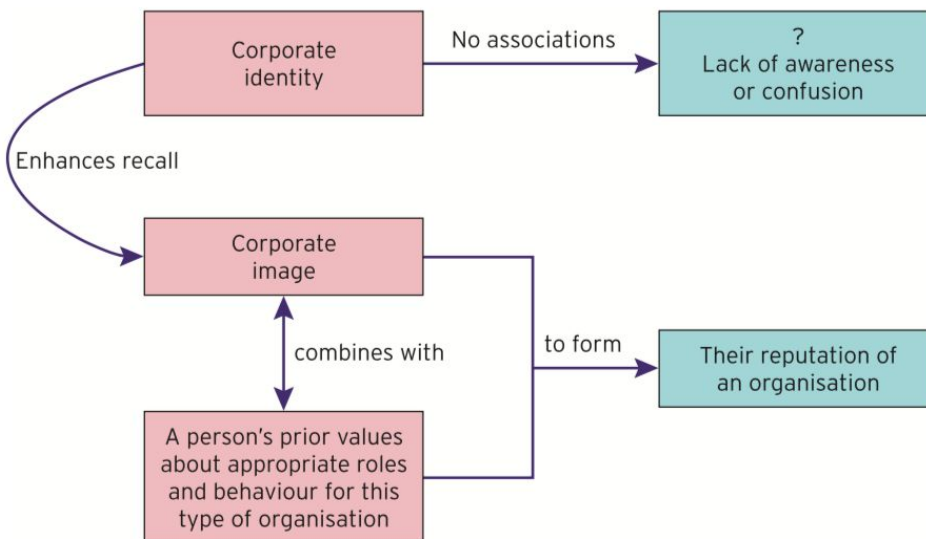

Figure 2. Corporate Reputation (Dowling, 1994)

2.7.1 Brand Personality

In order to build a strong brand, a company's first step is to define the organization's personality. Brand personality is referred to as the core nature of an organization (Arora & Stoner, 2009). Aaker (1997, p. 347) explains brand personality as *"the set of human characteristics associated with a brand."* To provide an example, Coca-Cola's personality traits are real, cool, all-American, whereas Pepsi is viewed as exciting, young, and hip. Brand personality puts value on the intangible aspects such as symbolic and emotional aspects that catch consumer appeal and influence purchase behavior. (Aaker, 1997) Identifying corporate personality traits is a prerequisite of successfully identifying the brand identity (Roper & Fill, 2012).

2.7.2 Brand Identity

The second step of the brand building process is to develop a brand identity (Shirazi, Lorestani, & Mazidi, 2013). With the help of a brand identity, a business can influence the way internal and external stakeholders, perceive the brand (Shirazi et al., 2013; Roper & Fill, 2012).

According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007) questions that companies should ask themselves when determining their identity include *"Who are we?"*, *"What do we stand for?"*, *"What is our core purpose?"*, and *"What does it mean to be involved in this company?"* Posing these questions creates a process that significantly aids the organizations in the creation of a shared belief in the business, which in turn supports communication and also makes stakeholders feel that they are involved in the company's decisions. (Riel & Fombrun, 2007)

According to Kapferer (2012), a brand is more than the name of business operation. The vision that is needed to fuel the creation of goods and services under that specific name plays a more crucial role because it eventually leads to the creation of a brand identity. Such an identity materializes through the actual cult following, loyalty, and advocates within the consumer base. Specifying a brand's identity helps a company find its place in the market place by defining its uniqueness and value, which necessarily leads to appropriate positioning compared to competitors. In traditional economic literature, the primary sources of value creation and wealth are capital, labor, and land. However, those forms of leverage do not explain why some products are sold at a price three times higher than competitors products when quality, efficiency, and features are the same. (Kapferer, 2012) According to Shirazi et al. (2013), this phenomenon can be explained by the identity that different brands create for their customers. In this instance, Shirazi et al. (2013) further argue that when a brand has a strong identity, then the brand offers prestige which it makes it appear more prestigious and distinctive compared to regular brands. Modern customers want to identify with the products and services they purchase, and brands are the medium they use to express themselves. Each brand stands for a different set of values and therefore allows consumers to demonstrate their beliefs by choosing to obtain their services or

not. (Shirazi et al., 2013) However, corporate identity is the way an organization is viewed by all its stakeholders and not just its consumer base (Roper & Fill, 2012).

The organization, as well as customers, utilize the benefit of the brand and the brand's role in creating added value is equally important as other factors such as technology and materials used (Shirazi et al., 2013). Furthermore, Shirazi et al. (2013) explain that if a customer is happy and satisfied with a purchase of a product or service, then he or she will be more likely to repeat the purchase or obtain other products and services from the same brand in the future. Therefore, companies should focus on communicating their brand identity instead of spending excessive resources and time on promotion efforts that fail to communicate the brand's identity. (Shirazi et al., 2013)

If a strong corporate brand is created, then it is vital that the internal identity is based upon true values and a visible value system. The employees are an important factor in identity creation, and they need to understand the identity and what it stands for. Furthermore, if the employees do not understand the purpose, the direction, and the reason for the brand identity, then convincing other members in the value chain such as consumer will be challenging. Furthermore, all organizations have an identity, but some choose to manage their identity, and others do not. The result of not maintaining a brand identity is that it misleads stakeholders and leads to untapped potential in the market it operates in. (Roper & Fill, 2012)

2.7.3 Corporate Brand Identity Matrix

Organizations can incorporate the corporate brand identity matrix to define their brand identity. Public organizations can be very complex and challenging to grasp, and therefore this model was chosen because it can assist in providing an overview of the critical aspects and dimensions that needs to consider when identifying an organization's brand identity. We wish to bring forward that to the extent of our knowledge this framework has not been used on public organizations before. Therefore, it is not evident that the outcome will be the same for an public organization as for a company in the private sector.

The Corporate Brand Identity Matrix (CBIM) can be used to define and build a business' brand identity. With the help of a set of structured questions about the company, the nine elements which outline the completeness of a corporate brand identity can be answered. In each element illustrated in the graph below, a specific question in regards to that element is showcased. The matrix is comprised of three layers: internal elements, external elements, and a middle layer that bridges both internal and external aspects. The bottom layer presents three internal elements of an organization, and these are mission and vision, culture, and competence. The internal aspects are derived from the business' values and operational truths. Mission and vision explain what engages and inspires the company while culture describes the attitudes and work ethic. The last element, competence, reveals a company's capabilities in terms of hard facts and figures. (Greyser & Urde, 2019)

As mentioned above, the three elements on the top are external components: value proposition, relationship, and positioning. These are related to in what way a business would like to be perceived by external stakeholders and customers. The value proposition explains the key offerings and the way it should appeal to customers. Relationships reveal the desired nature of the relations with stakeholders and customers and positioning touches upon the desired position in the market and the heart of the consumer and stakeholders. (Greyser & Urde, 2019)

The middle layer is comprised of factors showing how the internal and external elements interact with each other by determining modes of expression, brand core, and personality. Personality determines the corporate brand's character traits and how stakeholders view them. Expression, on the other hand, derives from verbal and visual appearances that are used in the outreach of the brand. The brand core sums up the core values by answering questions such as what the brand stands for and what promise it seeks to fulfill towards its stakeholders. Furthermore, the core is the essence of the business identity, and therefore, it is located in the heart of the matrix. When filling out the matrix, management can start with the internal elements and then move towards the external ones while simultaneously crafting the middle layer. When filling out the middle layer in the model, the brand core should be recognized last and this is because all the elements surrounding the core value will build an echo and provide the answer for the brand core. Later on, the brand core will shape the surrounding eight elements. When all the nine elements are filled out and are coherent, a corporate brand identity has been established. (Greyser & Urde, 2019)

EXTERNAL	VALUE PROPOSITION What are our key offerings, and how do we want them to appeal to customers and other stakeholders?	RELATIONSHIPS What should be the nature of our relationships with key customers and other stakeholders?	POSITION What is our intended position in the market and in the hearts and minds of key customers and other stakeholders?
EXTERNAL/ INTERNAL	EXPRESSION What is distinctive about the way we communicate and express ourselves and makes it possible to recognize us at a distance?	BRAND CORE What do we promise, and what are the core values that sum up what our brand stands for?	PERSONALITY What combination of human characteristics or qualities forms our corporate character?
INTERNAL	MISSION AND VISION What engages us (mission)? What is our direction and inspiration (vision)?	CULTURE What are our attitudes, and how do we work and behave?	COMPETENCES What are we particularly good at, and what makes us better than the competition?

2.7.4 Brand Image

As mentioned above, brand identity reflects the whole organization. Therefore, brand identity is internal and can be created and utilized by an organization. Brand image, on the other hand, is an external factor and depends on how the consumers perceive the brand. (Plummer, 2000)

According to Bernstein (1984) mentioned in Roper and Fill (2012, p. 36), *"the image does not exist in the organization but in those that perceive the organization."* The world interprets the brand with the help of perceptions and experiences and creates their image of the brand based on what is presented to them, and it is ultimately the brand image. An organization can influence the way the brand is perceived with the help of the brand identity, but it cannot choose the desired brand image. (Plummer, 2000) Ultimately, the image is a result of combinations of multiple elements and can be essentially explained as the beliefs, attitudes, values that individuals hold of the organization. Therefore, multiple images may exist due to peoples different values and beliefs but also their experience with the brand. (Roper & Fill, 2012)

2.7.5. Brand Reputation

Brand reputation reflects upon the brand image over a long period (Roper & Fill, 2012). Reputation is described as *"the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something"* and *"the estimation in which a person or thing is held, especially by the community or the public generally"* (Dictionary, n.d.; English Oxford Living Dictionaries, n.d.). These descriptions showcase that reputation is a combination of impressions and views from a more significant amount of people rather than an individual's own opinion. However, an organization's reputation is based on a variety of stakeholders overall opinion and not only the consumer. From this, reputation can be useful when measuring the view of the brand from the constituents and ultimately estimate the effectiveness of an organization's communication with these participants. (Roper & Fill, 2012) Connected to branding, corporate reputation is defined by Dowling (1986) and mentioned by van Riel and Fombrun (2007, p. 44) as *"the set of meanings by which a company is known and through which people describe, remember, and relate to it. It is the net result of the interaction of a person's beliefs, ideas, feelings, and impressions about the company."*

Organizations with strong reputation provide loyal customers and a higher share price. Studies show that organizations with strong corporate reputation outperform competitors financially but also by customers satisfaction. However, it is crucial that companies constantly maintain their reputation to ensure that a decline does not occur. Furthermore, a company can have a strong corporate brand with high appeal and awareness but a weak reputation and also the other way around. (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Roper & Fill, 2012) An example of a company that has a strong brand but a weak reputation is Ryanair. The company is in the minds of the consumer when it comes to low cost and low fare, but no customers are pleased with the experience

provided by the company (Brown, 2006). Brown (2006) refer the brand to a love and hate relationship with its customers.

