Umeå. Wants more.

A coordination perspective on how key stakeholders develop place brand identity.

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Abstract

During centuries, places – nations, region and cities – have tried to make themselves more attractive, productive, lucrative and secure. This strive has accelerated due to globalization and other external factors. Today there is fierce and global competition between cities regarding promoting exports, convincing firms to invest as well as attracting tourists and inhabitants. The place brand, and the meaning of it, is key for success. However, place branding is challenging. It includes the involvement of all stakeholders – possessing different agendas and target markets – and the coordination of those while simultaneously making sure that conflicting messages, harming the place brand, are avoided. There is a disagreement among researchers whether to prefer a single brand identity – contributing with a clear and trustworthy message, or if a multiple identity approach – enriching and diversifying the place brand, is desirable. The described conflicts above create the problem background on which this study is based. Place branding is a relatively new but growing field of research. The topic is multidisciplinary and we consider it advantageous to study place branding from a stakeholder and coordination perspective. In this thesis, the Stakeholders are viewed as the actors that engage in the act of Coordination to successfully undertake the process of Place Branding in order to develop a strong Place brand identity. Based on the purpose and research problems of this thesis, we aim to produce a better tool for analyzing brand identity development. A theory based preliminary framework was developed with the intention of testing it on the case Place brand Umeå.

For this qualitative research, a single case study design is used and nine key stakeholders are identified for the data gathering – using semi-structured interviews, secondary data and observations as data collection methods. The preliminary framework is used as an analytical tool and gives guidance to the research. For the analysis, categorization and pattern matching techniques are employed. The main finding of this study is that the theoretical framework of place brand identity development holds and can be used for the understanding of the process of identity development. The key stakeholders develop the brand identity through individual and common goals and activities. Coordination can be managed through common activities within areas of interdependencies, hence the framework emphasizes the correct identification of key stakeholders, goals and activities. All components of the brand identity development process are affected by external factors. For the case of Place brand Umeå, the framework was slightly modified according to the empirical findings. We identified coordination problems between the key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå and offered recommendations to manage the issues. The main contribution of this research is the theory-based framework laying the foundation for a general theory on the topic, thus contributing to theory. Our study also fills other research gaps by contributing with an understanding of the stakeholder’s role, prerequisites for coordination and by studying place branding in the context of a mid-size city. With regard to the empirical contribution, this study offers a range of insights for Umeå and the findings can be regarded as a starting point for brand managers working to develop the place brand identity in other contexts.

KEYWORDS: Place branding, Stakeholder, Coordination, Brand identity
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1. Introduction

In this introductory chapter, we will argue for and present the problem background of this study – which also includes an introduction of the three areas of research and the presentation of the identified gaps in previous research. The background ends up in the purpose as well as the theoretical and empirical research problems of the study. Then, delimitations, contributions as well as key definitions of the research are presented.

1.1 Problem background

“Cities have always been brands, in the truest sense of the word.”

(Anholt, 2006, p. 2)

During centuries, citizens have tried to make their places a bit more productive, secure, attractive and lucrative. History books are filled with nations, regions and cities that have been successful when it comes to attracting migration of key competences and encouraging innovations within different areas – there among the modern San Francisco with Silicon Valley, and the classic Athens (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 13). Through the last decades, the world has been exposed to many changes regarding its business activities. Globalization, technological advances as well as deregulations has increased the competition and changed the competitive arena for places. Now, the main competitors are no longer the city next doors, but several cities (sometimes) located on other continents (Van Gelder & Roberts, 2007, p. 1). Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 2) acknowledge this growing competition between cities when it comes to promoting exports, convincing firms to invest and attracting tourists and inhabitants. Florida (2005, p. 54) recognizes that there is a connection between the places ability to attract top creative talent and the occurrence of economic progress and prosperity. Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993, p. 312-316) argue that places are increasingly at risk because of the growing competition for the scarce resources, the accelerating pace of change in the macro environment and because of citizens and companies moving out to suburbs to escape pollution and crime, which makes the urban areas deteriorate. In order to face the global competition places must think globally but act locally – meaning that places must identify what they can offer that someone else – somewhere in the world – needs, and then serve these customers locally.

Even though the core disciplines of the research domains of place branding and city branding are marketing and economic geography, many contrasting academic disciplines have studied these using different methods, empirical tools and explanations. Consequently, the domains have been a topic of endless debate (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011, p. 12). Lucarelli and Berg (2011, p. 22) point out that city branding has borrowed concepts and methods from different disciplines and state that upcoming research needs to handle it as a genuine inter-disciplinary research domain, which requires a critical approach and a wide range of different types of research and methods. The issue of the place brand identity divides the researcher into two groups. On the one side, it is argued that the common identity of the place’s internal stakeholders – the politicians, businesses, branding authorities and residents – is a crucial aspect to successfully market the place to the customers – the tourists, students, workers and companies (Müller & Schade, 2012, p. 12). On the other side, several researchers promote the idea and benefits of multiple identities, there among Skinner (2008, p. 916), who argues that
each of the stakeholders will want to assign the place brand a meaning that suits the target market of that stakeholder. A diverse place branding approach can possibility work to enrich and diversify the place (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011, p. 431-432).

The word “Stakeholder” appeared for the first time in the management literature already in 1963. The original definition was “those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exists” (Freeman, 1984, p. 31). However, it was not until the mid 80s, after the pioneer of the subject – Richard Edward Freeman – launched the publication “Strategic Management: A Stakeholder approach” (1984) that the concept really became popular. Fundamentally, “Stakeholder theory” is about how organization works at its best and how it could work – it is about value creation, trade and how to effectively manage the organization (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & del Colle, 2010, p. 9). In order to connect the theory to the purpose of this thesis, we consider the place brand as the organization/firm. There are no general criteria for how to classify stakeholders into groups and thus, authors of previous studies have chosen different ways in order to do so. For instance, Wheeler and Sillanpää (1997, p. 167-168) classify stakeholders according to four groups – Primary social stakeholders, Secondary social stakeholders, Primary non-social stakeholders and Secondary non-social stakeholders. Medway, Alexander, Bennison and Wamaby (1998, p. 369) order stakeholders into three groups – Public sector, Private sector and Voluntary Sector. Evans (1997, p. 97-98) proposes three groups – Producers, Users and Intermediaries, and Kotler et al. (1999, in Rainisto 2003, p. 41, 35) suggest two groups – Public and Private sector – and also highlight that the marketing of the place has four different target markets, with different stakeholders belonging to each one of them. The definitions chosen for this thesis can be found in section 1.6, and the criteria used for the selection of stakeholders is presented in section 4.1.

There are several challenges of place branding – and these are far more compelling than designing a new logotype or marketing campaign. The first trial lie in defining the entity to be branded – the country, region and city (Allen, 2007, p. 60), then the next issue is the creation of the place brand, which is depending on coordination, integration and cooperation (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, p. 11). Allan (2006, p. 5-6) states that places needs to involve all key stakeholders – that is all the organizations and institutions that have a stake in the future development of the place in the process – as their investment, communications and actions are crucial to how the story of the city will be communicated. Still, simply working together is not enough. All stakeholders need to understand and agree upon the brand’s core attributes since this provides the groundwork on which the brand strengths are built. In addition, the brand consistency needs to be sustained over time (Allen, 2007, p. 60-62). However, the involvement of all key players can result in conflicting stakeholder objectives and needs, and the challenge is to find ways to communicate and accommodate these (Trueman, Klemm & Giroud, 2004, p. 321). A major failure, reducing the chance of successful cooperation, is a shortage of good leadership working to coordinate the stakeholders (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, p. 75). Anholt (2007, p. 3) argues that the lack of coordination of the key actors promotion of products and services often leads to them sending out contradictory messages. The consequence is the emergence of an inconsistent picture of the place and a reputation that stands still, or even worse, moves backwards. Coordination plays a huge part when influencing the performance of alliance settings (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 522). According to Malone and Crowston (1990, p. 4) the components of coordination are goals, activities, actors and interdependencies.
This means, for coordination to exist, actors need to be doing interdependent activities towards some objectives. Many researchers, including Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2007, p. 522) argue that the most effective way to influence people’s perception of a city is to make the internal organizations strive towards the same objectives.

In the review of literature related to the multidisciplinary topic of place branding, several research areas established models and theories were examined. This lead to the identification of the most appropriate research areas – this process and argumentation is further described in section 2.10 – and several knowledge gaps. First, we noted that there are little research on place branding from a stakeholder perspective, in spite of the fact that the individual stakeholder – e.g. the city council, education authorizes, major local employers and business investors – will have specific needs, priorities and expectations. Second, we lack empirical research on which the prerequisites are for the creation of successful coordination of the place brand’s key stakeholders. Kavaratzis (2012, p. 17) highlights that an interesting aspect for future research within the area of place branding is to distinguish the central desires of stakeholders and try to integrate these. For this study, distinguishing all underlying factors that are related to each stakeholder’s desires are considered too immense. However, the stakeholders’ desires can be related to – and is the foundation of – their respective objectives. We view the key stakeholders objectives as a central part of the issue of key stakeholder coordination. Third, despite the comprehensive literature on the importance of the place brand identity, there is no sufficient tool for analyzing brand identity development. Fourth, most studies on place branding have been made on countries or larger cities (e.g. Suma & Ertrörün, 2011; Rainisto, 2003; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2003; Strandgaard & Ooi, 2010; Björner, 2010) and our feasible conclusion is that there is a lack of studies made in other contexts. For these reasons, it is of high value to further explore the concepts of place branding and place brand identity development – from a coordination and stakeholder perspective – within a mid-size city.

The empirical study is performed in the city of Umeå (except from one interview held in Skellefteå due to practical issues), which is the 11th largest city in Sweden in terms of inhabitants (SCB, 2011), thus to be viewed as a mid-size city in our opinion. The case that this thesis seeks to investigate is consequently Place Brand Umeå. In Umeå, the work with the Place brand has accelerated during the last years and a brand platform and core values are adopted. The long-term motto – “Umeå. Wants more” (Umeå. Vill mer) – implies that the city of Umeå wants to grow and improve (Portalen för Umeå, 2011a).