2.7.6 Industry Reputation

Reputation can also occur on multiple levels. Industry reputation can be explained as the collective perception in regards to social, economic, and environmental impact hold by the general public and stakeholders. Events and action caused by either member of the industry or outsiders can affect the reputation of an industry either positively or negatively. Mini-cabs industry, for example, is suffering from a poor reputation that affects every company within that sector. From this, attitudes in a product category can potentially be an essential determinant concerning consumer response. For example, if a consumer is under the impression that train companies have delayed departures, it is very probable that the same consumer might think this about all train-companies from this experience with one. However, the opposite can also occur when positive publicity affects the rest of the members of the industry. An organization can either work individually or together with other industry members to change industry reputation. Industry members can jointly plan actions and mobilize resources together to manage industry reputation. This type of strategy is referred to as collective reputation management since all members are collectively taking steps and influencing behavior. These actions can include joint research, information sharing, establishing codes of conduct, performing industry advertising. (Winn, MacDonald, & Zietsma, 2008)

2.8 Core Values

To fully comprehend the importance and impact of core values, a definition will be provided to define and understand what they are. An organization's mission statement aims to describe the purpose and overarching goal of conducting business. Core values explain what the organization stands for and define the direction of their business. Moreover, core values can be referred to as *"the heart of an organization's culture that generates sense and purpose."* (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008) These values are distinct guiding principles that are deeply rooted in an organization (Yoganathan, McLeay, Osburg, & Hart, 2018). According to Urde (2003), core values can be explained as a comprehensive term that sums up the brand identity and ties an organization's vision and mission together. Furthermore, the core values can be explained as a *"rule of life"* that set the direction for behavior, leadership, communication processes, and product development (Urde, 2003). One could argue that core values hold an organization together as it expands, diversifies, and decentralizes. While business strategies and practices are often changing to fit in a fast moving world, the core values should remain fixed. (van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006)

An example of a organization that has an established and strong brand with clear core values is Volvo. Volvo's core values are safety, quality, and concern for the environment. Safety is

Volvo's primary core value and has been communicated both internally and externally over a long period of time. In every decision made, even design-wise, then the question arises *"how does this affect safety."* Even in the minds of the consumer, many associate Volvo with safety, although other companies in the automobile market might be as safe or even safer but do still not carry the association. (Urde, 2003)

To build a strong brand, it is vital to define the core values (Urde, 2003). If an organization create core values only based upon external stakeholder such as customers, the employees might not agree with the association and therefore not be motivated by the values that are supposed to guide the organization. If the core values are only built from within an organization, then the company might have the opposite challenge. That customer cannot associate to the created values. Therefore, the core values should be on the borderline between internal and external stakeholders and include values that engage both stakeholders group. It is crucial that both stakeholder groups understand what the core values are and what they represent to create unity and coherence. (Yoganathan et al., 2018)

From creating effective core values, a governmental organization can empower employees to reach their highest level of personal aspirations and thereby contribute to a more effective organization (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). According to Ferguson and Milliman (2008, p. 441) *"effective core organizational values as a unique set of organizational wide beliefs and ideas that intrinsically influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees to achieve institutional and greater societal goals as well as promote employee attainment of personal aspirations."*

If a core value is given to an employee without it having a deeper meaning to this person, it may be hard for the employee to live up to it and act upon it in different situations. Core values are supposed to motivate an organization's members in day-to-day actions and work as a tool for direction in both good and bad times (Yoganathan et al., 2018). Furthermore, an organization should try to limit itself to a few core values and not try to embrace too many. When to many core values are created, it is challenging for organizations to communicate all effectively and create any recognition in the minds of the employees and consumers. (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008) This does not mean that a core value cannot include multiple messages, as long as these messages are stated. A guideline can be created to help internal and external stakeholders to understand and comprehend both the core values and the messages that are associated with them. If core values are too hard to understand and comprehend, then many people will have a hard time to follow or even accept them. (Yoganathan et al., 2018)

Researchers have identified three ways of how core values can impact an organization; decision making, motivate and inspire people, and provide moral guidance. Core values can help organizations take a hard decision and guide behavior. When a hard decision needs to be made, an organization can lean back and look at the core values and make a decision based on them. Furthermore, this also provides reasoning or explanation of why individual decisions have been made. Core values can also force a company to act in a socially and ethical responsive way on all levels of the organization. (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008) Even though researchers have stated the importance of core values, many organizations have failed to exploit them successfully. Communicating the meaning of the core values frequently is a requirement for people to

remember them. The closer related the values are to what the business does, the better they are. (van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006)

2.9 Brand Consistency

In order for both internal and external stakeholders to understand what a brand stands for, it is important that the core values and the brand image are consistent and coherent. Otherwise, this might result in a diffused brand image, and the core values may be misunderstood and thereby create confusion. (Navarro-Bailón, 2011)

Through creating consistency, consumers are able to recall the brand and therefore create top of mind awareness and associations. According to Guzmán, Hakala, Svensson, and Vincze (2012), top-of-mind is explained as the: *"awareness or status that makes a particular brand in a particular product category the first one that consumers recall."*

The consistency can be created with the help of an integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy. According to Navarro-Bailón (2011, p.189), *"an integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategy states that all communication activities should act within the same campaign with a unique voice, a single message and one goal to offer consistency in communication."* Consistency, in this case, refers to the communication of the brand identity among various means over a long period. When the brand identity is incorporated in all communication messages on the various means, it is easier for the consumer to recognize the brand without having to process all information provided in the message. (Navarro-Bailón, 2011) When exposed to brand messages that are in line with consumers expectation, they then do not need to process the given information in-depth. This is occurring from having a high level of consistency among communicated messages. (Delgado‑Ballester, Navarro, & Sicilia, 2012).

The consistency in brand associations is determining the *"cohesiveness"* of brand image, which entails to which extent associations share meaning that makes up the brand image. From this, the said cohesiveness can determine consumers reactions to the brand. It can pose several problems for marketers if the communicated brand identity creates a diffuse brand image in the minds of the consumers from little congruence among brand associations. Ultimately, resulting in a weak brand and financial underperformance. (Keller, 1993)

3. Methodology

In this chapter, a description of the incorporated research-strategy and reasoning will be outlined. To begin, our philosophical stand with regards to Epistemology and Ontology will be explained and how the philosophy has guided us through choosing research strategy, method, and design. The process of data collection and sampling method will be presented and discussed. From this, arguments for selection criteria for participants and the design of interviews are carried out. Lastly, the limitations of the research will be presented.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The philosophical aspect of research is vital to take into consideration because it contributes to understanding how the creation of research activities with outcomes are affected by philosophical factors. Therefore, it presents the relative aspects and interpretation of occurrences extracted from reality. It is also crucial for the researchers to understand their philosophical standpoint to be able to make contributions within the research field. The research aspect holds influence over how the whole process from formulating, interpreting, and analyzing collected data. The ultimate goal is to provide satisfactory answers to given research questions. Therefore, research philosophies clarify how the end results of the research have been attained, as well as the applicability of the research. Moreover, the quality of the research can increase from awareness of philosophical assumptions. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, & Jaspersen, 2018) From understanding philosophical dilemmas, we as researchers can define the research design and from this, apply the most suitable for the research. This chapter is outlined with the aim to provide an understanding for the reader of what is considered acceptable knowledge within the social sciences. This is dependent on the possibility to study the phenomenon at all. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

The two dominating research philosophies are Ontology and Epistemology. Ontology concerns the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality. To be able to research how public organizations view and use branding the stance made was with regards to a relativist ontology; however characteristics from the internal realist ontology is also evident. We have studied the phenomenon and concept of branding; moreover, we have studied different people's attitudes and views concerning branding. From this, the view concerning the topic can differ depending on the person in question. This is in accordance with a relativist standpoint.

Moreover, branding activities of these organization will continuously be affected by actions and activities, and therefore, the truth concerning branding in these organizations is hard to access and obtain in one fixed state. According to the internal realist ontology regardless of people's opinions, what different concepts mean to different individuals it does not alter the reality of their consequences and exist independently from the observer. Moreover, from an internal realist

ontology fact are concrete but is difficult to access directly from which the truth exists but is obscure and difficult to access directly. However, we have taken into consideration that this research has not been solely according to the internal realist ontology but holds perspectives from the relativist ontology as well. We have, to a certain extent, taken views and perspective from people into consideration. These views can vary, which is in accordance with the relativist ontology. Although branding is the main concern of this thesis, which is deemed to remain fixed regardless of people's personal beliefs and opinions. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018)

Epistemology concerns the theory of knowledge and how one can attain and understand knowledge from the world and its existential nature. This research has taken a constructionist standpoint on how to acquire knowledge concerning branding. To gain knowledge of the topic, we have considered aspects and strategies related to branding on how to improve their brand and perceptions from consumers, for instance. However, as Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) suggest, there are overlaps in these positions, which has been evident in this research. Balancing the approaches of being independent of while getting closer to the object that is studied, which is called an engaged style of study. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018)

3.2 Research Strategy

Qualitative research strategy mainly studies human behaviors, opinions, relationships, and beliefs within the social and natural science. The main strength of qualitative research is that it can explain the experiences an individual has concerning a specific topic, more specifically, how and why something has occurred (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). To be able to reach the outlined purpose of this paper, we sought to study the understanding of what marketing and branding entail for the studied organizations. From this, we were able to comprehend what marketing and branding entail for the organizations. Moreover, how this understanding can affect the branding and marketing practices that are then incorporated into the organization. From this, the respondents were able to express their knowledge and beliefs in their own words to provide us with an understanding of their standpoint within the topic.

Qualitative research strategy allows flexibility for thoughts to emerge and to be explained, bearing in mind, a brand is created internally through the managers and employees. Therefore, their consideration of what a brand and marketing are is vital to take into consideration. Characteristics that define a qualitative research strategy are; the small-sized sample was chosen based on specific criteria, the interaction between the participants and the researcher, being able to retrieve sufficient and detailed information and detect similarities of gathered data which constitutes a pattern which then is presented (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). How this has been applied to this research will be explained throughout the rest of this chapter.

3.3 Research Design

Research design concerns the choice of what will be observed and how the researcher has been guided when gathering and analyzing data. From this, considerations such as what data is to be gathered, how and from where need to be outlined. Moreover, how the data has been analyzed to be able to give answers to research-questions of the research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). The research questions of this study is as presented:

RQ 1: How are organizations in public transportation viewing and manage branding to create a brand image from the public?

RQ 2: What possible challenges and advantages are these organizations faced with concerning branding?

These questions serve as a directive in how this study has been outlined to be able to answer this question accurately. The type of data that is necessary to gather has been guided from the research-question together with the studied object: Branding in public organizations. From this, we wished to study Marketing and branding as independent concepts to then be able to understand how the organizations in the public sector are viewing this both as concepts but also in perspective to their brand. It was necessary to study several organizations to be able to access supplementary views and opinions to be able to explain and generalize the outcomes with substantiality. Although, before diving into studying the organizations and their behavior, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the field by creating a literature review. From this, we have been able to evaluate what the organizations are doing and how this can be put into perspective to literature that has been presented prior to this chapter. The research question has guided us through what type of literature that needs to be gathered to serve as a foundation to more accurately analyze and understand the outcomes of the gathered empirical data.

3.3.1 Data Collection

Primary data has been collected to understand behavior and attitudes towards the defined area of research. The primary data was collected through interviews and documents, which was the most appropriate method of data collection. Interviews make it possible to create an understanding of unique perspectives and experiences for the respondent concerning a particular topic. A predetermined set of questions were asked to the respondents. Additionally, individual reflections and evaluations were taken into consideration during the interviews. The held interviews were semi-structured and according to Patten and Newhart (2018), in these types of interviews, the respondents are able to deviate from the interview guide which can make it possible for the researches to collect the most accurate and useful information. Ultimately, since this thesis aims at understanding motivations and attitudes towards branding, semi-structured interviews were deemed to be most suitable (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). The questions in the

interview-guide were divided into categories to give us some structure in the interview, and the categories were accordingly: Presentation of the organizations, marketing, brand management, competition, and consumers. From this structure, we were able to go through each category one at a time, which provided us with coherent answers, which also relieved the work in analyzing the answers.