The scope of the research is within the fields of marketing and management and is rather broad as it concerns three main areas; Place branding, Stakeholders and Coordination. These main concepts are presented in figure 1. Much of the literature reviewed, for instance a study by Hanna & Rowley (2011), show a clear connection between these three factors. In this thesis, the Stakeholders are viewed as the actors that engage in the act of Coordination to successfully undertake the process of Place Branding in order to develop a strong Place brand identity. Hence, Coordination is viewed as the link between Place branding and Stakeholders and the three concepts have a central connection in the notion of Place Brand Identity. The theoretical gaps that the thesis aims to fill will hence be linked to the topic of Place brand identity.
1.2 Purpose of the study and research problems

The purpose of this exploratory study is to produce a more accurate tool for analyzing place brand identity development. Our objective is to develop a theory based preliminary framework to be tested on a single case. The preliminary framework will be modified according to the empirical findings and a case specific theoretical framework of place brand identity development will be presented. Taking a stakeholder perspective, the focal point is to gain insight about which the key stakeholders are, how they perceive the place brand and how they coordinate towards the desirable identity. The theoretical research problem of this study is:

How can the process of developing place brand identity be understood?

There is clear link between the theoretical research problem and the empirical ditto. For the empirical study, by applying the preliminary framework of place brand identity development on the case Place brand Umeå, our objective is to gain insight of the situation – with regard to the stakeholders, the coordination and place brand identity – in Umeå and form recommendations for this particular case. For this, we seek to answer the empirical research problem:

How is the place brand identity developed in the city of Umeå?

For the empirical study, based on the purpose of this thesis, we started with a broad topic and narrowed this down step-by-step, to define the research area (see figure 2).

1.3 Delimitation and Contribution

In order to keep the research rather narrow and define the boundaries, sufficient delimitations, i.e. explanations of what the study will not investigate and reasons for this, are decided upon. The emphasis of this thesis is to find and analyze the stakeholders’ coordination – that includes among other things the objectives – affecting and developing the place brand identity, hence the preliminary framework does not reveal how a strong place brand identity is created. The study does neither seek to investigate the reasons for the choice of Umeå’s profile, the brand platform or core values, nor is the aim to evaluate if the most appropriate strategies area chosen. The study focuses on the brand identity creator (the stakeholders) – the sender of the

Figure 1. The connection of the main research areas.

Figure 2. Defining the research area.
message, and pays very little attention to the brand image creator (the customer) – the receiver of the message. Moreover, the focus is strictly directed upon nine actors within the city, more specifically organizations within the private sector and public sector that have key influence on the place brand identity. These are selected with criteria stated in theory. Individuals, with leading positions within the different organizations, represent each actor. The nine actors, defined as key stakeholders, are the major subjects of interest in this thesis. Hence, no other stakeholders – residents, students, visitors – are investigated. The broad scope – the areas of Stakeholders, Coordination and Place branding – is studied with a narrow focus; the three areas connection to Place brand identity. The theories and models applicable for the main areas will be used as background to the study but foremost as the foundation of the preliminary framework. Thus, specific theories only applicable for certain stakeholder groups, e.g. destination marketing theories used by tourism stakeholders, are not seen as distinctly relevant and are therefore excluded.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis is twofold. First, the investigation lays the foundation for a general theory by the development of a combined framework – a theoretical based tool – for place brand identity development. Second, this preliminary framework is tested and improved according to the empirical findings from the case study. Hence, the study shall make a theoretical contribution to the general understanding of place branding from the perspective of stakeholders and coordination. City planners, municipalities, tourist informations and event planners can benefit from the study as the general findings can be applied to other contexts – that is places of different sizes and in other parts of the world. The empirical study will contribute to an understanding of the situation in Umeå with regard to the development of the brand identity, thus identify the different key stakeholders’ goals and how the work is coordinated. This will enable us to give recommendations for improvements.

1.4 Definitions

Within this study there are important and recurrently used concepts. For a correct understanding of this thesis, we believe that the following definitions are central;

**Brand** “A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name.” (AMA, 2012)

**City branding** “…understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest.” (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 70)

**Coordination** “The act of managing interdependencies between activities performed to achieve a goal.” (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 5)

**Key stakeholder (of a Place brand)** “A stakeholder that has a clear connection to the place brand – is in some way directly or indirectly “selling the place” – and is depending on the place brand for goal achievement and success.”
Place branding “… a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design.” (Zenker & Braun, 2010, p. 3)

Place brand identity “.the visual, verbal and behavioural expressions of a place, which are embodied in the aims, communication, values and general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design.” (Zenker, 2011, p. 42)

Stakeholders “All the organizations and institutions that have a stake in the future development of the place.” (Allan, 2006, p. 6)

1.5 Outline of the study

This study is divided into 8 chapters. Chapter 1 aims to give the reader an introduction to the topic including the problem background, research areas and the gap in previous research. This ends up in the purpose, the research problems, delimitations and contributions of the study. Thereafter, key definitions are presented. Chapter 2 presents and describes the methodology choices made for this thesis and presents the quality criteria and ethical concerns. Then, we argue for the choice of literature and research areas, and explain the concept of the preliminary framework – our analytical tool – derived from the literature. Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive understanding of previous authors work – models and theories – that constitute the foundation of the preliminary framework of this study. The chapter ends with the presentation of the preliminary framework of place brand identity development.

Chapter 4 handles the choices regarding the practical methodology, which are closely connected the preliminary framework. The respondent selection and sampling techniques are clarified, the key stakeholders and the interview guide are presented, and the data collection is explained. Then, the use of the preliminary framework as a guide to the structure and analysis of empirical data is clarified and we present how and what analytical techniques that were employed for the analysis. Chapter 5 presents the empirical data – from interviews, secondary data and observations – through the Case description. The chapter starts with a background of the place studied and thereafter the empirical data is organized and structured under the five themes of the interview guide.

Chapter 6 analyzes and discusses the empirical data presented in the case description. The preliminary framework is used as the analytical tool and gives guidance to the structure of the analysis. Our interpretation of the empirical data, which is evaluated and compared with the use of theory, is structured and divided into the three main areas of the preliminary framework. Then, the revised – case specific – theoretical framework is presented. The chapter ends with the answers to the research problems. Chapter 7 provides the main findings, which answers the research problems, presents recommendations, contributions and limitations of the thesis. Chapter 8 gives recommendations for further research. At last, References and Appendices – comprising Stakeholder definitions and the interview guide, in English and Swedish, are presented.
2. Methodology

As a starting point of the research, this chapter presents the philosophical standpoints of the study. Then, the research approach and choices regarding research strategy and design, the case as well as data collection methods are elucidated and discussed. The chapter also clarifies the quality criteria and ethics of the research. Last, we argue for the choice of literature and the areas of research, as well as the connection to the preliminary framework – which will be used as an analytical tool guiding the research.

2.1 Personal reflections

We want to stress the importance of staying objective as researchers. By objective we mean eliminate personal biases, previous commitments and emotional involvement. However, when conducting any research, it is likely that the researchers own background, experience and interest will affect the direction of the research and influence the results. In fact, it might be viewed as almost impossible to remain objective when conducting research within social science (Neuman & Kreuger, 2006, p. 125). Creswell (2007, p. 21) even states that it is clear that researchers prior background and knowledge will affect the understanding. The fact that we are students at Umeå University, and inhabitants of Umeå, influence how we view the society and which priorities that are made. Inhabitants of the city can be seen as stakeholder, but this group is not considered in this research. Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 30) state that research cannot be value free since preconceptions interferes in decisions and thus prior knowledge, experience and attitudes will have an impact on how the researcher views things and also what is seen. To limit the negative consequences that can arise due to a lack of objectivity, Svenning (1997, p. 12-13) proposes the research to clarify all preconceptions, perspective and purposes that can have influence of the way the research is conduced. By reflecting on these, we are hopeful that we can reduce the impact that predeterminations can have on the findings. Nevertheless, it is important that the reader keeps these issues in mind.

Our educational background – and our specific areas of knowledge – is within marketing and entrepreneurship, thus the thesis is likely to be influenced by preconceptions from these two disciplines. Also, since the area of place branding is multidisciplinary the study is also connected to the discipline of management, which will influence the study to a large extent. Consequently, the research will present more angles, than the marketing perspective, which is the main discipline within which this thesis is written. Our social and geographic backgrounds are quite diverse. One of us is raised in Umeå and has substantial work-experience from Umeå tourist information. The other one grew up in the south of Sweden and has large work-experience from one of the largest businesses within the industrial sector in the Umeå region. This is likely to affect our interpretation of the environment and the respondents. Our understandings of the surroundings have affected the choice of topic for this thesis and partly originated from a critical perception of how place branding is used in the city and how the key stakeholders work together. Hence, there is a risk that the research will be affected by these personal and internal doubts. We are aware of this and strongly believe that we can actively work to not let the preconception lead to bias of the analysis. Lastly, by using other authors’ definitions of key concepts and reviewing related literature, we hope to reduce the impact of our personal preconceptions to a minimum.
2.2 Choice of subject and research approach

The choice of subject for this thesis originated from our interest in the effects of globalization and increased competition on cities as well as the businesses and organizations operating there. The actors – businesses, organizations, and institutions – in a city have at least two things in common, the geographical location and the objective to make the most out of the resources. The place brand is an intangible entity that everyone, and no one, owns. Today, place branding is a growing, multidisciplinary, field of research and the topics relation to stakeholders becomes very interesting after reading Maio’s (2003, p. 236) views; “In today’s highly relationship-driven world, the brand is a dynamic, vital, living entity, fed by the interaction among its myriad stakeholders.”

Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 11) state that the deductive research includes a theoretical structure as the starting point to gathering empirical data and that the inductive approach is the exact opposite – the theory is the outcome of the research. According to Creswell (2003, p. 134), the use of theory affects its placement in the study. We want to stress that the existing literature does not offer a feasible theory to answer the theoretical and empirical research problems or the purpose, hence we explore the possibility to create such theory (derived from literature) and further improve it by applying it on a single case. The frame of reference in Chapter 3 reveals the literature reviewed from the three main areas of research and will be used for the development of the preliminary framework, i.e. the analytical tool that will guide the research. Therefore, the deductive approach is chosen for this study. However, according to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 14), deduction entails a small amount of induction, and that is also the case for this study. Since the preliminary framework will be tested on a case and thereafter modified according to the case specific empirical findings, this study also has inductive elements. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 25) state that although the inductive – theory building – approach sometimes is understood as rather subjective, well done theory building from cases is remarkably objective as a result of its close adherence to the data which helps keeping the research honest. Moreover, the investigation undertaken was of exploratory type. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003, p. 96) state that exploratory studies are valuable to obtain new insights and that these studies are “particular useful if you wish to clarify your understanding of a problem”. This is just in line with our intentions. Section 7.1 presents the main findings and new insights of this thesis.