The conducted interviews, according to this research, aimed to increase the understanding of related motives and attitudes towards branding and marketing within the Swedish public transportation sector. Managers knowledgeable within these organizations accounted for the respondents in this study to provide us with accurate answers concerning branding practices within these organizations. The asked questions are written out in Swedish in Appendix 1; however, a translated version in English can be found in Appendix 2.

To gain several perspectives and arguments concerning the chosen area of study, we decided to interview representatives from SJ, SL, Skånetrafiken, and Västtrafik. The interviewees are operating on marketing and communications level within these respective organizations. These organizations were chosen specifically because they are the four most extensive public transportation organizations in Sweden and thereby hold the most influence over the sector. Another criterion for selecting these organization was due to the size of the geographical area they operate in. The chosen regions are the most populated areas, and therefore, the organizations have access to a greater scope of consumer-base.

All of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and later translated into English. Four interviews in total were conducted, whereas two of the interviews were face to face at the headquarters of the organization in questions. These organizations were SL and SJ that was held in Stockholm. By visiting the headquarters in Stockholm, this allowed us as researchers to gain the full picture regarding their organization. For example, we were able to meet other employees and speak briefly with them, observe the organization while in action, captivate the work-environment, and receive a feeling of the general organizational culture. Moreover, by meeting the respondents face to face they were able to advance more deeply into the questions which provided us with richer and a broader level of information.

The other two interviews, together with Skånetrafiken and Västtrafik, occurred through a phone interview. We saw the distinctions between these different methods of conducting interviews. Trough phone-interviews we were not able to take the body language or full image of the organization into consideration. However, due to the weak scheduling of the respondents, the phone interview was the possible way to conduct the interview. However, we were still able to gather valuable information because the respondents were able to deviate from the interview guide and state their personal views. However, it can be argued that we would have been able to retrieve the deeper meaning behind the answers if met face-to-face.

All four interviews were recorded and saved on our cell phones. The interviewees' consent was asked before we initiated the recording. After the interviews, we have had email contact with both SL and SJ to receive answers to questions that we felt the need to clarify. During the

interviews, it was agreed that we would take part in documents which were sent to us through email from SL. These documents provided us with more empirical material for the research.

3.3.2 Sampling

A sampling method assist the researchers in the process of gaining the particular data required by choosing from where the data will be gathered which is referred to as sampling units (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). According to literature, there are mainly two profiles of sampling which are called, probability and non-probability. In this research, a non-probability sampling has been implemented, which means that the units have been chosen from specific criteria (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Our selected units have been chosen due to their profession and expertise within the selected organizations. Both purposive and snowball sampling has been undertaken in this research. For our interviews with Västtrafik and SJ, we directly contacted the respondents in their position of representing their organization that was chosen according to specific criteria which are called purposive sampling (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). For the interviews with SL and Skånetrafiken, we first contacted customer services who then redirected us to the respondents. This is called snowball sampling, which entails that the researcher advises other people who then redirect or recommend the researcher to other appropriate respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Therefore, a combined sampling was used for the purpose of this thesis. As mentioned above, the manager within the respective organizations was interviewed due to their knowledge of the organization itself and marketing and branding practices. The sample consisted of two communication strategists respectively from SJ and SL, one brand manager from SL and two managers over communication and market- unit at respectively Västtrafik and Skånetrafiken. In total, five representatives were interviewed, from four organizations, in the SL interview, two representatives were present. Below, we have outlined a table of the interviewees in this research. The table explains what organization they work for, what position they carry, the number of people interviewed, the period of employment, and length of the interview.

Organization	Respondent Position	Number of People	Employment Period	Interview
SJ	Communication Strategist	1	3 years	55 min
SL	Communication Strategist & Brand Manager	2	7 years	110 min
Västtrafik	Manager over communication and market	1	8 months	45 min
Skånetrafiken	Manager over communication and market	1	6 months	43min

Table 1. Outline of respondents

3.4 Data Analysis

When conducting qualitative research, a large unstructured amount of empirical material is often gathered (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To facilitate the process of analyzing this amount of data from all organizations, we undertook a thematic analysis after conducting the interviews (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The undertaken process of analysis is described as iterative. As Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) suggest, we went back and forth between the collected material to be able to detect patterns and draw conclusions to simplify the extensive material. This way of analysis was used to our advantage to be able to deeply understand the interviews and create a structure to base our discussion and conclusions on.

When initiating the work of analyzing the interviews, we first transcribed the material on the computer. We transcribed each interview the day after they were conducted while we still had the responses and impressions recent in our minds.

After transcribing the interviews, we then outlined the questions together with the answers from the respondents. We were then able to see what their specific answer was to the proposed questions. Bearing in mind, the semi-structured interview allowed us to ask follow-up questions, which was also written down. After all of the interviews had been transcribed, we discussed the findings between us to detect similarities and differences between the organizations' answers to the questions. When analyzing the interviews, we took specific words used or the tone in which something was said into consideration. For example, some of the answers were given to us in an irritated tone of voice, which we then took into account when evaluating the response. From this, we detected the main findings and outlined what we wished to highlight in the analysis. The findings distributed over the categories are presented in the analysis-chapter. We also chose distinctive quotes which we evaluated to be of importance to illustrate, due to its relevance for the research question. While reading, categorizing, and discussing the empirical findings between us, we created separate documents where we put our comments concerning similarities and abbreviations in the answers between the organization. We also put comments relating to findings that could be matched to certain literature as well as our remarks. This made it helpful when later on writing the discussion chapter. When analyzing empirical material in qualitative research, validity is strengthened when identifying categories. Mainly because repeated finding according to a category entails that this is a view that is held among several of the interviewees and therefore, the credibility of the findings becomes higher (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

It was useful to be able to go back and forth between the interviews to clarify specific points we were unsure about. If this did not manage to answer our questions, we emailed the organization in question and asked them to clarify specific questions.

After categorizing and discussing the empirical material, we then matched the findings towards our literature review. We detected a need to complement the literature review to make use of all of the findings. Afterward, we were able to combine empirical material and literature with our evaluations and propositions as presented in the discussion-chapter. We first found it suitable to

create a discussion around the same categories as in the analysis. However, we detected rather quickly that the thesis and findings would benefit more by being presented around similar, although modified categories in the discussion to be able to bring forward the main points more effectively.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

To be able to evaluate the quality of the research, validity, and reliability functions as criteria. Reliability treats if the results are frequent; therefore this criterion conveys the consistency of research and accuracy of answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this research, the focus is on organizations in public transportation and their view and use of branding. We have provided a literature review to lay the foundation and outline conditions for what branding entails and what the criterions are for successful branding. We have seen a replication of several findings stated across organizations which we have been able to compare and align with literature to ensure reliability.

Internal reliability concerns studies where there are more than one researcher and the agreement between the observers concerning what they see and hear (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We were both presents at all interviews with the organizations which we recorded to be able to go back and discuss, after transcribing the interviews. Therefore, we reached an agreement of the findings which would account for internal reliability.

The validity of research in qualitative methods explains the trustworthiness of the drawn conclusions with regards to representation, understanding, and interpretation of the empirical material (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The validity of this research can be deemed to have certain limitations. This is mainly because humans views and attitudes have been studied; additionally, the research is influenced by our individual understanding of the empirical material. However, what is strengthening the validity is that we have studied several organizations and have been able to draw similarities from and detected a dominant pattern with some differences. The validity is also justified from our ability to ask to follow up questions both in the interviews but also through continuous contact afterward (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Therefore, we could limit possible misunderstandings when interpreting their statements and increase the trustworthiness in all three instances connected to validity.

3.5.1 Generalizability

Generalizability evaluates if the outcomes and contribution of the research are relevant and diverse enough to apply to other research contexts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Bearing in mind that we have gathered findings that can be confirmed in existing literature as well as detected gaps in research which we consider to be of relevance. Although, to increase the generalizability

of our findings, a more comprehensive sample could have been gathered with additional interviews to confirm the validity of the contribution.

3.6 Limitations

Limitations of this research mainly consider the scope of respondents. An increased number of interviewed representatives would possibly raise the validity and generalizability of the empirical data. Moreover, it would contribute to the study to interview the entrepreneurs that the organizations work together with. Considering that these entrepreneurs hold influence over the organization and its operations. Therefore, a contribution to the study would be added by taking into account the attitudes towards branding by representatives on several levels in the organization. A second limitation of the study is the limited access we as researchers have had to the studied phenomena. For example, one aspect we have studied is decision-making within the organizations. However, we have not been able to observe the actual processes in which decisions are made concerning the brand. Thirdly, the consumers could also have been taken into consideration to provide both the attitudes towards branding and marketing practices internally from the organization. The consumer perspective would have added to the research by providing an understanding of how the consumers perceive the efforts made by the organizations. Lastly, we argue that by interviewing an organization that is incorporating branding successfully and use this as a *"best case scenario"* an example for how branding in public organizations can be carried out would increase the accuracy of the discussion and conclusions of this research.

3.7 Organisations in The Public Transportation Sector

Before conducting the interviews, it was necessary for us to conduct information concerning the organization. We had to understand how the organization is operating to be able to generate suitable questions. We argue that this information will assist the reader in understanding the outcomes of the presented empirical data in this research. This information was gathered through the respective websites of the organizations.

3.7.1 SL

Trafikförvaltningen is responsible for Stockholm Lokaltrafik (SL), Färdtjänsten and Waxholmsbolaget and has the overall responsibility for all who live in, or visit, Stockholm county to have access to a well-developed, accessible and reliable public transport system (AB Stockholms Lokaltrafik, 2017). SL is a corporation owned by Region Stockholm and offers transportation means such as metro, bus, commuter train, local train, and shuttle-boat (Region Stockholm, n.d.a). Every day approximately 800,000 people travel with SL and with the help of 2120 busses, 497 metro cars, 186 tram, 129 commuter train, and 7308 stations, people can live,

work and obtain other types of activities in multiple areas (AB Stockholms Lokaltrafik, 2017). SL obtain traffic and services from contractors such as Keolis Sverige, Arriva, Nobina, MTR, and Stockholm spårvagn (Region Stockholm, n.d.a).

Region Stockholm is a democratically-managed organization responsible for public transportation, health care, region planning, and regional growth and development (Region Stockholm, n.d.b). Trafikförvaltningen is, therefore, a part of Region Stockholm and is an administrative organization that operates under Trafiknämnden and the region council (Region Stockholm, n.d.c). The Regional Council is the highest decision-making body with ultimate responsibility for the economy and the direction of the business (Region Stockholm, n.d.b).

Waxholms Ångfartygs AB also called Waxholmsbolaget, is responsible for the seaborne public transportation in the Stockholm archipelago and Stockholm harbor. (AB Stockholms Lokaltrafik, 2017).

3.7.2 Västtrafik

Kollektivtrafikmyndigheten in Västra Götaland is called Västra Götalandsregionen and is responsible for the public transportation in the region Västra Götaland including the most densely populated area of Gothenburg. Kollektivtrafikmyndigheten determines how public transportation is to be expanded and where to invest. On the other hand, Kollektivetrafiknämnden proposes strategies in regards to public transport and infrastructure, and the regional council makes the final decision. (Göteborgs Stad, n.d.)