2.3 Research process

The research process was divided into three parts (see figure 3). Starting with a fairly broad problem area in the pre-phase – which consisted of search for information about Umeå, place branding, stakeholder and coordination. An extensive amount of previous and related literature and theories where studied. This first phase also included consultation – informal meetings and discussions – with a number of individuals with good knowledge about the topic, in order to develop more ideas, new perspectives and to receive support. All of this together made us narrow down the problem area, identify the research gap and formulate the research problems.

The first phase lead to the development of the preliminary framework, which was the starting point of the second phase. The actual data collection of the research was based on interviews with key stakeholders, secondary data and observations, and the second-
phase also consisted of the pilot study of the interview, adjustments of the interview guide and careful preparations before the data-collection took place. The interviews were arranged in Umeå (with one exception that for practical reasons took place in Skellefteå) during approximately one week in April 2012, during which we also collected the secondary data. The observations were spread out over almost half of a year. The time remaining after the data collection belonged to the third phase of the research process. In this last part, the empirical data was presented, analyzed and discussed. Thereafter, the preliminary framework – improved with the case specific empirical findings – was portrayed and the research problems were answered. This last phase was completed a few weeks before the deadline in the end of May, which enabled us to review the material and make sure that the thesis was complete.

The chosen methods and motivations are all linked to the purpose and research problems of this thesis and will be explained in depth in the following parts of this chapter as well as in chapter 4. Table 1 shows a summary of the methodological choices.

2.4 Methodological Assumption

As a starting point, it is necessary to present our views of what reality is and how it ought to be examined, likewise what method to employ. These issues are connected to the methodological considerations of ontology, epistemology and methods (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 16-24). The selection of the methodological assumptions is grounded in the purpose and research problem of the thesis.

Firstly, for the epistemological assumption, a vital concern is if the same procedures, main believes and ethos can, and are supposed to be utilized for the study of natural science as well as the study of social science (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 17-19). Kilduff and Mehra (2011, p. 299) add that epistemological matters concerns how one gains
access to knowledge and the link between knowledge and truth. The epistemological position of positivism can be summarized as the assumption that the independent researcher – that won’t affect nor be affected by those participating in the study – will interpret and generalize the gathered information in a value free manner (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 83-84). However, as this thesis seeks to study the unique circumstances of key stakeholders to gain an understanding of their role, behavior and coordination, and do not intend to generalize beyond the case (i.e. aim to generalize analytically), the research philosophy of positivism does not conform with our own considerations. According to Saunders et al. (2003, p. 84), the contrasting epistemology to positivism – the philosophical stance of interpretivism – does not view generalizability as crucial. Interpretivism supports the thought of seeking to understand the subjective reality of the research objects. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 19) state that interpretivism begins with the thought that the only access to common dynamic and individually constructed reality is through social constructions as language and shared meanings. We, as researchers agree with the ideas of interpretivism, as our intention is to gain insight about who the key stakeholders are, how they perceive the place brand and their motivation and actions in coordinating towards the desirable identity.

Secondly, the ontological assumption of what reality is (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 13) can, for this thesis, be defended by the ontological position called constructivism. Creswell (2007, p. 20) notes that constructivism is often combined with the epistemological position of interpretivism, which is also the case for this study. The position of constructivism implies that social phenomena and their meanings are repeatedly attained by social actors, and that the investigator’s own accounts of the social world are only to be understood as constructions (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 23-24). Hence, outside the individuals, reality does not exist (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 14). In terms of practice, the constructivist researcher focuses on broad and general questions to enable the participant to construct the meaning of the situation – and it is clear that the researcher’s interpretation is shaped by his/her own experiences and background (Creswell, 2007, p. 21), this is just in line with our intentions. However, we believe that it is necessary to take Flowers (2009, p. 3) recommendations into consideration. He states that step must be taken in order to avoid bias and he advises the use of self-reflection, hence section 2.1 present and evaluate our personal pre-conceptions.

2.5 Research Strategy: Qualitative Strategy

For this thesis, a qualitative research strategy is chosen. The desires to see and express a happening from the research objects perspective – through his or her eyes – is the core of qualitative research (Bryman, 1997, p. 77), which is just in line with our intentions. As stated earlier, this study is largely exploratory and according to Shiu, Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2009, p. 172), therefore normally a qualitative research method is used. We are hoping to pinpoint the meaning of the key stakeholders intentions and perspectives, understand the environment in which they act and how this context influences their actions. We also hope to recognize unanticipated phenomena and understand the process of place brand identity development and how the stakeholders’ coordinate. All of these intentions are just in line with what Maxwell (2005, p. 22-23) defines as five certain intellectuals goals for which the qualitative study are especially well suited.
It should be noted that quantitative research that emphasizes quantification in the gathering and analysis of information (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 27) also has advantages well worth considering. Bryman (1997, p. 42-51) discusses the quantitative studies establishment of causality and internal validity, the opportunity of replication of the research as well as the possibility to generalize and show external validity. In fact, the lack of generalizability, due to the use of a non-random and small sample can be seen as a real disadvantage of the qualitative approach (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 174). However, for this research – which emphasizes words rather than quantification of data and numbers – neither of the advantages of a quantitative study is seen as required to fulfill the purpose of the thesis. Quite the reverse, one advantage of the qualitative research is the possibility to acquire in-depth information – perceptions, attitudes, emotions and beliefs – about the research subject, which can enable an understanding of behaviors (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 174). This is a much more suitable advantage with regard to the purpose and research problems of this thesis. In addition, as a result of a relatively small sample, the chosen research strategy is less time and money consuming than a quantitative study (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 174). Lastly, it ought to be mentioned that the qualitative research, in general, provides an extensive amount of information (Backman, 1998, p. 57). In order to deal with this issue, our analytical tool – the preliminary framework – serves as an outline, the guide and the core structure for how we select data.

2.6 Research Design: Single Case Study

Shiu et al. (2009, p. 173) state that qualitative research tends to have its focus on the gathering of detailed information from a comparatively minor sample of subjects by observing behavior or asking questions. For this thesis, the research design “single case study” is used. When the main strategy for research is qualitative, a case study tends to take an inductive stance (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 63), as mentioned earlier, this is not fully true for this thesis as the study can be seen as foremost deductive with inductive elements. A case study is preferable when the researchers aim is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the context of the study, as well as develop answer to questions like “how” and “why” (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 93). The case study can be defined as a research design that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1989, p. 23). Thus, for a comprehensive understanding of the case, the investigation must rely on multiple sources of data relevant to the case (Bryman, 1997, p. 157). We have adhered to this and found that for this study, data from qualitative interviews, secondary data and participant observations are necessary for a complete understanding of the case. These are further presented in the sections 2.7 and 4.4.

Case studies are held to be particularly suitable for investigations where the research objectives are very complex and the researcher seeks to explain, understand and describe larger phenomena, systems or organizations (Backman 1998, p. 49). This is just in line with what we want to accomplish with study. However the contextual approach makes it difficult to evaluate what the case is and where to draw the boundaries. The case can be an individual group, organization or happening (Backman 1998, p. 49). For this study, the boundaries have been strictly drawn and the identified case is “Place brand Umeå”.

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Creswell (2007, p. 78) presents a general sketch of alternative research designs, which highlights the contrasting characteristics. For this thesis, the complexity of the group chosen and the intentions of the research make the use of any alternative research designs – where the major ones are experimental, cross sectional, longitudinal, case study and comparative (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 72) – are seen as less attractive options. Nonetheless, these have also been considered.

Due to the limited amount of time for completing this research, the case study is conducted over a short timeframe. According to Saunders et al. (2003, p. 95-96), if the research is a “snapshot” taken at a particular point in time it is defined as a cross-sectional case study, and many case studies are in fact based on interviews performed over a short time. It should be noted that the case study, as all research designs, has shortcomings. For instance, it has been accused of exaggerating and oversimplifying factors of situations (Merriam, 1994, p. 47). We are aware of this and have been careful to avoid this from happening by clearly presenting the empirical data (see chapter 5) and analyzed and discussed it in an organized and careful manner (see chapter 6). The logic of the research design for this thesis was clearly organized to enable congruence between the research theory, research problems, data collection and analysis.

2.7 Choice of Case – Place brand Umeå

The case studied in this thesis is Place brand Umeå. The study was carried out in Umeå (except from one interview that was held in Skellefteå) and the respondents are all key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå. There are numerous reasons motivating the choice of this case.

First, Umeå is a mid-size city with large visions. The objective is to grow rapidly and reach 200 000 inhabitants before year 2050 (Portalen för Umeå, 2010). To achieve this, more individuals need to choose Umeå as their permanent city of residence instead of choosing any of the other cities around the world. In order to attract residents, visitors (who might become future residence), businesses (creating more jobs) and investors; the city needs to be viewed as a place that offers extraordinary possibilities that fills the needs for a wide range of different individuals. The place brand is the perfect metaphor for the way places compete with each other in the global marketplace (Anholt, 2010, p. 1), hence to win the competition – a strong place brand is needed. Second, Umeå actively does place branding. The whole idea of branding the city already exists in Umeå, investments are made and actions are taken. A brand platform and four Core values were – after deep and compelling research, analysis as well as workshops with a large number of people – launched in 2007 (Svensson, 2009, p. 6). It is obvious that there exists an interest for place branding, brand identity and coordination in Umeå. The findings of this study can hopefully give new ideas and insights useful for the work to further develop the place brand and the place brand identity. Third, the understanding and priority of this topic is very up-to-date in Umeå because of the fact that the city has been elected European Capital of Culture 2014 (Portalen för Umeå, 2010). This award is incredibly important and has a tremendous impact on all actors – the municipality, businesses, organizations and entrepreneurs – involved in the planning and preparation. It also creates many opportunities to further develop and strengthen the city brand and this will demand coordination of the stakeholders’ actions and activities. In order to make the most out of this large happening, before, during and after 2014 – a strong place brand is needed. Fourth, convenience is an argument that cannot be neglected. We
are studying and living in Umeå and this have contributed to a large interest and passion for the city and the development of it. This interest grew after meetings and discussions with some of the people involved in the marketing of the city. As a consequence of our involvement in work and other projects, the authors network is fairly broad and this facilitates easy access to respondents and valuable information. The combination of the reasons stated above show our motivation and the importance of conducting the study in the context of Umeå. All these reasons contributed to the choice of the case to study.

2.8 Data collection methods: Interviews, Secondary data, Observations

The unique strength of a case study is "its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations" (Yin, 2003, p. 8). Empirical data was collected through interviews, secondary data and observations. Gathering data with the use of a variety of sources and methods is called triangulation. By using triangulation, the risk that conclusions only will reflect systematic bias is reduced and hence admits the researcher to achieve a wider as well as more confident view of the subject under investigation (Maxwell, 2005, p. 93-94). Hence, the motivation for choosing three complementing data collection methods for this study was to avoid reliance on just one approach, get a holistic view and increase reliability. However, we want to stress that the interviews constitute the primary method of data collection for this thesis. The three data collection methods, as well their suitability for this study, are further described below. Other methods; for instance focus groups, have been considered. A focus group means that the researcher gathers 8-12 people in a room together with a moderator to discuss issues for one or two hours. This can give many interesting new insights, however a disadvantage is that the participants might not feel comfortable sharing with others what they actually and truly feel (Neuman & Kreuger, 2006, p. 286). For this research, despite the many interesting discussion a focus group could lead to, we believe that it would indeed be difficult to make some of them express their true opinion and we consider it unmanageable to gather more than a couple of the respondent at the same time. Thus, we argue that the chosen methods for data collection are the most suitable to fulfill the purpose and to answer the research problems of the study.

2.8.1 Qualitative interviews: Semi-structured Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are possibly the most widely used method (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 472). For this thesis, the main source of empirical data was gathered through nine semi-structured interviews. The choice is motivated by the intention to explore a group containing many different stakeholders and let the interviewees speak freely in relation to predetermined themes. This is in line with Saunders et al. (2003, p. 251) description of a semi-structured interview and these authors also state that this research method will be most appropriate when the art of the questions are open ended, complex and where the order of them can vary. Compared to the almost totally unstructured interviews, we saw a big advantage with the semi-structured interview as the interview guide – with flexible questions – could steer the interview in such direction that made sure that the interview covered the sufficient areas (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 474). The choice of the semi-structured interview is also well connected to exploratory angle of this research (Saunders, 2003, p. 248). The unstructured qualitative interviews are different from the more formalized and standardized interviews used in quantitative research. The prior tries to achieve rich and detailed answers and is quite
flexible, whereas the latter is inflexible and aims for short answers that can be coded (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 474). Shiu et al. (2009, p. 206) mean that a general rule of thumb is that the more the respondent talks about the topic, the more likely it is that underlying attitudes, emotions, motives and behaviors are revealed, which was exactly what we were hoping for.

One drawback with the semi-structured interview is noted by Bryman (1997, p. 115) who argues that these types of interviews imply shorter time of interaction between the research object and the researcher, compared to what would be the case when using the method direct participant observation. Another issue to keep in mind is that the interviewer must have both excellent interpersonal communication and listening skills (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 207). Unfortunately, the authors of this thesis have no formal training as interviewers, nevertheless strived to keep a high standard. Furthermore, the authors are aware of the fact that the personality of the interviewer affects how comfortable the respondent will feel during the interview, and therefore made sure to act professional and trustworthy (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 208). The ethical considerations related to the interviews are described in section 9.2.

2.8.2 Secondary Data: Public and Organizational Documents etc.

Secondary data is described as data that has already been collected but for another purpose and includes raw data or published summaries (Saunders et al., 2003, p. 188). Shiu et al. (2009, p. 140) argue that with the research problem in focus, the researcher investigates if the required information needs to be collected, or if decent data already exists. This was done also for the work with this thesis. As a complement to the interviews, and thus as a depth in the collection of data, secondary data was regarded appropriate. The focus of the type of secondary data was two fold – public documents and organizational documents provided by the various key stakeholders on request from the researchers. The key stakeholders’ web pages provided good background information about the organizations. In addition, the Center for Regional Science (CERUM) and the marketing department at the university were helpful with providing relevant documents and studies about Umeå.

We find the six fundamental principles of Shiu et al. (2009, p. 143-144) to evaluate the quality of the secondary data – purpose, accuracy, consistency, credibility, methodology and bias – as valid, and these were adhered to. For a case study research like this, organizational documents can give the researcher valuable background information and build up a description of the organizations (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 566). A real advantage of using secondary data is the time and cost effectiveness of the method (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 141). It is however important to reflect upon the documents that were provided as it is likely that the people who wrote the documents want that some points, rather than others, should be highlighted. Moreover, in order to gain insights into processes, documents can be used as a platform, but should be examined in the context of other sources of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 566). Consequently, the authors were careful when interpreting the secondary data and considered it a complement to the other data collected. Although the documents have many benefits – they can be studied many times, are discrete and can cover many happenings or time – they also have weaknesses that should be taken into consideration. For instance, access problem and errors in the sampling that might occur if the gathering of the documents is incomplete (Yin, 2007, p. 112). We want highlight that we have taken this into consideration and
refer to the section 2.9.1 for the argumentation on how we have proceeded to ensure a high quality of the thesis.

2.8.3 Observations: Direct Observations

The observation entails the involvement of the researchers in the social life of the research objects (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 400). Direct observations means watching meetings or interactions as these occur, whereas studying the results of a process is called indirect observation. The first is used for this study as it was considered a good complement to the interviews and the secondary data. In fact, a real strength of observation as a data collection method is that it does not rely on people’s eagerness or capacity to provide information. We are however aware of the possible disadvantages with this method – as observer bias – and we argue that this is taken into consideration (CDC, 2008, p. 1). When performing the observations of desired meetings, disclosing that we are researchers was seen as necessary and fair. Bryman (2008, p. 406) argues that there are ethical problems connected to researchers that do not reveal the reason for participation.

Bryman (2008, p. 403) means that gaining access to the social setting relevant to the research problem is one of the most difficult steps when it comes to participant observation. We have a good network of people within the municipality and organizations of Umeå and were informed about – and registered to participate – in different meetings, in which various key stakeholders participated. We took the role as complete observers; hence, we did not interact with people during the meetings. However, both before and after the meeting we talked with people in order to get more ideas and inputs to our study. As Bryman (2008, p. 417) suggests, we made sure to take as much notes as possible during the observations when hearing and seeing something of interest, and we wrote a full summary right after the meetings.

2.9 Research Quality

2.9.1 Quality Criteria

To enable a review as well as an acceptable quality level of this study, the authors have allocated a great amount of time to study literature regarding the issue. In the opinion of the authors, the keys to maintain a high research quality throughout the study are careful preparation and planning as well as a reflection on how to best demonstrate this efforts for the reader.

Quantitative researchers occasionally criticize qualitative research when it comes to the topic of research quality. It is argued that qualitative studies are too subjective, unfocused and unstructured, thus conducting a true replication is nearly impossible (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 423). Likewise, it is argued that the lack of standardization leads to a lack of reliability, which in turns points at the difficulty of showing the same results with another researchers work. Saunders et al. (2003, p. 253) argue that the strength of non-standardized research methods is that these reflect a complex and dynamic circumstance at the moment when the information was collected. Consequently, this type of research is not necessarily intended to be repeatable. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 41), in order to enable someone else to perform a replication of the research, the processes must be stated in great detail. We have
carefully taken this into consideration and find that the structure and use of the preliminary framework – as well as the theories that it comprises – are well outlined and explained. As the preliminary framework is used as a tool for analysis and also guides the research, we believe that it helps us, and the reader, to stay on the right course. This issue is related to another area of criticism; the lack of transparency in qualitative studies (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 424). We have strived to express a clear and fair picture to enable the reader to understand how the data collection was structured, how the analysis was conducted and how the study’s conclusions were established. Maxwell (2005, p. 105) argues that validity is a key issue and depends on the relationship of the researcher inferences to reality. There are no methods that fully can guarantee that the researcher has apprehended this and therefore it is an issue that the researcher needs to keep in mind during the whole research. We have done our best to follow this advice. We know that interviews are very sensitive to small changes of wording and that it is rarely considered whether the respondent has enough knowledge to answer a certain question. Related to this is the topic of interpretation of data in qualitative research. For this study, we made sure to reach a high level of agreement before making any statements and connections. Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 104) calls this internal reliability and describes it as the degree to which the interviewers have the same opinion about what is said and heard.

Generalizability is another area of discussion in qualitative research. This study does not intend to generalize beyond the sample – the research objects are not to be seen as representative of an entire population – and the findings are only to be generalized to theory. Maxwell (2005, p. 115) points out the difference between internal and external generalizability. The first, refers to generalizability of a conclusion within the group studied – which is a key issue for qualitative case studies like ours. The latter refers to generalizability beyond the group – also referred to as external reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 410) – and is not a crucial issue for our qualitative case study.

It has been argued that the measures for assessing quality of quantitative research are less suitable for use in qualitative research. Thus, two “new” criterions – trustworthiness and authenticity – are suggested (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 411). For this research, two of the pillars of trustworthiness – credibility and dependability – are seen as very vital. It has been our goal to carry out a thesis by using good practice, let the respondents verify the findings after the interviews and keep complete records of all parts of the research process. To overcome bias in the interviews, Saunders et al. (2003, p. 253-263) suggest a number of points that we found very valuable and have taken in consideration. Some of these points seemed more critical in order to promote credibility – there among careful preparation of the interviews, supply the interviewee with sufficient amount of information and interview-themes prior to the interview, phrasing questions clearly, listen careful and make sure to record the interviews when acceptable – and we followed these suggestions.

2.9.2 Research Ethics

One problem in social sciences is that ethical considerations are subjective (Berg, 2004, p.43). Kvale (1997, p. 105) argue that the ethical matters cannot be limited to a specific part of the thesis, hence ought to be evaluated through all sections. We fully agree with this statement and have been taking precautions, measures and reflections in attempt to
minimize ethical breaches as much as possible. We note that there are several ethical issues well worth emphasizing.

The terms of confidentiality and anonymity deserves extra attention. The first is an attempt to remove any elements that may indicate the subjects’ identities from the research records, where as the latter means that the subject remains nameless (Berg, 2004, p. 64). The respondents of this thesis had no objection about us using their real names in the study, however, in order to make sure that the thesis focused on the key stakeholders rather than the individual respondent, we decided on referring to them by the name of the organizations and/or position. Another important term is informed consent. This can be explained as the consent of individuals to participate as an exercise of their choice and knowledge, free from any element of fraud, deception, pressure, or manipulation (Berg, 2004, p. 64). Even though there are boundaries as to how much information the participant is willing to acquire (e.g. theoretical background and aims) and how much information the researcher is able to provide, the researcher has an obligation to fully inform the participant and to receive their consent as early in the study as possible (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001, p. 21). We considered this as very important and made sure to be clear about the purpose of our study directly as the initial contact was taken.