Public transportation such as trams, buses, commuter trains and ferries in West Sweden are managed by Västtrafik AB and is owned by Västra Götalandsregionen. The regional council is responsible for Västtrafik's budget as well as the traffic supply program. The traffic supply program specifies how public transport will evolve in the long term, has resulted in the overall goal of doubling traveling with Västtrafik in the time between 2006 to 2025. Every day 400,000 people travel with Västtrafik by the 1857 busses, 101 trains, 263 trams, and 36 boats. (Västtrafik, n.d.)

Göteborgs Stad owns the trams and the tram line, however, the traffic is managed by Göteborgs Spårvägar through Västtrafik (Göteborgs Stad, n.d.). Göteborgs Spårvägar is the largest operator of public transportation in the region and operates both busses and trams. However, there are also other actors that run public transportation such as Transdev, Styrsöbolaget, and Keolis (Göteborgs Spårvägar, n.d.). Trafikkontoret plans tram traffic and is therefore responsible to cater to the needs of the people living in Gothenburg. Via Västtrafik, Trafikkontoret orders services and ancillary that include tram traffic and on behalf of Göteborgs trams, Trafikkontoret operates the trains. The operation of the buses in Gothenburg is determined by the procurements from Västtrafik. However, the Public Transport Act allows private operators to compete with or supplement the procured traffic. (Göteborgs Stad, n.d.)

3.7.3 Skånetrafiken

Skånetrafiken is an administration within Region Skåne that holds responsibility for public transportation, mainly within this geographical area. Region Skåne is the Landsting in Skåne county and holds responsibility for public transportation. The operating traffic in the directive of Skånetrafiken is driven by different companies that have been procured in competition. Skånetrafiken is a governmentally owned organization, and political institutions centralize the decisions concerning Skånetrafiken. Namely, Kollektivtrafiknämnden makes decisions concerning budget, ticket prices, or purchasing of trains, among others. According to the Skånetrafiken operation planning 2017-2021 the main tasks of Skånetrafiken is to plan, develop, purchase, inform, and market the public transportation in Skåne County. The market-share of Skånetrafiken is 29% of the goals of 40%, and to be able to reach this goal, Skånetrafiken strives towards distributing travel options that meet consumers expectations. Skånetrafiken is cooperating with several actors in the market to be able to distribute their transportation service throughout Skåne, but also to the rendering counties in the south of Sweden as well as the bridge over to Denmark. (Skånetrafiken, n.d.)

Trafikverket holds responsibility for the Swedish railway system, electricity lines, switches, signals, and platforms. Transportstyrelsen holds responsibility for the overarching security of the train traffic. They approve operating-licenses within the traffic for organizations that seek to drive trains as well as investigate the causes for potential incidents or accidents. (Skånetrafiken, n.d.)

Skånetrafiken is the principal over Pågatågen which drives local traffic. Öresundstågen is regional trains and is a shared train traffic system in Southern Sweden and Denmark. Arriva Tåg AB holds responsibility for driving Pågatågen by contract from Skånetrafiken as well as concerning security for Pågatågen trains towards Järnvägsstyrelsen and Trafikverket. Transdev Sverige AB operates Öresundstågen in Sweden and until Peberholm by agreement from Öresundståg. In Denmark, it is also Transdev that drives Öresundstågen. (Skånetrafiken, n.d.)

3.7.4 SJ

SJ is a Swedish travel company that is providing journeys throughout Sweden and to other Nordic regions such as Copenhagen and Oslo. They were established in 1856, and daily they supply 1200 journeys from 284 train-stations. Yearly, approximately 51.000.000 chose to travel with SJ. In 2001 they transitioned to becoming an incorporated company (AB), and the Swedish Government owns them. SJ operates under the purpose to drive profitable traffic by railroad. The traffic that is driven by SJ themselves, is identified by further journeys as well as local train traffic in the larger cities in Sweden and the Nordic capitals. Prior, SJ has had exclusive rights in driving the interregional traffic. However, in 2011 this became unregulated, and other railway-organizations are now able to compete with SJ one the same railway-lines commercially.

The traffic that is negotiated with public entrepreneurs is mainly shorter journeys consumers incorporate into their daily lives. Such as transportation to school or work. The state-owned authority, Trafikverket, is negotiating long-distance traffic with SJ, which otherwise would not have been possible based on commercial criteria. (SJ, n.d.)

Jernhusen is managing the train-stations, offices, and workshops along the Swedish railways. Trafikverket is leading the infrastructure concerning operations and maintenance, but also, they distribute the paths and the daily activities of all railway-traffic in Sweden. Although it is outlined that SJ holds the primary responsibility for their travelers. SJ is dependent on cooperating with these actors to maintain efficient traffic in the railways. It is described that SJ is a part of the solution for Sweden to be able to reach its climate goals. Therefore all the trains are marked with *"Bra Miljöval."* (SJ, n.d.).

4. Analysis

In the analysis-chapter, the findings and empirical material obtained from the conducted interviews will be outlined. To provide a structure for the reader the findings have been categorized according to topics which represent the main findings of the research. The analysis begins by presenting general organisational descriptions and detailing the interviewee's role. From this, the organizational structure and decision making process is outlined to then further move on to branding and associations from an internal perspective in the organization. This will account for internal effects on branding and marketing activities. Subsequently, challenges and goals will be presented which describe the interviewees view on external factors which ultimately has an effect on how their brand and organization is perceived. Lastly, findings will be presented concerning competition. The latter four categories account for external perceptions, factors and the attitudes/views the interviewees holds towards these.

4.1 Branding

In this section, the interviewees and their roles within their respective organizations will be presented. Additionally, it will be taken into consideration how they view branding as a concept.

At SJ, the interviewee holds a role as a communication strategist which includes responsibilities such as communication in regards to the environment and the climate. SJ, as a governmental organization, follows goals set out by the state concerning sustainability and financials. SJ has two main activities, which include driving its own commercial trains that generate profits from the amount of sold tickets and negotiated traffic with entrepreneurs. The interviewee further explains that the organization has a long history of 160 years and that the company got divided approximately 16-17 years ago. Since then, the company has been going through multiple changes. In the past, the sole purpose of SJ was to operate traffic, and profitability was not an obligation. Today, however, SJ has become more sales-driven to generate profits and has an increased focus on commercial interests instead of solely providing a train-service. SJ strives to be more than a means of transportation and instead would like to become a travel-company which considers all aspects included in providing a comfortable journey.

At SL, two representatives were present in the interviews. The first is working as a communication strategist in a department underneath Trafikförvaltningen which includes all public transportation in Stockholm. The second that we interviewed is a brand manager and holds responsibility concerning all branding within SL. Similar to SJ, SL also has outlined political goals such as RUFS 2050 concerning the development of Stockholm as a city-region. SL is currently in the midst of an internal reorganization, which poses several challenges as well as opportunities which will be further explained below.

The interviewee from Skånetrafiken is relatively new to the organization, however, she is the responsible manager over the unit, communication and market. Skånetrafiken is divided into several business units, and the interviewee's unit works closely with the unit that works with customer focus and responsibility. For example, they focus on how the trains look and logistics around the railroads, such as parking spaces or what one would need when entering or leaving the train. The interviewee is responsible for the overall planned communication and publishing as well as marketing and has 14 people in her team. During the interview, it became evident that Skånetrafiken also has experienced a change from being politically and socially driven to becoming more available to the public.

At Västtrafik, we interviewed the head of the unit, market and communication. Similar to Skånetrafiken this representative is relatively new to the organization with an entry in September 2018. She works with the communication-chain as a whole both internally as well as externally by negotiating with external actors such as traffic entrepreneurs. Moreover, not much was mentioned regarding Västtrafik as an organization and its history.

When asked what the representatives associate with branding as a concept, SJ explained as *"the reputation one holds in a target group in the form of preconceived views that become evident when exposed to a brand."* SL's explanation was *"the perception of a brand in the minds of the consumers."* Västtrafik had a very similar description although they connected the question to their organization instead of speaking in general terms: *"Branding concerns how the target group perceive us and the expectations they hold towards us as a brand. Then it also concerns what image we wish consumers to have about us as well as visual aspects as logo"*.

4.2 Decision Making

Concerning the organizational structure and level of decision-making in the organizations, SJ has a division that is responsible for communication, sales, and a director for that department. However, the CEO has created different forums for strategy, production, and markets, among others, and often decisions are made within these forums instead of going all the way up to the board. Moreover, in the daily operations, it is expressed that everyone is responsible for the brand which is also stated in the contract.

SL explained that Landstingsfullmäktige is the highest deciding political organ and the SL-board and is in charge of decisions concerning strategy. However, questions and decisions in regards to the brand are decided on a lower level. SL also mentioned *"flying under the radar"* which means that questions sometimes do not need to be discussed on a higher level and can instead be packaged on a lower one.

At Västtrafik, campaigns are decided on a divisional level, however, if it is an extensive campaign or if the organization makes a statement in the campaign, then it is important to discuss it on a political level and with the board of Västtrafik. The decisive factor is the size and

type of campaign. *"If it is supposed to raise feelings or questions, then it needs to be anchored on a higher level of course."*

At Skånetrafiken the interviewee explained, *"I am responsible for the brand, but at the same time we are working with transportation companies that take care of the local marketing, which makes everything a little bit complicated but we have a marketing manual that everyone can follow online."*

All the organizations interviewed are using advertising agencies when developing campaigns. However, it was not fully explained to what extent agencies are being used. The organizations create concepts that they would like to be communicated and with the help from advertising agencies they can bring the idea to life. According to SL:

"We usually know what we want to communicate and have an idea of how it could be portrayed by the advertising agencies. It is an advantage to use the agencies and their creativity as well as their independence...., the best result arises when you collaborate, so not just buying things but creating them together."

SJ is currently making decisions based on consumer preferences, compared to what they used to do when they were still in a state monopoly. Consumer-focus is vital for SJ, since the organization does not receive any grants from the state. Therefore, SJ needs to earn profits by selling tickets and negotiating traffic.

SJ has a department that works exclusively with consumer insights. For example, they track commuters in their daily travel patterns. Sustainability is a concept that SJ used to communicate frequently. However, the organization realised that consumers might not be invested in the problem and therefore shifted towards other types of communication messages. Today, SJ evaluates sustainability to be more current and therefore, they have brought back this type of communication. Since reinstating sustainability communication, SJ is working with getting the whole organization onboard.

Västtraffik explained that they are constantly working with consumer preferences. For example, web, social media and customer services. Similar to Västtrafik is Skånetrafiken, which also takes consumer preferences into account. Västtrafik uses for example Facebook to receive feedback and to respond to consumers concerns to improve their service. The organization additionally considers the customer journey in product planning as well conducts consumer analysis.

SL acknowledges that they have a lot to gain by gathering and considering customers' views and opinions. However, the feedback is poorly used since processes in structuring the comments are insufficient. Nevertheless, the organizations state that they operate according to the consumer's needs and preferences. SL is currently using surveys to receive feedback concerning how consumers are experiencing the train-service in regards to safety, and availability. The feedback SL receives from emails and phone calls are considered on a small scale. Moreover, SL explains that the market has gone from broadcasting and mass communication, to an increased focus on

consumer behavior. The interviewees express that the change has permeated the whole market which suits them as a societal actor.

All organizations emphasize the importance of considering consumer preferences and views. SL has recently incorporated brand-tracking, however, they have not yet gathered a sufficient amount of data to be able to draw conclusions from it. However, the aim is to be able to look at the development of the data to assist them in consumer insights and decisions.

Skånetrafiken continuously works with brand tracking where they measure, if and to what extent, they are in line with what they seek the consumers to associate with Skånetrafiken. In their brand-tracking, they measure different values that Skånetrafiken deem to be important and thereafter adjust commercials. Skånetrafiken continuously works with brand tracking to measure if the organization are in line with what they seek the consumers to associate with them. The organization measure different values they believe is important for the consumer and depending on the outcome adjust commercials accordingly.

SJ mentioned their brand index is weak compared to other strong Swedish brands. The interviewee explained that other strong Swedish brands are investing heavily in marketing and have a competitive advantage in their respective industry. Additionally, Västtrafik explains that their organization work with tracking to a certain extent. The interviewee explained that a public transportation barometer was available and that the organization conduct surveys in regards to consumers satisfaction. If Västtrafik used the barometer was never mentioned. However, she stated that many surveys in regards to the consumers are frequently conducted, but she did not know if the organization conduct any surveys in regards to their brand strategy.

4.3 Brand Associations

The core values of SJ are simplicity and enjoyability. SJ explains simplicity as a word that is concrete and easy to comprehend. It can be applicable in many situations and can cover everything from the customers' journey to other technical solutions. The whole journey from booking a ticket to arriving at a destination should be simple. SJ further explains that the word enjoyable, on the other hand, is more difficult to communicate because it is more difficult for employees to act upon it and deliver an enjoyable experience for consumers in every situation. If a train, for example, is delayed, it is not very pleasant for the consumer and he or she might not enjoy this particular journey to the same extent. When SJ discuss their core values, they only mention simplicity and enjoyable, but then they explain that the communication backbone consists of simplicity, comfortability, and punctuality. Furthermore, climate smart is something the organization would like to integrate into their communication backbone as well to speak about due to its current relevance in today's world. SJ states: *"Everyone knows that trains are climate smart, but nobody knows how climate-smart the trains are compared to cars and airplanes and we need to find expressions to communicate this."*

When we interviewed SL and asked questions in regards to core values, the interviewees first had a very hard to provide the core values that the company had established. They had to discuss with each other to discover the established values within the company. SL's core values are simple, intelligent, and caring. Simple refers to the journey itself and how easy it is to choose public transportation while caring refers to security and accessibility, and lastly intelligent indicates that choosing SL is a smart alternative for both the wallet and the health as well as the environment compared to other alternatives. In another situation, the interviewees mention the words environment, availability, and safety as their core values. Furthermore, trust is another word that was mentioned multiple times throughout the interview, and something the interviewees believe is a vital part of their brand. However, SL would like to earn trust instead of communicating it: *"Trust is earned, it is nothing that we talk about. Do, don't tell."* However, the word trust was never mentioned as a core value even though the interviewees clearly stated its importance.

"We are aware that we have a couple of different core values and that they have arisen during different situations and therefore there is a need to work internally with these words so that we can tie the bag together."

This year SL has been working with the words forward and green. The idea behind the word forward is to create pride, both internally and trust externally. The word is supposed to work as a management tool for the organization and inspire others to choose public transportation and thereby become more sustainable. SL explains that the word forward will probably not be used in the future and that it is not a bumper-sticker.

"In our resent, forward campaign, we showcased the full offer. Usually, we talk about a particular question, but in this campaign, we tried to widen the scope and showcase that: This is SL, and together we bring Stockholm forward with the help of you as customers behind the wheel."

According to SL, the market has gone from broadcasting, bumper stickers; moreover, it is explained that the reason behind consumers choose a particular service or product is more central than the individual service/ product itself than it was ten years ago.

"It is more about heart than price and product. This helps for an establishment like us because this thing with price and product and tape the whole town full of messages; that we cannot do. We are a societal actor. We are not supposed to do that".

When speaking to Västtrafik concerning branding, they stated that the organization would soon start changing their current brand strategy. However, according to Västtrafik, the core values that belong to the current and not updated brand strategy are smart, simple, and reliable. The interviewee stated that these core values were important a couple of years ago and that they were set for the internal purpose and rarely communicated externally. On the other hand, Västtrafik explained that the company had tried to communicate the words sustainability and smart externally but that it is not part of their core values. Västtrafik and their partners developed the current core values to get all partners to deliver the same customer promise and have a clear and

shared client focus. In the interview with Skånetrafiken, the interviewee only mentioned one core value, which is simplicity.

During the interviews, we asked the organizations if their core values permeate the whole organization and if every employee knows about them. According to SJ, the people working in the office know about them, but the interviewee was not sure if this applied for the total remaining workforce.

"We have had these values for a very long time, so I believe that there should be a wide knowledge of them, but then, of course, I know that we can do it much better."

When we asked SL the same question, the initial reaction was that interviewees thought it was a difficult question to answer, which was also evident in the response. From this, SL stated that they might or might not permeate the whole organization, however, that they are included in the agreement provided to multiple external actors.

"When we write an agreement document with an external actor, then we state the following: Here are all guidelines, everything from availability to branding and to how to build a bus stop."

Skånetrafiken, on the other hand, answered *"yes, that is very important"* and further explained that these core values should be reflected within everything from how a person acts as a manager to how a person should behave as a co-worker, to how the company is advertised. The given answer was more general in nature; therefore, it was explicitly asked if the employees know about these values. Moreover, Skånetrafiken explained that they should know about them, however, they are not top of mind.

"They should smile, they should ask, and they should do some things, and that is supposed to be working, but if they exactly know what we stand for, maybe, I do not know." The interviewee further stated that she is not certain if the employees inside the headquarters of Skånetrafiken are aware of the core values or if they are felt when walking into the building.

Västtrafik responded, *"yes, I believe so, we work a lot with these customer promises, so I believe everyone should know about them."* When the question was asked, the word core values were used. However, in the response, the interviewee used the word customer promise instead of core values.

Another question that was asked was if the consumer, by any chance knew about these core values, and both SJ and Västtrafik answered no. SJ stated that the core values are something they would instead like to convey, then be associated with. Furthermore, Västtrafik said that their core values are old and therefore, it is not relevant for consumers to know of them and that they were more critical a couple of years ago.

Another posed question concerned if the focus is put on maintaining or changing the brand. All of the organization's stated that it was important to maintain the brand. However, it was also mentioned that it was important to be open to change. SL, for example, said that there should be

a basis to stand on, but since they cannot control the outside world, they should be open to change and add details to their brand. Furthermore, Västtrafik applied a similar strategy stating that they want to maintain the basis but always try to improve and develop the brand.

All organizations are using some type of brand message in their communication. SJ, for example, has been using *"whoever you are, wherever you're going"* as a tagline in commercials and campaigns, and it is also used as a marketing guideline. The meaning behind the tagline is *"we focus on the collective, the common. We are not made for the elite; we are for the many people, an option for everyone."*

SL's brand message, on the other hand, is not clearly outlined, but the overarching message is that traveling with SL is simple, readily available, safe, and climate-smart. Skånetrafiken is using multiple brand messages, but the general message is, *"together we give Skåne a lift."* The interviewee further explained that this message is not frequently used and that the organization uses different closing lines in commercials.

"We have different closing lines, and we do not have a tagline, it varies from time to time. However, the overall message is: together, we give Skåne a lift, but that is nothing that we use in our traditional marketing."

Västtrafik, in line with Skånetrafiken is also using multiple brand messages. An example of a brand message is *"thank you for traveling together"* and has been used in communication to assist in the brand building process.

4.4 Challenges

In this part, we will analyze what the different organizations perceived as a challenge with their brand and brand building process. SJ explained that being a brand with a long history has both positive and negative aspects to it. Positively, because of the recognition, it has acquired over time. Negatively, it brings challenges such as a preconceived image in the minds of the consumers that is difficult to change. SJ is facing challenges as a result of consumers being misinformed, which has created an inaccurate image of the brand. To illustrate an example, there was a sales associate at pressbyrån in Örebro who misinformed a consumer who wished to purchase a train ticket with SJ. Allegedly, the sales associate stated that the trip would include seven changes which made the consumer angry since it seemed unlikely. The consumer turned his anger towards sending a letter to SJ, which then created bad publicity for SJ. The angry man was misinformed, and in reality, SJ offered a direct train connection. He further stated that this is the type of things that SJ are up against when wanting to build a strong brand. Approximately 10% of all disturbances are created by SJ's trains, and the rest of the problems are created by infrastructure, people running on the track, events in regards to nature and other train companies who are delayed and are causing a queue.

SJ needs to consider several political aspects and not only the sole commercial interest of the organization. *"Behind our buyers, there are politicians who make this situation a bit special since it is not only commercial considerations in such a situation. The politicians may have another outlook on the purpose of the organization".* When SJ spoke about their challenges, it was noticeable that their challenges were connected to external factors. SL, on the other hand, mentioned both internal and external challenges.

"We have been very successful at aspects concerning driving traffic and the business as a whole, build new stations, develop it and keep up with the development in all possible aspects, although, the packaging of this establishment has been completely Hawaii."

SL explains that the focus on branding and the *"packaging"* should not only be a priority in a particular department. Instead, it should be discussed by top management and be integrated into the whole organization. It was expressed that the set goals by top management are hard to comprehend and act upon. One of the goals is to become Sweden's most attractive big city region, *"but what does this really mean? We are supposed to become the most attractive, how? And what is that? and for who?."* The interviewee further explains that it is challenging to get everyone to work together towards the same goals. The two following quotes illustrate this:

"It is all about how everything is connected. If anyone says: "now we have decided to purchase a new ticket system, can you market it?" All right, was this the best you could come up with, who needs this, and what need does it fill?"

"It hurts in my heart when 52% is not satisfied with the disturbance information, for example. What should we do? And then everyone says: "no, but we are too busy working with something else over here."

During the interviews, it became evident that SL lacks what they refer to as *"Campfire."*
"Campfire, we miss that. We are outstanding in many ways, but we need to get together and say: we are doing a great job! As a brand in general, it goes straight out to the consumer. If the consumer believes that we have no soft or emotionally values around SL, that is probably because that is what we are reflecting outwards."

The quote below illustrates the internal motivations of one should work for SL and that there are several things they can gain from improving the internal culture of the organization.
" if a person is interested in questions in regards to the community, then he or she should come here. We cannot offer high salaries. We could become much sexier and attractive as an employee if the campfire feeling increased. It has to start internally."

The interviewees also mentioned that bringing all the external actors that work for the company together to the campfire could help the brand and get everyone to work on the same page. They admit that they have not included these external actors in what they refer to as their *"family."* However, they express that this is something they need to start doing.

When wanting to build a strong brand, time is another factor that is affecting SL and this process. When signing agreements, the process for these to become incorporated can sometimes take up to ten years before it is evident. This means that during this time period for the agreement to become effective, it might be irrelevant. This might affect the brand differently than if the processes were more time-efficient when incorporating changes.

Another aspect mentioned by the interviewee is that many people have no attitude or preference towards SL as a brand: *"we know that 60% that know of us think that we are flat."* Moreover, SL expressed a challenge with increasing the understanding amongst consumers of how complex the organization is. For example, it was explained that SL runs more traffic than Skånetrafiken, Västtrafik, SJ, and Hallandstrafiken together and Stockholm as a city is not easy to build public transportation in since it is an island with waters surrounding it.