As researchers, we are aware that we have a responsibility to safeguard those involved in, and affected by, our study. This also means that it is our duty to make sure that the findings are accurately and truthfully reported. Thus, when performing the research and documenting the investigation, we have taken the effects and consequences for the key stakeholders and the place brand into consideration. Moreover, we want to stress that we avoided asking the respondents any personal questions outside the area of research and we tried to be objective towards their answers. At last, we have used other authors’ work in a careful and correct way, and we have handled references in a strict manner to take a clear standpoint against plagiarism.

2.10 Choice of Literature

The review of literature is one of the most important parts in the research project and ought to provide the foundation on which the problem statement can be justified and the research design can be built (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 94). The intention of the literature search was to build a solid foundation for the research process, increase the credibility of the study and enable a clear description of the findings. In the process of deciding what literature to choose for this thesis, we started looking for previous studies concerning the area of place branding. Some authors argue that it ought to be seen as an inter-disciplinary research domain (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011, p. 22) and this show the topics relation to other areas, as corporate branding, cultural geography, stakeholder management and coordination, hence we came into close contact with these topics as well. In line with Dinnie’s (2004, p. 106) opinion, we have scanned the horizons far wider than just conventional brand management. In fact, as a result of our educational backgrounds, our initial thought was to include the topic of entrepreneurship in our study of place branding, but we saw that place branding does not depend on entrepreneurial activities alone and searched for further concepts. However, fairly soon we understood the need of building a theoretical tool for place brand identity development, hence the areas of corporate branding, cultural geography and entrepreneurship (our initial thought) were left out.
Through logical steps – using questions like who, what, how – we studied previous research and literature. As a starting point, we concentrated on the question of “who does what” in place branding, and we found that the actors are best to be seen as stakeholders because they contribute to, and benefit from, the place brand. We also noted that this is the reason that they conduct undertakings together. This lead to the question of “what these actors do”. It became clear that the place brand stakeholders conduct several activities, some alone and some together. Consequently we recognized the necessity for them to harmonize – i.e. the need for coordination. This created the research problem of “how the process of place brand identity development can be understood”. We noted that Kavaratzis (2012, p. 17) mentioned that it would be interesting to distinguish the central desires of stakeholders and try to integrate these. We also found this interesting and realized that stakeholders’ desires affect how they act. However, we discovered it too immense to study the stakeholders’ desires since it is a very broad term that lacks boundaries and includes all of the stakeholders’ wishes. Simultaneously, we realized that the stakeholders’ objectives are the consequence of their desires, however much smaller in number and much more distinct thus less immense to study, and we decided on seeking to distinguish the stakeholders’ objectives instead. We saw that we could investigate the stakeholders’ goals – common, individual and even conflicting – and compare these in order to identify the interdependencies for which common activities could be created to enable the goals to be fulfilled. This created a need to study theories explaining how stakeholders work together and we started reviewing theories and literature on collaboration and the related topic of cooperation. Through this, we discovered an essential key – if stakeholders have common goals (e.g. creating the brand of a city), the stakeholders’ activities and their goals needs to be organized – coordinated – before any collaboration can take place. Thus, we realized that our research problems are possibly best to be answered with a framework created with the focus on the stakeholders and coordination perspectives. With the focus on the theoretical research problem, we selected relevant literature on place branding, coordination and stakeholders to build the preliminary framework (see section 2.11).

Backman (1998, p. 150-151) suggests three different types of methods for information search. The first one, consultation, includes written and oral communication with experts – professors, organizations, and authorities – within the area, and is primary used to find entryways to the scientific literature. As a starting point for this study, consultation was very useful for the purpose of gaining an overview of the topic. Discussions with a number of people – for instance professors, market directors, entrepreneurs and previous students – took place in emails and informal meetings during the first couple of weeks of the semester. This lead to good advises, new perspectives and suggestions on relevant literature. It ought to be noted that these meetings were not considered as interviews, rather brainstorms and discussions, and did not handle the questions later used for the empirical data collection. The second one, manual research, comprises more goal oriented and systematic information search through a number of channels including research overview, reference list and book references as well as browsing for books (Backman, 1998, p. 150-151). The third one, computer based information search, includes reference databases and citation index (Backman, 1998, p. 153-154). We paid attention to both these methods and have used them side-by-side, with the main focus on computerized information in forms of academic papers. To make the most out of the meetings with the experts, we started the
manual and computer based research even before the consultation took place. In the beginning, the literature search was very broad and kept growing as more interesting areas were found. However, when we decided on a preliminary research problem, a structure was established and the information search became narrower. This enabled the identification of keywords, which helped to outline the borders of the selected areas of research (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 107). According to Saunders (2003, p. 56), this is one of the most important parts for planning the search for appropriate literature. Consequently, a narrower and more precise literature search followed. In fact, to make sure that we had covered the whole area of interest, the manual search continued throughout the whole research project and literature was added and taken away continuously.

A thorough review of literature identifies what is known about the area, the relevant theories, contradicting or inconsistent findings as well as unanswered areas (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 95). Hence the review assisted us in identifying the research gap. The search for articles and literature was primarily conducted through Umeå University library’s database which enabled the use of for instance ALBUM, Business Source Premier, Academic search Elite, Web of Science and Econlit. Examples of words used for the literature search, both alone and as combinations, are: Place branding (1550 hits), city branding (1992 hits), stakeholders + coordination (1417 hits), place branding + coordination (7 hits) etc. In a few cases, the articles could not be retrieved through the databases used and therefore Google scholar assisted in finding these. Moreover, a wide variety of methodological literature has been used for guidance in methodological principles and practical execution of the research.

A researcher can fail by not using enough literature but also by relying too much on it without being critical (Maxwell, 2005, p. 46). We have reflected upon this and made sure that all literature reviewed were judged from a critical angle – foremost in terms of strengths and flaws of methodology and credibility of conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 97). Regarding the use of dissertations in our thesis, we have agreed on some basic policies. The dissertations on doctoral level are viewed as sufficient in terms of quality and therefore these have had a larger impact on our study. However, dissertations on Bachelor and Master levels have only served as inspiration and helped us gain a larger understanding of the topic and previous studies.

It should be noted that the approach used in the literature review has some shortcomings. Our background and interests affect the choice of literature; hence the review of the literature might be influenced by our assumptions. We are aware of this and have tried to stay unbiased when studying the literature. Nevertheless, the choice of literature ought to be seen as comprehensive – it assisted in understanding the development of the research area (see figure 1), served as foundation of the preliminary framework and helped us to present a logical as well as critical analysis. Thus, when we felt that further literature did not add anything new or contribute to our choice of study – we concluded that we had reached theoretical saturation.
2.11 Preliminary framework

As discussed in section 2.10, through the literature review, we realized that the multidisciplinary issue of place branding would be best seen from a stakeholder perspective and a coordination perspective. Maxwell (2005, p. 33-35) states that existing theories are the key sources for understanding what is going on within the areas that the study covers and further argue that the framework is predominantly to be seen as a conception of what is out there, what is going on with these things and why. As no coherent framework existed, we wanted to produce a better tool for analyzing brand identity development. Hence, the preliminary framework (see section 3.5) was developed from existing theory – by incorporating and combining several theories – and was to be tested empirically on a specific case. This structure was connected to the two research problems – one theoretical and one empirical – of this study.

The role of the preliminary framework was as an analytical tool for analysis and as an instrument directing the research. The interview guide was derived from the preliminary framework and was used to guide the data collection – foremost the interviews but also as a structure for the secondary data and observations. The three areas of the preliminary framework – Stakeholders, Coordination and Place branding were used as the three themes for the analysis. Since the data collection was closely connected to the structure of the preliminary framework, the three these themes of the framework could comprise all different types of data and fairly convenient be connected to the theories of the literature. After the analysis, the case specific empirical findings lead to the adjustment of the framework – to better fit the case of the study – and the presentation of a revised theoretical framework of place brand identity development of Umeå (see section 6.4).
3. The Frame of Reference

This chapter intends to present a comprehensive understanding of previous research within the areas of Place branding, Stakeholders and Coordination, in order to devise theoretical tools for the research – to answer the research problems – and also as a foundation and background of the study. Several of the theories presented are used for the creation of the preliminary framework. The chapter ends with a presentation of the preliminary framework – designed as an analytical tool that guides the research.

3.1 The concept of a Brand

“No longer are places merely the settings for business activity. Instead, every community has to transform itself to a seller of goods and services, a proactive marketer of its products and its place value. Places are, indeed, products, whose identities and values must be designed and marketed. Places that fail to market themselves successfully face the risk of economic stagnation and decline.”

(Kotler et al., 1993 p. 10)

The word “Brand”, origins from the Old Norse brandr, which means to burn. With this roots, it made its way into Anglo-Saxon (Blackett, 2009, p. 13). The term lacks a general definition and many authors have presented their understanding of what the concept is. Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 6) define brand as “an impression perceived in a client’s mind of a product or a service” and also state that the brand “is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, which makes the selection unique”. Caldwell and Freire (2004, p. 51) argue that a brand is “an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely”. Kotler and Gertner (2002, p. 249-250) state; “Brands differentiate products and represent a promise of value. Brands incite beliefs, evoke emotions and prompt behaviors. Marketers often extend successful brand names to new product launches, lending existing associations to them. As a result, they speed consumers’ information processing and learning.” For this thesis, we find the definition offered by the American market association (AMA, 2012) most comprehensive and thus appropriate; “A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name.”

Simply put, a brand is a carrier of a message. That is, the brand is an abstract concept that conveys a message to a receiver – the potential customer. The customer’s understanding of the message will determine if a purchase takes place. This means that no matter how the brand owner wants the brand to be interpreted, the customer’s brand associations determine the outcome (Treffner, 2011, p. 10). The classical branding literature focuses on the notion of the product brand (Hankinson, 2004, p. 110). However, also services, corporations, retail stores, organizations and even cities and individuals can be seen as brands – and all these different entities strive to make their brand mean something extremely particular to their market (Percy, 2003 p. 13). Even though the brand belongs to the “intangible” assets of the organization, it is in fact one of the most important, stable and sustainable single corporate assets. This implies that
proper brand management is vital to the whole business (Clifton, 2009, p. 5-6). This is also true for place brands, which will be further discussed in section 3.2.