"it is about creating an understanding as well. When someone says: "how hard could it be" because we hear this all the time. It is hard." Hence, they have not tried to create an understanding through communication since they are afraid of becoming misunderstood from consumers as belittling these problems from *"making fun of themselves."*

Similar challenges were mentioned by Västtrafik to increase the understanding among consumers how everything is connected and who decides what. *"Consumers believe it is Västtrafik as a company that decides the prices, for example, but that is not the truth, it is the politicians."* Another similar challenge to SL concerning time is also faced by västtrafik: *"we are a public organization where we have to do public agreements, and that takes time. This creates challenges when it comes to not being a fast moving as we would desire."*

Moreover, Västtrafik faces similar challenges as SJ concerning changing consumers perceptions. *"Overall the public transportation industry has faced scrutiny for a long time, and even if things have changed the past ten years, people still have pre-assumptions about us."*

Skånetrafiken explained that being dependent on Trafikverket is a challenge since they hold influence over several aspects of Skånetrafiken. These are occurrences that Skånetrafiken is not able to directly control such as, traffic-accidents, delays, and track-maintenance, which is affecting and can ultimately hurt the brand.

All respondents from the organizations expressed that working with external actors is a challenge when it comes to building the desired brand. Bearing in mind that it is entrepreneurs who are driving the traffic, therefore a problem for SL is to get everyone on board and work towards the same goals while creating trust in all instances. Similar challenges are faced by Västtrafik, although here the marketing-aspect was more evident. Västtrafik works with entrepreneurs who themselves have their marketing departments, and therefore, it is a challenge to correlate the marketing activities into one brand that makes up Västtrafik. Skånetrafiken expressed a challenge concerning coherency and working with entrepreneurs, and this has been improved by all train conductors wearing the same uniform. SJ, however, express that the noticeability of the entrepreneurs they hold contracts with depends on the agreements in question and objectives of

the cooperation. Although they state that they generally speaking do not have a coherency between different entrepreneurs, which is a point for improvement.

4.5 Goals

During the interviews, it was evident that all organizations main goal with marketing is to get more people to travel with public transportation. SJ has different goals concerning sales and profitability as well as individual activities connected to the brand itself. SJ track their brand index each month and have established goals to follow how they are being perceived. SJ also create campaigns to reach a chosen target group with a specific offer, and within these campaigns the organization establish goals in regards to the brand and sales that they would like to accomplish.

The interviewee at SL pronounced political objectives to expand the Stockholm region and attempt to make the city one of Europe's most attractive big city with 5 million inhabitants. The amount of cars circulating in the city is today feasible, but an increase in inhabitants and cars would create significant problems concerning capacity. In order to accomplish this goal, more people need to use public transportation instead of a vehicle due to limitations when it comes to available space.

"We call this Stockholm's bloodstream for both the climate and the community as a whole, which makes it possible for people to live and visit Stockholm."

SL is currently working towards newly defined goals that have not been present within the organization prior. These new goals are decided by politicians and are directed more towards a market orientated way of conducting business. This is strengthened by what SL representatives expressed in the interview that from this market-transition there is a new concept in communication that is meant to tie the organization together in the transition to keep the brand together in a structured and collect communication that SL has not had before. The goals are directed towards enhancing the customer experience, and recently, SL wrote their first customer service strategy ever. Moreover, this strategy is not incorporated to the extent that they would like due to the organization's complexity. Another goal that SL has established is to make the SL card a status symbol.

Currently, Skånetrafiken is working towards incorporating more sales driven activities.
Similar to SJ, Skånetrafiken is using goals within the brand index tracking to make sure they are perceived in the desired way and if not use the tracking to change consumers perceptions. They are not only trying to communicate information but also offers with a purpose and then closure. The objective is to become more focused on consumers, which entails that they communicate benefits of Skånetrafiken and their related service.

The interviewee from Västtrafik explained that their goals with their marketing are to improve the picture of Västtrafik and to become a community developer and a public transportation

expert. To deliver reliable services in the future it is essential for Västtrafik that the consumer perceive and experience the brand in a positive way. The interviewee also explained that the competition would increase and more outside actors will enter the market, and then it is vital to deliver a strong brand to be an obvious choice by the consumer.

4.6 Brand Image

Concerning brand associations and image from consumers, SJ explained that many people probably associate SJ as governmental, unpunctual, and a climate-smart alternative. The interviewee stated that SJ has noticed that consumers are becoming more aware of climate change and the environmental problems the world is changing and have therefore become more positive towards public transportation.

"The last couple of years, we have recognized a change, suddenly the train has become the climate-smart option."

The interviewee mentioned that SJ is still perceived as unpunctual even though 90% of all trains are on time today. *"We do measure people's perception of how late they believe our trains are and a normal Svensson believe that 56% of our trains are delayed."* SJ express that this is a big problem for them and that they are trying to close the gap between the perceived punctuality and the actual punctuality. However, there are many positive associations connected to trains, such as being comfortable and efficient while on board on the train. Ultimately, SJ does not believe that the actual picture is in line with the perceived picture by the consumer of the organization.

Similar to SJ, Skånetrafiken believes that they are associated with flawed punctuality. However, the interviewees also stated associations such as open, simple and safe, which they were pleased with. However, the associations made from consumers depends on the most recent campaign, and accordingly holds influence of what consumers choose to associate with Skånetrafiken according to brand measurements. Safety is another word Skånetrafiken explained that customer associated with them and is something they constantly work with to deliver. They work continuously with tracking and adjust after that.

The interviewee at Västtrafik stated that the associations with public transportation are more positive than with their brand. Västtrafik further explained that this is due to perceptions that were created in the past when the service was different. Therefore, this image has followed Västtrafik into modern days, even though the service has changed since these perceptions were made. Similarly, SL is aware that consumers perceive them as unpunctual. Consumer holds both positive and negative associations towards SL, but the majority hold no associations whatsoever towards them as a brand. One word that consumers associate with SL is responsibility. SL explains that it demands trust to be associated with as responsible *"Responsibility is quite big, and it feels quite heavy to carry, and it demands a lot of trusts."*
They believe responsibility can be associated with the climate, the individual, and the community and can both be a positive and a negative thing.

SJ explained that since they have been operating for a very long time, people automatically associate the organizations with the word train. *"Since we have been around for so long that most people think about SJ when they think about the means train. So it is hard to distinguish the two of them. If we speak about the parks with trains, then we know they will think about SJ."*

4.7 Competition

When asking the organization about who they believe is their biggest competitor, all four organizations had the car and the airplane top of mind. Västtrafik also mentioned that a couple of years ago they had a goal to increase their market share, but today they are instead trying to encourage people to walk, bike or take other types of climate-smart alternatives to get to their desired destination. Västtrafik also stated that they are open and willing to work with other environmentally friendly means of transportation. According to SJ, even though electric cars would increase, there is still the issue of accessibility in larger cities.

"40 cars are always going to be 40 cars whatever fuel they are using. Trains are the only mean that can bring 1000 people to every station, every 10 minutes. Studies made by KTH showcase that trains are the only means of transportation that can help cities to grow."

SL also acknowledged competitors, such as electrical cars, being more environmentally friendly. However, they perceive this competition as constructive because then it forces them to develop and keep up with the market. *"I believe that it is very good that they show up, then it forces us to look more forward."* The interviewees from SL stated that they hope in the future can work together with other climate-friendly organizations to deliver the most optimal service. Although, there is an existing barrier of public and private corporations cannot legally work together in that type of way. Bearing in mind, SJ was the only organizations that mentioned trains that operate on the same trainway as them as competitors.

The SJ-interviewee also mentioned that in this industry it is not a lot of competition and the consumer does not have to choose between 30 brands, and therefore the company does not have to work with recognition. *"We are not in a fast moving industry with 30 different brands and needs to improve recognition of our brand, we do not need that."*

5. Discussion

5.1 Core Values

In the analysis, it was very evident that some of the organizations did not know their core values on top of their mind. SJ, for example, mentioned simplicity and enjoyability in the interview but when we later on emailed SJ and asked them to send us the core values they provided us with simple, reliable, enjoyable and human. The word human and reliable were never mentioned during the interview. In the interview, a discussion amongst the interviewees was needed to determine the core values. The core values of SJ were concluded to be simple, intelligent, and caring. However, later on in the interview they mentioned simplicity, comfortability, and punctuality. This demonstrates that the core values are not readily available and that the interviewees are not sure which ones are their actual core values.

A word that SL stated multiple times and expressed as a vital part of their brand was trust; however, it was never expressed as a core value. It was also stated that they wish to gain trust and increase the understanding of the complexity of their organization. The literature states that core values should be acted upon as *"rules of life"* (Urde, 2003). We got the impression that trust is a keyword that is directing SL as an organization and therefore is a rule of life. Hence, the word trustworthy could be used as a core value. However, it is hard to act upon and grasp because it is an intangible asset and can hold several meanings depending on the consumer. Therefore, creating a core value such as transparency could assist SL in ultimately creating trust. Being transparent is easy to comprehend and act upon and eventually results in increased trust over time.

SJ also mentioned that one of their core values, enjoyable, is hard to communicate and act upon. Literature states that this could be due to the fact that the core value is too hard to understand and comprehend, and therefore, people have a hard time to follow or even accept it (Yoganathan et al., 2018). The word enjoyable is hard to grasp, and depending on the person in question, it can also have a different connotation. Another reason why it might be hard to act upon is that the core value was communicated to an employee without it having a deeper meaning to that particular person (Yoganathan et al., 2018). Core values should be created with the help of both internal and external stakeholders (Yoganathan et al., 2018). If the word has been created from a consumer perspective to motivate the consumer, then the employees might not agree with the association and therefore not be driven by the values that are supposed to guide the organization as a whole (Yoganathan et al., 2018).

SJ explicitly stated in the interviewee that in tough situations, it is difficult to be enjoyable. Core values are supposed to act as a tool and help organizations in both bad and good times to guide behavior (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). The employees are supposed to be able to lean back and use the core value to help them act or make a decision (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). The core value is a means to guide behavior, and as a tool through which an organization can always

justify their actions (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). An example that was provided in the literature review is Volvo. In every decision made Volvo asks themselves: *"is it safe, does it provide safety."* If stakeholder then questions why specific actions were taken, then the answer will most certainly include the word safe.

When Västtrafik was asked if their core values permeate the whole organization, the interviewee answered with the term customer promise instead of core values. This occurred on several occasions and could be an indication that the interviewee was confused by the meanings of the individual terms. Emphasizing that core values are as important for employees as they are for the consumers creates the vitality of knowing what core values are and what function they serve (Yoganathan et al., 2018). Västtrafik further explained that they have values that were created a couple of years back and are now outdated. However, it is stated in literature by van Rekom, van Riel, and Wierenga (2006) that for core values to be effective, they need to be deeply rooted in the organization which occurs over a long period. Recognizing that Västtrafik might be under the influence that the service they provided has changed over the years, urged them to think they need to change the core values as well since their values are communicated as customer promises. Västtrafik also mentioned that they have tried to communicate the words smart and sustainable to consumers, but these words are not part of the organization's core values.