### 3.2 Place branding

Place branding is a mix of existing disciplines – e.g. brand management and corporate branding, general management – and ideas of branding, together with development policies (Maheshwari, 2011, p. 198). Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 459) state that there is a growing number of practice and studies around the field of place branding, however, the field is relatively new and lacks empirical studies. Most authors of the existing work offer their own definitions of the concept. A quite broad definition is offered by Maheshwari (2011, p. 200); “A place brand is a perception that people have about a place, city, region or a country and a place’s reputation among those people that the place embraces.” Another, a bit more complex suggestions is that place brand is “the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, political, and cultural developments of cities, regions and countries” (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 521). The authors Zenker and Braun (2010, p. 3) propose the clear but rich definition explaining the place brand as “a network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioral expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design”. For the purpose of this study, we find that Maheshwari’s (2011) definition can be considered too vague whereas the definition by Zenker and Braun (2010) – highlighting the communication, aims and culture of the place’s stakeholder – seems more appropriate.

A strong place brand can have superior impact on a place. Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 1) argue that the influences of a place brand boosts the residents’ identity and increases self-esteem, increases attractiveness of businesses and investments, encourages the goals of the tourism industry as well as the interests of the exporting industry. Practical experience show that effective place management can result in rebuilt wealth (Asplund, Ikkala & Kotler, 2011, p. 199). As a result of the positive effects, a strong place brand is very desirable. Consequently, place branding is a popular activity within places of different sizes – that is countries, regions, cities and districts – and the investment in these activities are substantial (Kavaratzis, 2012, p. 7). However, it is argued that it is more difficult to create a coherent image of a country because of the complexity of a nation’s many different attributes (Caldwell & Freire, 2004, p. 54). In a study, Caldwell and Freire (2004, p. 59) find that the factors influencing the image of a nation are different from those affecting a region and a city, thus the branding strategies should also be different.

There is a common understanding among academics and practitioners that places can in fact be branded in much the same way as consumer goods and services (Caldwell & Freire, 2004, p. 50-51). Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2007, p. 526) argue that there are quite a few similarities between the two types of brands. Both:

- Have multidisciplinary roots.
- Address multiple groups of stakeholders.
- Have a high level of intangibility and complexity.
- Need to take social responsibility into account.
- Deal with multiple identities.
Nevertheless, despite the similarities, branding strategies of products and places cannot be regarded and treated the same way (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 526). The review of previous authors’ work has shown that many authors fail to distinguish the underlying difference between specific procedures of product/service brand strategy and those connected to place brand strategy. Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 472) state that what distinguishes place branding models from corporate branding models is that the stakeholder engagement and place brand infrastructure is crucial to place branding. The stakeholder engagement and infrastructure are two of nine components of the strategic place brand management model – SPBM (see figure 4). Within each component of the model, a number of processes and activities take place. The model shows that the dynamic between the stakeholder engagement and the place brand infrastructure is central to the creation of brand identity (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 473). The stakeholder engagement is the element that holds the processes in which stakeholders are identified, their interests made apparent and interactions are managed. The central importance of multiple stakeholders’ engagement in the place branding process has been recognized as one unique feature of place branding. The infrastructure component is concerned with both the tangible and intangible attributes of the brand and the infrastructure strategies must include the diversity of stakeholders needs, as well as the limitations of the place brand with regard to its infrastructure and environment (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 465-467). Hanna & Rowley (2011, p. 467) stress that the development of brand identity is dependent on the effectiveness of brand leadership in engaging and managing stakeholders on the basis of shared objectives. The model is to be viewed as a framework for contextualizing different streams of inquiries in place branding, and to inform and support place marketing and brand managers (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 459). The model is developed from previous research but not tested empirically, which we argue can be seen as a weakness. Another limitation is that the affect of external environment is omitted or overlooked. In our opinion, the model is very interesting and can be understood as quite broad as it involves many large areas of the branding process. We very much agree to the core part of the model – the stakeholder identification, engagement and their mutual involvement in the branding process – and its connection to the component of brand identity. This part of the model is seen as especially useful for our study and will be adopted, and adjusted, to fit into our preliminary framework.

Figure 4. Strategic place brand–management model. (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 463)
The external factors – missing in Hanna and Rowley’s model, are acknowledged by Rainisto’s framework of the success factors of place branding (2003). Figure 5 shows the framework that recognizes success factors for place marketing practice as well as environmental challenges (Rainisto, 2003, p. 227-228).

Figure 5. Framework of the success factors of place branding. (Modified from Rainisto, 2003, p. 227)

The center of the model, the *prism*, presents the factors that help build a strong place brand and these are factors that a place normally can influence. The main responsibility of the *planning group* is to find the main strengths and weaknesses of the place as well as the major opportunities and threats (i.e. the SWOT-analysis). Additionally, the group must design a 10-15 years action plan and is in charge of coordinating the place marketing (Rainisto, 2003, p. 86-70). The *Vision* is the profound perception and insight of the place about its future long-term position in the place market. The strategy can be explained as the way in which the organization takes care of its core tasks and the *Strategic analysis* is a detailed examination of the elements of strategic information for this purpose (Rainisto, 2003, p. 70-71). The factor *Place identity & Place image* promotes the fact that when the place have created a clear definition of its desired identity, the foundation of its image has been set. If the place brand marketing processes are successful, the place in question can regard its future image as the way the place marketing planning group wants it to be (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73). *Public-private partnerships* are ways to better plan resource allocations, manage development projects and show evidence of working relationships between the community and its organizations. This is, together with the managerial part of the place brand, the most difficult process to initiate and maintain. Places value *Leadership* because it manages the place’s resources – a place that looks past this fact will ultimately lose its uniqueness (Rainisto, 2003, p. 235).

The surrounding factors (situated outside the “prism”) are the environmental challenges facing a place brand. Organizing capacity is of outermost importance for the success of the place marketing, hence the place management must have the necessary financial as well as human resources. This leads to the matter of *Political unity* and consistency, which sets great trials for the management of a place. The *Global marketplace* increases global competition – which is a huge challenge, however also brings about new possibilities for all places. In order to successfully compete in the field of the international market, good managerial skills are required. But, before entering the international market headfirst, place management needs to polish its own *Local development*. *Process coincidences* can surprise the place management if it is not ready with backup plans (Rainisto, 2003, p. 234). For the creation of our preliminary framework, we argue that that Rainisto’s framework can add valuable elements, thus we
agree with the framework in general and foremost the selected parts. First, the environmental challenges are seen as crucial part and will be summarized as the External factors – influencing all other components – in the preliminary framework. Second, two of Rainisto’s success factors – “Place identity” (we are omitting the image) and “Vision & Strategic analysis” – will be used for the construction of our framework whereas the remaining factors will be considered when discussing the empirical data.

Rainisto (2003, p. 71) stresses the fact that marketing planning is more difficult for public communities and regions than for private companies. In strategic planning it is vital to construct plans for the unpredictable future of a place. In order for the strategic planning to be successful, the place marketing management of a place must create systems to gather the market information, plan the activities, and execute the implementations while constantly minding the resources and the targets. According to Boisen, Terlouw & van Gorp (2011, p. 144), the main notion of a place brand is that the term embodies the whole place and that this is what is dominating the formation of the perception of the place. However, the process of place branding demands selectivity in the formulation of the brand strategy and in the choice of target groups. Without this selectivity and strategy planning, one cannot speak of strategic place branding, even though metaphorically the place may still be viewed as a brand. However, in order to be successful, the importance of the branding of a place cannot be neglected. With close connection to the previous discussion on external challenges and their effect on places, globalization is one of the factors threatening but also creating new opportunities for places all around the world. This will be further discussed in section 3.2.1.

3.2.1 Globalization and Place branding

The economic and cultural globalization – together with other changes in the environment – affects and challenges cities, regions and countries all over the globe (Kavaratzis, 2005, p. 329). The movement of people, capital and companies has made the competition among places increase and all strive to keep the existing place-users satisfied and to attract new. The external threats – for instance the economic crisis that begun in 2008 – have a great and negative impact on many European places. This is the reality that place managers have to deal with (Asplund et al., 2011, p. 13). These facts strengthen the need for including environmental factors as an element in our preliminary framework. Many authors’ express that as a result of the increased competition, the place has become increasingly aware of what it should, want, and actually does represent, and the message it conveys to its stakeholders. These are the issues of place brand identity and place brand image that will be further discussed in section 3.2.2. According to Asplund et al. (2011, p. 90) the winners in this tough competition are those places that manage to differentiate themselves in the minds of the potential visitors, investors and residents. There is no way to escape the hard competition and since 2005 there is even a Nation Brand index that serves to measure and rank places image and reputation (Simon Anholt, 2009).

3.2.2 Place Brand Identity and Image

The idea behind brand identity is that it should provide direction, purpose and meaning for the brand (Aaker, 2002, p. 68). Furthermore, the identity helps the brand stay credible to itself by embracing the brand specific characteristics (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73) and the goals that differentiate the brand from other brands (Kapferer, 1997, p. 91).
Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 472) state, “To a greater extent than in other branding contexts, place brand identity is determined by the ‘place’ and its stakeholders and is the essence of the place”. Brand identity communicates the distinctive characteristics that the stakeholders assign to a place, it offers a frame for overall consistency and it displays means of expression (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 468). According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 43), brand identity can be described as a “set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain”. These associations infer a promise from the organization’s members to the consumers and drive the brand building efforts. Consequently, the depth and richness of these associations are crucial.

There seem to be a division between those researchers finding it necessary for a place to have a clear and single identity and those that believe in having multiple identities. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 43) argue that successful branding – commercial, corporate or place – requires an understanding of how to create and develop a brand identity. The authors state that a powerful brand identity tends to stem from a powerful and united sense of common purpose within the organization itself. Unfortunately, logotypes and slogans can only contribute with publicity, thus with the absence of a common purpose there will be no strong identity. Ren and Blichfeldt (2011, p. 431-432) criticize the fact that destination branding and marketing are based on the idea that someone needs, and is able to draw, visitors to a place by means of one-way communication emphasizing a few selected aspects of the place. They argue that relying on few identities is not the most efficient way to attract visitors, on the contrary, a more diverse branding approach should be seen as a possibility to enrich and diversify the place brand and will not necessarily result in confusion, rather give rise to an acceptance. Skinner (2008, p. 916) claims that as a result of the complex connection between culture, identity and large variety of stakeholders involved in managing the place brand, a place does not have a single identity that can be branded as clear as brands of products or services. The same author states that the stakeholders have various target markets, and each will want to assign the place brand a certain meaning. In line with this, Anholt (2010, p. 38-39) means that in contrast to a commercial brand, the thought that a place can express a single promise and a distinct image is irrational. The richness and complexity are valuable image attributes for a place that in fact must be able to hold the wide variety of industrial, cultural and political activities that the city engage in. Also, no single promise can match all the external audiences needs.