None of the interviewees of the organizations were certain if the core values permeate the whole organization and if the employees are fully aware of them. For instance, SJ stated that at their headquarters, people knew of them but that the remaining organization out in the field would most likely not. However, they should know of them since they have been around for a long time. It is argued that just because something has been existing for a long time does not entail that people are aware of these values. Ultimately, this showcases that they are not a priority within SJ. Literature emphasizes the importance to permeate the values through the whole organization in all instances (van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006; Ferguson & Milliman, 2008).

SL, Västtrafik, and Skånetrafiken did not know if the employees knew of these core values either. However, SL and Skånetrafiken stated that these values are part of the employees' contracts and that they have an obligation to know of them. However, we wish to bring forward that solely because it is stated in the contract does not mean that they are exercised in the organization. Therefore, we strongly argue that the employees are not fully aware of the core values. This is largely emphasized by the fact that core values have to be the rule of life and need to be deeply rooted in the organization in order for the employees to act upon them when they are representing the brand (Urde, 2003; van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006). Regarding if the consumers are aware of the core values, both SJ and västtrafik answered no. They additionally stated that they would convey these values instead of associate themselves with them. However, it is difficult for consumers to associate an organization with a value that is not conveyed.

In regards to brand messages, Skånetrafiken and Västtrafik explained that they use different messages and closing lines within their marketing and that no message is frequently used over a

an extended period of time. This prevents organizations from creating consistency and coherence, which is needed for consumers to recognize their brand (Navarro-Bailón, 2011).

SL has been working with the message: Forward, which is only used temporarily and will not follow SJ in the future. We wish to bring forward that literature highlights the importance of working in a consistent manner when aiming to create a strong brand (van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006). Incorporating a word such as forward temporarily or occasionally will make it difficult for consumers to remember it and associate it with the brand. In order for consumers to remember and connect a word or a tagline to a brand, it has to be consistent and should be used in all forms of marketing during a long period (van Rekom, van Riel, & Wierenga, 2006).

Our perspective is that many of the core values that the organizations are using reflect the service itself and focus on what they would like the consumer to associate the train with and not what the organizations stand for as a whole. It seems like they are working from an outside-in perspective, which means, that they start by looking at their reputation and thereby the image and how consumers perceive them. With this in mind, the organizations use the image to define the brand identity. In literature, the brand building process (Figure 1) stresses how a strong brand is built and the associated steps required (Roper & Fill, 2012). This process highlights that an organization needs to start internally and define their personality and identity, which is then reflected in the image, and in turn creates reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012). One of the underlying reasons for why they are using their image and how they are perceived by consumers to create core values could be because they do not concretely know who they are and what they stand for which is a gap that would ultimately be filled by their brand identity.

5.2 Brand Image

All of the organizations explained that consumers have both positive and negative associations with their brand. According to SL, many consumers have no associations with the company, and this might be due to a confused brand identity which makes it hard for consumers to create relevant associations. If a brand does not communicate anything concerning who they are or what they stand for, we argue that consumers might build their own perceptions based upon their experience with the service. Their view of the brand might reflect the individual experience the consumer has had instead of the desired values communicated from the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

The interviewed organizations have not been able to fully communicate their values and create a brand image in the minds of the consumers. Therefore, they are now facing the challenge of not only creating, but having to change the image consumers have made up themselves. Ultimately, the shift from focusing on the product brand to the corporate brand is the main challenge for the organizations (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

Skånetrafiken mentioned that consumers associate the brand with safety, which they try to deliver on, but it is not one of the core values in the organization. It was also explained that after

a marketing campaign, the associations' consumers hold with them change accordingly. This implies that the brand image is constantly changing since Skånetrafiken is not consistent in their communication. We argue that the lack of consistency in their communication is due to Skånetrafiken not knowing who they are as an organization. Therefore, they are adapting and changing their communication messages to try to create what they believe is a desired brand image and reputation at any given time. As a result a confused image of their brand is created.

As previously mentioned, it is evident that all organizations that have been interviewed in this thesis are trying to work from an outside-in perspective when trying to create a strong brand. Instead of investing time and resources to properly figure out who they are and what they stand for, they are trying to change their reputation by creating marketing to manipulate the brand image instead.

5.3 Challenges

SL is currently focusing on communicating their corporate brand to create associations towards the organization as a whole, instead of only the service. However, SL is experiencing challenges to get all employees within the organization to work towards the same goals. Emphasizing the importance of shared beliefs in corporate branding, employees at all instances are a vital part in creating desired associations with the business as a whole (Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

However, as stated in the findings concerning *"flying under the radar,"* by taking decisions in this manner it is argued that these decisions might not permeate the whole organization. As the literature suggests, decisions concerning a product brand can be made within the marketing department, while corporate branding requires support throughout the entire organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). In order for SL to increase the company's recognition, visibility, and reputation by creating a corporate brand, they would first need to create more structure internally. This could make decision-processes more effective and make sure that agreed upon decisions are coherent and reach all employees in the organization.

As explained by Hatch and Schultz (2003), it is crucial to understand these differences between a corporate and product brand to know at what level the decisions need to be made at. The process varies significantly depending on if it will affect the whole organization and the brand or only a specific campaign and is thereby considered short-term. SL has an outspoken challenge of creating a *"campfire,"* which can be interpreted as their wish to create an internal identity. According to the brand building process (figure 1) from literature, the first step is to define their organizational personality from which identity is created (Roper & Fill, 2012). The CBIM framework can be incorporated to determine the identity and all the dimensions that are connected both internally and externally to detect the core of the brand (Greyser & Urde, 2019). This is vital because as observers we strongly argue that SL has been moving in the wrong direction by incorporating values for the sole purpose of external communication, which is not permeating the whole internal organization. SL would overcome many of the internal challenges they are facing today if they would begin change internally. To conclude, SL knows that they

have a bad reputation and that 60% have no association towards them. It is argued that their willingness to change their reputation has made them turn to branding. However, SL is doing it backwards by beginning with the reputation in order to define their image to eventually create an identity through which they want to be led to the desired campfire. Judging by the literature it is suggested that they do it the other way around, beginning with identity (Roper & Fill, 2012).

SL and all organizations interviewed expressed that their organizations are very complex, which has posed as a difficulty in creating the desired brand image. Västtrafik stated that this was due to the politicians' influence and their power to make decisions concerning the operations of Västtrafik, which has become reflected in their brand. What is expressed by Gromark and Melin (2013) is experienced by Västtrafik concerning that the public transportation sector has faced scrutiny, which is something Västtrafik would like to change, but requires time. Although, it is presumptuous that all organizations are facing this challenge, it was only directly voiced by Västtrafik and SJ. Therefore, it is a challenge from a flawed industry reputation explained by Winn, MacDonald, and Zietsma, (2008).

The organizations operating in this industry can collectively change the industry-reputation through branding (Winn, MacDonald, and Zietsma, 2008). Bearing in mind that events and actions by either member of the industry can affect the collective reputation positively or negatively. While these organizations can collectively work together to overcome their challenges, all organizations face approximately the same challenges. Therefore, the effects might become superior, which is referred to as collective reputation management suggested in the literature (Winn, MacDonald, & Zietsma, 2008). However, it takes a long time to change reputation both on a brand- and industry level. This is experienced and communicated by the organizations as well as confirmed in literature by Roper and Fill (2012) concerning brand reputation and its creation.

Brand tracking can help the organizations by continuously maintaining and obtaining how the associations change, if they change, over time to measure the development of the brand. After that, branding practices need to be created to increase the effectiveness of brand communications and maximize investments made in these (Keller, 1993). However, it is possible to have a strong brand with a weak reputation and therefore, it is extra important to monitor the reputation through brand tracking while bearing in mind consumer preferences which are explained by Brown (2006).

SL expressed that they are afraid of *"making fun of themselves"* when potentially using communicating to be transparent concerning their flaws. We argue that this showcases that they are scared to become misunderstood, which is also a consequence of having an incoherent internal identity. If a brand knows who it is and what it stands for, the risk of becoming misunderstood in branding practices will decrease (Navarro-Bailon, 2010).

All interviewed organizations expressed challenges concerning co-operating with several actors such as entrepreneurs being in charge of operating the traffic. These challenges mainly concerned the difficulty of creating coherence between all actors. Västtrafik experiences challenges due to incoherence in regard to their marketing practices. This challenge ultimately

affects how the consumers perceive the brand. Therefore, it is stressed that all these different actors should have a united front and strive towards the same goals for the organization to reach their branding ambitions. By having a strong corporate personality and brand identity while communicating these clearly to all different actors, the work towards a united front would be assisted.

Currently many of the organization stated that the values are outlined in the contracts, but no active work is being done to make sure that everyone is aware of the personality and identity. It is crucial for employees to represent the core values and the vision of the business to the consumers and ultimately, create an improved reputation for these organizations. All interviewees expressed that they are facing challenges due to the complexity of their organizations. This is stated in the CBIM framework, which organizations can incorporate to define their brand identity, which would revive the organizations in creating coherence among actors.

5.4 Goals

All organizations operate with the goal of increasing the number of people traveling by public transportation. However, they have different motivations behind this goal, ranging from brand-goals to profitability and political goals. For SL, the goal is for the consumers to create an image towards SL that corresponds to their personal beliefs and values. This is explained by Keller (1993) by saying that brand attitudes from consumers can be connected to personal beliefs that are not related to the product itself, but the symbolic benefits through which consumers can express their self-concept. If SL reached this goal, their brand would benefit immensely from it. However, to do so, they need to build their brand by taking the correct steps beginning internally and incorporating them as a long-term strategy.

Skånetrafiken aims to become more sales-driven by incorporating goals related to this. Meanwhile, SL is fearful of having too much focus on sales. Similar to Skånetrafiken, SJ is sales and profit-driven. SL would benefit from monitoring other organizations within the industry and from incorporating similar practices. Naturally, increased sales in tickets will generate more profits. By doing this, SL could potentially invest more in branding activities but also in their service. As expressed by Leijerholt et al. (2018), public organizations are more dependent on their quality of service. SJ stated that they do not operate in a fast-moving industry and therefore, do not hold direct competitors and do not need to improve the recognition of their brand. However, it is emphasized by Hatch and Schultz (2003), that improvement of recognition, visibility, and therefore, reputation is needed to create a strong corporate brand, regardless of industry. Adhering to this would assist SJ in their goal of selling more tickets and improve financial profitability.

Västtrafik expressed that their goals concern community development as well as improving the brand image of Västtrafik, which is in accordance with the public organization serving a greater good in the community. Therefore, branding can assist in reaching these goals through a

consistent branding strategy. SL's goals can also be deemed to mainly concern the development of society to reach the goal in 2050, which is established by the Swedish government. As stated by Gromark and Melin (2013), long-term value for society is more emphasized than customer satisfaction amongst public organizations. The brand building process could assist SL and Västrafik in improving the brand identity and image to ultimately be able to live up to the values of the consumers and create a strong brand. As suggested by Brewer (2007), these organizations should consider consumers as stakeholders due to their influence. Organizational operations are constantly evaluated by society. Therefore, it is vital to take into account what attitudes the citizens hold towards the organization in order to build a strong brand (Gromark & Melin, 2013). This highlights the importance of brand consistency, which is vital for stakeholders to understand what a brand stands for (Navarro-Bailon, 2011).