Whereas the brand identity refers to how the owner wants the brand to be perceived, the brand image concerns how the target audience actually perceives the brand (Nandan, 2005, p. 267; Aaker, 2002, p. 71; Kapferer, 1997, p. 99). Another way to emphasize the importance of the relationship between brand identity and image is that the brand message is “packaged” in the form of brand identity, and “unpackaged” by the consumer in the shape of brand image (Nandan, 2005, p. 268). In short, the intention of building a clear identity and communicate this to target customers is to make them create and hold on to the image and to make the brand stand out in a positive matter (Ren & Blichfeldt, 2011, p. 417). Figure 6 explains the relation between the brand identity and brand image. The brand identity is to be seen as the result of planned activities within the place-marketing project and is the objective state where as the image is to be understood as the subjective state (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73). Vanolo (2008, p. 371) argues that the image of a city is highly metaphoric – it may range from environmental psychology to semantics, or from urban design to geography. It is not only formed by visual images, but also from other elements.
In this study and for the creation of the preliminary framework of place brand identity development, we argue that the place brand has no single owner and the place brand identity is created and developed by the key stakeholders. Hence, the stakeholders will be seen as the starting point of the framework and the identity as the end, i.e. the outcome. Furthermore, in the creation of the preliminary framework, we adhere to Rainisto’s (2003, p. 73) opinion that the brand identity will be included as the outcome of planned activities.

3.2.3 City branding

“What can be created that is so valuable about the city that its businesses, institutions and residents want to remain, that will attract investors, visitors and talent, and that will make commentators and influences recommend the city? Your city’s brand is the promise of that value.” (Van Gelder & Allan, 2006, p. 7)

When place branding regards a certain city, the definition city branding can be employed. According to Donald and Gammack (2007, p. 45) city brandings is a rational as well as emotional engagement with a place, aesthetics and everyday life, and is more complex then brand creation and maintenance for products and services. However, for this thesis, we adopt the definition that City branding is; “Understood as the means both for achieving competitive advantage in order to increase inward investment and tourism, and also for achieving community development, reinforcing local identity and identification of the citizens with their city and activating all social forces to avoid social exclusion and unrest.” (Kavaratzis, 2004, p. 70)

Kotler et al. (1999, in Rainisto 2003, p. 35) present the list and division of “Place marketing target markets” for local actors (see figure 7). For this thesis, we consider these four target markets as the main markets for different place brand stakeholders to target. Kotler et al. (1999, in Rainisto 2003, p. 41) also present “Major actors in the local place marketing” (see figure 8). These are divided into two larger groups – the public and private sector. We want to highlight that in this thesis, the cities local actors are synonymous with the stakeholders. For the creation of the preliminary framework, figure 7 will be used for the framework’s stakeholder category map (see section 3.3.3). Moreover both figure 7 and figure 8 will be employed as criteria for selecting key stakeholders (see section 4.1). The concept of stakeholders and the connected theories needs its own explanation and this will be provided and discussed in section 3.3.
3.3 Stakeholders

“All the organizations and institutions that have a stake in the future development of the place.” (Allan, 2006, p. 6)

The authors behind the large number of literature on stakeholder, stakeholder management, stakeholder models and stakeholder theory have used the concepts differently and presented various and often conflicting arguments and proofs (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 66). The definitions found in the review of previous authors work are presented in Appendix 1. Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997, p. 854) argue that there is a need of a theory of stakeholder identification robust enough to separate stakeholders from the non-stakeholders. These authors’ opinions underline the fact that there is a lack of a general meaning of concepts. We believe that the different definition and variety of specification can lead to misinterpretations. This is a clear
limitation of the concept, hence a weakness of the stakeholder theory. We consider the
definition presented in the beginning of the section (i.e. Allan, 2006, p. 6) as the most
appropriate for this thesis. It ought to be mentioned that the large group of stakeholders
have been divided into different groups by different authors, for instance, internal
stakeholders (employees, owners and managers) – and external stakeholders
(consumers, competitors, government, social activist groups, media, environment and
the community). Further categories, suitable for certain contexts might be primary and
secondary, active and passive, economic and social, core, strategic and environmental
(Carroll & Näsi, 1997, p. 46). However, neither the proposed definitions nor the
categories seem suitable for our study, hence we decided on the term key stakeholders
according to our own definition (see section 1.4). In our opinion, a key stakeholder of a
place brand has a clear connection to the place brand – is in some way directly or
indirectly “selling the place” – and is depending on the place brand for goal
achievement and success.

Since this study takes a stakeholder perspective, we need to include the stakeholders in
an appropriate way in our preliminary framework. Hence it seem necessary to study the
concept of stakeholders thoroughly – from its entrance into literature until today and
also examine general stakeholder theories and models. This is done in section 3.3.1.

3.3.1 Stakeholder history, theory and models

The history of the stakeholder concept goes many years back in time and can be traced
to, among others, Adam Smith, and the topic made its first entrance into management
literature already in 1963 (Freeman, 1984, p. 31). In 1984, Freeman – the father of the
stakeholder theory – published his first book within the topic. Thereafter, the interest of
the stakeholder thinking increased as other fields – there among business ethics,
busines and society, corporate social performance and strategic management – realized
the worth of connecting their contemporary theory and concepts to stakeholder concepts
managers must try to achieve a more correct and precise picture of the organizations
external environment. In order to connect the stakeholder concept and models to this
thesis, the city is regarded as the organization/firm.

Freeman (1984, p. 91-92) proposes a two-way relationship between the firm and its
stakeholders. This includes gaining an understanding of the individuals and groups
whose actions can affect the firm’s profitability, stock price or cash-flow, but also those
stakeholders whose well-being are affected by the firm’s actions. According to Freeman
(1984, p. 25), the “Stakeholder View of Firm” (see figure 9) shows all the groups and
individuals that in today’s environment are affected by, or can affect the success of
organizational purpose. 28 year later, Post, Preston and Sachs (2002, p. 19), published
an article on the topic stating that the core of a stakeholder is its stake in the operation
of the business, and that all stakeholders share the common risks for losses as well as
possibilities for benefits. The same authors presented a further developed stakeholder
model, however still unquestionable similar to Freeman’s, named “The corporation and
its stakeholders” (see figure 10). This model aimed to describe the multiple connections
between the corporation and its different stakeholders. Some aspects of the model are
valuable to keep in mind: First, the benefits flows between the corporation and the
stakeholders and runs in both directions, and all the links might be active at the same
time. Furthermore, the roles of individuals and groups can be overlapping. Secondly, in
this model competitors are not appearing as a stakeholder as they neither provide a stake nor benefit from the success of the organization – quite the reverse, the competitors benefit from organizational losses. Thirdly, the relationship with the stakeholders is argued as not fixed over time, rather dynamic and flexible (Post et al., 2002 p. 22-24). In our opinion, both figure 9 and figure 10 provide an appropriate core structure for the creation of a stakeholder category map for place branding – as an element of the preliminary framework – and will be used in section 3.3.3.

Freeman’s seminal work in 1984 left the status of the stakeholder notion as theory indistinct (Jones, 1995, p. 406). In the development of the stakeholder theory, one main problem has been the confusion about its nature and purpose. The stakeholder theory is fundamentally different from other theories of the firm, for example it aims to explain as well as guide the structure and operation of the established organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 69-70). According to Donaldson and Preston (1995, p. 70) “The stakeholder theory is general and comprehensive, but it is not empty; it goes well beyond the descriptive observation that “organizations have stakeholders”.” Donaldson and Preston (1995, p. 66-67) state that the stakeholder theory comprises theory of three different types. Firstly, it is descriptive, as it presents a model describing what the company is. Secondly, it is instrumental, because it creates a basis for examining the links between the practice of stakeholder management and the success of different company performance objectives. Thirdly, the fundamental basis of the stakeholder theory is normative and includes approval of particular notions, that is “Stakeholders are identified by their interests in the corporation, whether the corporation has any

Figure 9. Stakeholder view of firm. (Freeman, 1984, p. 25)

Figure 10. The corporation and its stakeholders. (Post, Preston, Sachs, 2002, p. 22)
corresponding functional interest in them” and “the interest of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value” (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 67). These authors argue that the three approaches to stakeholder theory are quite different but still mutually supportive. Having stated this, the same authors conclude that the stakeholder theory also is managerial as it does not only define existing conditions but also recommends attitudes, structures as well as practices that establish stakeholder management (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 67).

Jones (1995, p. 404) further develops the stakeholder theory by proposing an instrumental theory of stakeholder management built on an incorporation of the stakeholder notion, economic concept, and insights from behavioral science as well as ethics. It suggests that behavior that is trustworthy, cooperative and trusting will give the firm a competitive advantage. Freeman et al. (2010, p. 5-7) state what they consider the central insights of stakeholder theory to be. That is; the relationship among the groups that have a stake in the business – the managers, stockholders, customers, employees, suppliers, financiers and communities – and how these interact and create value, are what makes up a business (in this study the place). In another article, Freeman (2010, p. 8-9) shares three interconnected ideas to keep in mind; firstly, because of the stakeholders have joint interests – no stakeholder stands alone in the process of value creation. Secondly, the primary responsibility of the executive is to create as much value as possible for stakeholders – so when conflicts arise, these has to be met with solutions and trade-offs. Thirdly, Stakeholders have names and faces and children – businesses are built up by human beings, who need to be treated well.

Many authors note the connection between the organization and the stakeholder. In a study on primary stakeholders, Akpinar (2009, p. 34) adapts Ahlstedt and Jahnukainen (1971) model (see figure 11) on the interdependence between the firm and its primary stakeholders, which shows that the primary stakeholders contribute with inputs to the firm and obtain compensation in return. For this thesis, this model implies that the key stakeholder input into the place brand – the city – ought to result in compensation. This is just in line with our beliefs, therefore we want to stress that we agree with this model.