5.5 Decision Making

The interviewed organizations consider consumer preferences and keep track of different values and experiences that the consumers associate with the brand. However, it was not clear that the organizations fully understand the purpose of doing it and the outcomes they can create for their brand. As observers we received the impression that the tracking was not used to verify if the consumer perceived the brand the way they desired. Instead, it seems as if they evaluate the tracking and are communicating the values with the highest scores. From this, instead of creating values internally and communicate them, the organizations communicate the values that were almost *"given to them"* from the brand tracking.

To experience maximum benefit from investments made in communication and brand strategies, the consumers need to be centralized, and in turn branding development needs to be coordinated internally for practices to satisfy the consumer's needs (Keller, 1993). For example, SL has incorporated brand tracking recently, and from this, they might be able to evaluate the data and then understand the outcomes to adjust their brand and ultimately create brand equity. Bearing in mind that this is a process which will take time.

It can be seen that there is a willingness from the organizations to use branding, and they have realized the benefits of brand tracking. However, due to the complexity of these organizations, it is essential to clearly define the decision processes to create full efficiency in brand tracking. Bearing in mind that consumer responses are time-sensitive. Concerning SL and its habit of *"flying under the radar"* a risk is established that decisions which should have been on organizational support-level might fly under the radar and turn into bad outcomes. However, SJ, Skånetrafiken and Västtrafik have outlined in which department decisions of a certain character should be made. The criteria for the decision depends on its relevance to the organization and the influence on the long-term strategy. Gromark and Melin (2013), stated that if an organization's direction is not defined and harbored, the risk of wasting resources on brand building is increasing. From this, the process of building a brand may create uncertainty externally and internally. Unstructured, internal processes at SL hinders them from taking full advantage of consumer preferences since processes are insufficient.

6. Conclusion

In the discussion several findings and arguments concerning how organisations are currently viewing and using branding are presented. In this chapter, we wish to further emphasize the findings we consider to be of most relevance in order to successfully answer the research-question.

All organizations interviewed know to a certain extent what branding is and have realized the importance of building a strong brand to attract both customers and non-customers to choose their respective means of transportation. The willingness to improve their brand was very evident but none of the organizations seem to know how to create a strong brand. Core values as a means of building a branding strategy are being used but none of the organizations seem to be using them in an effective way. Furthermore, the core values are not followed as a rule of life and they are not deeply rooted in the organizations. Instead, customer promises have been created to change and manipulate the brand image. However, as mentioned multiple times, building a strong brand has to start internally and the whole organization needs to take part in the process in order for anyone to adapt the brand identity. It is evident from the discussion that the organizations interviewed have not spend enough resources to find their brand personality and brand identity internally. Furthermore, it could be due to the lack of knowledge in regard to knowing how to do it or even in response to a lack of engagement from the top management. The organizations are eager to change their reputation and therefore are only focusing on the consumers and satisfying their needs at a given time.

RQ 1 : How are organizations in public transportation viewing and managing branding to create a brand image from the public?

The objective for organizations to use branding is to increase the number of people travelling with public transportation. However, the organizations hold different specific motivations towards why branding is important to them. It has been established that the organizations are not completely aware of who they are or what they stand for. The organizations in this industry are in the early stages of realizing branding as a strategic tool. We have revealed the need for the organizations to create a corporate personality and identity. From this the organizations are able to convey a strong identity which will create a desired brand image from consumers. Currently we have seen that the organizations are exercising marketing without a fully established brand. Branding seems to be appearing as a key concept in the marketing departments but is not yet fully prioritized by key-decision makers in the organisations. Nevertheless, the organizations are at a stage of awakening when it comes to branding.

The focus is put on the consumers, their perceived image and the reputation that their experiences create. Reaching non-consumers is very hard for the organizations since they are not breaking through the noise and catching the attention of the ones not already experiencing the service. The organizations are stuck in a vicious circle where all efforts within marketing are

used to change the negative associations but since the image is not reflected upon the identity it will constantly change and the consumers will be confused and create their own perception of the brand.

RQ 2 : What possible challenges and advantages are these organizations faced with concerning branding?

The organizations are experiencing a change from competing in a monopolistic market to having to focus on consumers and ultimately creating results that are reflected in the bottom line. However, the main challenge the organizations are facing is not having a desired reputation and therefore a need for changing consumers' associations has appeared. These associations mainly entail the isolated trains' service which are often characterized by negative images. Currently, the organizations are not successfully communicating their corporate brand. The consumers are then left to connect the brand with the service and that is why only a product brand is created. In addition, untapped consumer populations have difficulties to build a perception of the brand which results in neglecting the overarching goals of increasing the number of consumers in public transportation.

Ultimately, the organizations are aware of the fact that branding is beneficial, however, they are not sure about how to undertake the process, which poses a significant challenge. A lack of motivation internally was also observed. Words that describe the organization's values are communicated to the employees without a true meaning, and therefore none of them can act upon them or live by them in the organization. Neither are the values easy to grasp, nor do they entail anything concrete for the organization. There are several areas of improvements which create several opportunities and advantages for the organizations. For example, if the organization successfully creates a corporate identity, they would possibly be able to engage the employees which is an important group to consider in the process of creating a brand identity.

7. Further Research

In this study there has been identified several topics and aspects that could be considered for future research. Firstly, how brand values can be communicated in a clear and consistent way that is coherent with a specific brand image from consumers. For example, SJ Value *"Härligt"* might be too difficult to communicate and therefore might create a confused brand image of SJ.

Another aspect that could be further studied is reputation within industries. Specifically how organization operating in the same industries affect each other and how one organization can have the potential to affect a whole industry through its actions. Transparency in public organizations could also be an area of further research, especially, what is occurring when an organization is moving from a monopoly market to becoming more consumer centred and market orientated. Coherency between actors inside the organisation as well as creating a community. Also, more research on change in public industries.

Appendix

Appendix 1.

Interview guide - Swedish

- Berätta lite om Er organisation?
- Vad är din/er roll? Vad innebär den? Vad arbetar ni med på en daglig basis?

Marknadsföring
- Vad associerar du med begreppet "Marknadsföring"?
- På vilket sätt använder ni er av marknadsföring idag?
- Utarbetar ni allt inom organisation eller konsulteras ni av externa byråer exempelvis?
- Vad är målen med era marknadsföringskampanjer? Uppnå önskade attityder/ beteende mot varumärket, ökad försäljning, exempelvis?
- Har synen på Marknadsföring ändrats från de senaste 5 åren till de kommande 5 åren? Om ja, på vilket sätt?
- Skulle ni säga att Er marknadsföring siktar på att huvudsakligen fokusera på den erbjudna transport-tjänsten eller marknadsföring av organisationen som helhet?

Varumärkesstrategi
- Vad ligger det i begreppet "varumärke" enligt er?
- Hur ser ni på ert varumärke och eventuell varumärkesbyggande?
- Kommunicerar ni något budskap till konsumenterna från er organisation?
    - Om ja, vad är detta budskapet?
- Har ni några grundvärden?
    - om ja, vilka?
- Är dessa grundvärden något som ni kommunicerar till konsumenter?
- Genomsyrar dessa grundvärden hela organisationen?
    - Det vill säga är exempelvis tåg-chaufförerna medvetna om SLs varumärke?
- Med tanke på att det är väldigt många aktörer som samarbetar för att upprätthålla tågtrafiken i Region Stockholm, arbetar ni mot att det ska finnas en samhörighet mellan dessa gällande varumärke? Strävar ni efter samma mål och kvalité av tjänster?
- Upplever ni några svårigheter angående ert varumärke och byggnaden av det?
    - Om ja, vilka? Hur hanterar ni dessa?
- Hur ofta förändrar ni ert varumärke eller försöker ni behålla det?
    - Hur ofta förnya ni det isåfall?
- Mäter ni på något sätt hur ni uppfattas och styrkan av ert varumärke bland konsumenter och andra aktörer i marknaden?
- Vem är det som tar besluten gällande varumärkesstrategi och Marknadsföring?
    - På vilken nivå tas de slutgiltiga besluten i organisationen?

- Har ni något sätt som ni mäter eller estimerar hur effekten av en kampanj exempelvis kommer påverka ert varumärke och organisationen?

Konkurrenter
- Vilka/ vad skulle ni definiera som era största konkurrenter? Om ni anser att ni har konkurrenter?
- Med tanke på att vi lever i en snabbt förändrande värld hur anpassar ni er till allt som går väldigt fort? Vilka faktorer är det då som gör att ni förändrar er? Exempelvis, konkurrenter eller konsumenter?
- Med tanke på nya tjänster såsom e-scooters, e-bilar osv., som också påstås vara miljövänliga. Hur påverkar detta Er och varumärket?

Konsumenter
- Vad tror ni att konsumenter associerar med ert varumärke?
- Är dessa associationerna i förenlighet med vad ni önskar?
    - Om inte, vilka associationer önskar ni att konsumenter ska hålla som erat relaterade varumärke?
- När ni arbetar med marknadsföring och ert varumärke, utgår ni ifrån konsumenterna eller interna motivationen i organisationen?
- Tror ni att den kommunicerade bilden och den faktiska bilden stämmer överens med hur konsumenter ser på er organisation?
- Hur arbetar ni med feedback från konsumenter? Tar ni dessa i åtanke när ni planerar marknadsföringsaktiviteter?
- Vilken är den viktigaste kontaktpunkten som konsumenter har mer Ert varumärke?
- Fastställer ni på något sätt att det ska vara samma kvalité mellan alla så kallade punkter exempelvis, rese-upplevelse, reklam, applikation osv.?

Appendix 2.

Interview guide - English

- Please explain a bit about your organization and what it does.
- What is your role? What does it entail? What do you do on a daily basis?

Marketing
- What do you associate with the term marketing?
- In what way does your organization use marketing?
- Are marketing and branding developed within the organization or with help of external agencies?
- What is the main goals with your organization's marketing campaigns?
- Have the view on marketing changed the last five years? If yes, in what way?
- Would you say that the marketing of your organization is mainly focused on the service itself or the organization as a whole?

Branding Strategy
- What do you associate with the term branding?
- How does your organization view its own brand the brand building process?
- Does your organization communicate any message towards the consumer?
- Does your organization have any core values?
- Does your organization communicate these values to the consumers?
- Does these core values permeate the whole organization?
- Considering there are several actors working together to coordinate the public transportation in Stockholm ,how do you ensure the coherence between these actors considering the SL-brand? Do you strive towards the same targets and quality of your services?
- Does your organization experience any difficulties in regards to the brand the brand building process?
- Is your organization trying to adapt the brand or sustain it?
- Do you measure how you are perceived by consumers, concerning the strength of your brand amongst consumers or other actors in the market?
- Who is responsible and make the decision in regards to branding strategies and marketing? And at what level does the decision-making occur?

Competition
- Who or what do you perceive as your organizations biggest competitor? If you believe you have any?
- Since we are living is a fast moving industry how do you adapt to this in terms of strategic renewal for example? What factors do you adapt to? For example, competition or consumers?
- Are the new services out there such as e-scooters, electrical cars etc, affecting your organizations brand?

Consumer
- What kind of attitudes do you think the consumer have towards your organization and how do you think they perceive the brand?
- Are these associations in accordance to how you would want your brand to be perceived?
- When you work with marketing and branding, do you take ground from the consumers or internal motivations?
- Do you believe that the communicated image and the actual image is accordance with each other?
- How do you review and work with feedback from consumers? Do you take those into account when planning for marketing activities?
- Concerning brand touchpoints: which is the most important contact consumers have with SL to experience your brand?
- How do you ensure consistent quality and communication throughout all touchpoints?

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