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\text{Fig. 11. The interdependence between the firm and its primary stakeholders. (Ahlstedt and Jahnukainen, 1971, in Akpinar, 2009, p. 34).}
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For managers who want to understand the environment in stakeholder terms, Freeman (1984, p. 112-117) has developed “The stakeholder audit process” to serve as a conceptual guideline (see figure 12). This starts with stating the companies mission and thereafter a generic stakeholder analysis has to be completed, which includes thinking through the relative importance and impact of each stakeholder group. Task two contains identifying stakeholder issues and concerns. Task three includes assessing corporate strategies for stakeholders, with the purpose of identifying the firm’s current strategy with regard to each stakeholder and group of stakeholders. The last task contains adjusting corporate priorities to be more in line with the stakeholder needs. This process can be applied for a place brand and its stakeholders as well, and the basic idea of a corporate mission will be used in the creation of our preliminary framework.
According to Kivits (2010, p. 4-5) there are mainly three main components that define a stakeholder and these three can together offer an overview of who a stakeholder is. First, Stakeholder salience, which gives a rich understanding of which of the stakeholders that are seen as more vital relative to other stakeholders, indicates what possible actions each of them could undertake and helps the organization decide how to deal with each of them. According to Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 853), stakeholder salience is a combination of power, legitimacy and urgency. The second component, the Stakeholder’s frame of references – how the stakeholder views the world – is unique to each stakeholder. Stakeholders can be driven by different motives, yet have similar goals or the opposite way around. The last component is Stakeholder network and comprises how the stakeholders are interrelated (Kivits, 2010, p. 5-6).

We have found that the largest part of the research on stakeholder theory is connected to a firm or organization, hence the theory may not perfectly suit place brands. However, the core concept of stakeholder models and theories can be adapted for both firms and places. In fact, for a company’s success, effective stakeholder management, i.e. to manage the relationships with stakeholders in a way that gives mutual benefits, is crucial (Post et al., 2002, p. 1). The same goes for a place and its stakeholders. Hence, we find that the stakeholder theory – with some adjustments – can be used for this thesis and it will therefore be included in the preliminary framework.

Freeman (1984, p. 53), refer the concept of stakeholder management to the “necessity for an organization to manage the relationships with its specific stakeholder groups in an action oriented way”. According to Carroll and Näsi (1997, p. 47), in order to capture the crucial information for effective stakeholder management, five questions needs to be answered. 1. Who are our stakeholders? 2. What are their stakes? 3. What opportunities and challenges do our stakeholders present to the firm? 4. What responsibilities (economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic) does the organization have to its stakeholders? 5. What strategies or actions should the firm take to best respond stakeholder challenges and opportunities? Also, Neville, Bell and Whitwell (2011, p. 360) highlight that fruitful stakeholder management is depending on the correct identification of stakeholders as well as the assessment of stakeholder salience to accurately prioritize competing stakeholder claims. In our opinion, the issue of identifying the correct stakeholders seem crucial to take into consideration, hence it will be integrated in our preliminary framework – in combination with the stakeholder category map (presented in section 3.3.3). The connection between stakeholders and the Place brand will be presented in section 3.3.2

Figure 12. Stakeholder audit process. (Freeman, 1984, p. 112)
3.3.2 Stakeholders and Place Brand

Maio (2003, p. 246) states that as a consequence of the shift in power, away from the organization to the stakeholder, the brand is more than ever a constantly shifting asset that is co-owned by the organization and its stakeholders. Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 472) find that the stakeholder engagement and the brand infrastructure are essential for place branding. Kavaratzis (2012, p. 7) focuses on the, in his opinion, inadequately examined area of stakeholders in the creation, development and ownership of place brands. The article suggests that “place branding should not be understood as a linear process of necessary steps but as a complex web of intertwined simultaneous processes” (Kavaratzis, 2012, p. 10). Kavaratzis continues (2012, p. 12-15) arguing for a re-examination and re-appreciation of the role of the stakeholders, and the needs for involving all stakeholders in all stages of the place branding process – which is not the case in current practice. We fully agree with this and we argue that this confirms the importance of the stakeholder perspective of our preliminary framework. Moreover, even though previous works have supported stakeholder participation, Kavaratzis (2012, p. 12-15) identifies three “new” reasons for the increased importance of stakeholders in place branding:

1. **Place branding is public and political** – Stakeholders need to be included to improve quality and effectiveness of polices through their knowledge, thus strong communication between stakeholders and the places authorities is needed, and in each stage of the place branding strategy stakeholder interaction ought to be planned for.

2. **Participatory branding** – The branding process is a dialogue between stakeholders over the meaning of the brand, thus for effective branding; internal audiences participation is vital

3. **The on-line world** – The development of the online world has influenced place branding and supports the involvement of stakeholders.

Kwak, YingYi and Ibbs (2009, p. 52) argue that it is vital to include the private sector when forming the values of a city brand. Having only a public approach may slow down and make the decision making non-effective. On the other hand, having a purely private approach may cause problems such as inequalities in the distribution of infrastructure services. This is also known as market failure. Asplund et al. (2011, p. 16-17) notes that the public and private sectors are equally important and that it is the combination of diverse competences that is a vital part of successful management. There are in fact hundreds of stakeholders who play the role of place managers even in the smallest place. A place managers is not the same as public administrators acting from the town hall, a place manager could just as well come from a leading local company. Maheshwari (2011, p. 201) states that managing a place brand is not solely the engagement of the public sector, private sector or the local governing authorities. He argues that what is needed is a collaborative operation of the place’s key stakeholders.

According to Allan (2006, p. 6), the place brand Hexagon (see figure 13) demonstrates those key stakeholders that need to work in partnership to design a place brand strategy. The author argues that a place is required to include all key stakeholders who can invest in and communicate what is occurring in the place and how they are taking action to develop the place in accordance with the agreed and shared vision. Compared to the stakeholder maps presented in figure 9 and 10, Allan’s place brand Hexagon presents stakeholders that are more appropriate for this study and we consider it to be very useful. Hence, the place brand Hexagon will be used to develop the place brand.
stakeholder category map (as an element of the preliminary framework) in figure 3.3.3. In addition, Allan’s thought of developing the place in accordance to an agreed and shared vision will also be employed when constructing the preliminary framework.

![Stakeholder Category Map](image)

Figure 13. The place brand hexagon. (Placebrands 2003 in Allan, 2006, p. 7)

However, even if all key stakeholders are included as suggested by Allan (2006, p. 6), each one of these stakeholders takes many decisions and it is clear that not all of these decisions can be “on brand”, i.e. be value adding for the place brand. Nevertheless, it is crucial that each key stakeholder considers and understands the level of impact that the decision-making, communication and performance has on the brand – so that the stakeholders activities can be build on each other for cumulative impact (Van Gelder & Allan, 2006, p. 18). Synchronizing the key stakeholders is not an easy task, however necessary when building a strong place brand. These thoughts – and the coordination of key stakeholders – will be further developed in the section 3.4.

### 3.3.3 Stakeholder Category Map

By combining and integrating the core structure of different models, we have developed a stakeholder category map (see figure 14) for place brands. The foundation of the structure is built on the stakeholder theory models (Freeman 1984, p. 25; Post et al. 2002, p. 22) presenting the stakeholders around a firm or organization. Thus, there is a two-way relationship between the place brand and its stakeholders (Freeman, 1984, p. 91-92), where the benefits flows between the place brand and the stakeholders (and runs in both directions) and where all links can be active simultaneously (Post et al., 2002 p. 22-24). In order to find larger categories of stakeholders, more suitable for a place brand, we adapted the work of two authors; “The place brand hexagon” (Placebrands, 2003 in Allan, 2006, p. 7) demonstrating key stakeholders of a place, and the model for “Place marketing target markets for the local actors” (Kotler et al., 1999, in Rainisto, 2003 p. 35) showing four target markets. In our opinion, these two models, together, provide suitable stakeholder categories for a place brand – in this case a city. The competitors are not viewed as a stakeholder – as they neither provide a stake nor benefit from the success of the place brand (Post et al., 2002 p. 22-24). We want to highlight a few things; First, the stakeholder category map offers an overview of larger categories of stakeholders. Second, the stakeholder category map does not show the relative importance of the respective stakeholders. Third, the categories are overlapping, thus stakeholders can fit the profile of more than one category. Last, as argued for by Post et al. (2002, p. 22-24), the relationship between the stakeholders and the place brand is not fixed over time, rather dynamic and flexible. In our preliminary framework, the stakeholder category map will be included as one of the main elements.
3.4 Coordination

Rainisto (2003, p. 235) states that a place needs teamwork and promotes the use of “cross marketing” involving all parties. For the mutual benefit of one stakeholder’s activities, the activities need to be organized in some way. Coordination is one of the levers that companies use to influence the performance in alliance settings (Aggarwal, Siggelkov & Singh, 2011, p. 707) and a better understanding of coordination can help build useful cooperative work tools (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 11). The nature and functioning of coordination and the associated failures to fully coordinate activities has been the central concern for both the classic and more recent organization design literature (Aggarwal et al., 2011, p. 707). With regard to place brands, Anholt (2007, p. 3) argues that inconsistent messages are sent out as a result of lacking coordination of the key stakeholders. However, the coordination of the place brand stakeholders can, if there are divergent needs and objectives, result in conflicts. The trial is to find ways to communicate and accommodate these (Trueman et al., 2004, p. 321). Moilanen and Rainisto (2009, p. 75) argue that good leadership is crucial for successful coordination. According to Asplund et al. (2011, p. 96), in smaller places, compared to metropolis, the key private and public stakeholders can more quickly communicate and closely coordinate. Hence, smaller cities ought to have an advantage compared to large cities.

Good coordination is nearly undetectable and consequently coordination is most noticed in those cases where there is a lack of it (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 1). Malone and Crowston (1990) offer two definitions of coordination. The first one is rather broad and defines coordination as “the act of working together harmoniously” (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 3). The second one is narrower and states that coordination is “the act of managing interdependencies between activities performed to achieve a goal” (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 5). It stands clear that in the theory of coordination, the mutual complications have to do with the topic of coordination. This includes the problems of how to:

- Divide overall objectives into actions.
- Allocate these actions to individual actors or groups.
- Distribute the means among the actors.
- Share information between these actors in order to enable goal achievement. (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 2)
For coordination to occur, there must be actors performing interdependent activities directed towards some objectives, and this “goal relevant-relationship” is called interdependencies (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 4). The components of coordination are shown in the table 2. However, the process of coordination can also start by the identification of interdependencies in a situation, thereafter alternative ways to manage these can be generated (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 8). In our opinion, this way of looking upon coordination perfectly fits into the preliminary framework, hence we agree with the coordination theory and it will, in our framework, be used as the link between the stakeholders and the place branding, for the development of the place brand identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of coordination</th>
<th>Associated coordination processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Identifying goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Mapping goals to activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e.g. goal decomposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Selecting actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assigning activities to actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependencies</td>
<td>“Managing” interdependencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Components of coordination. (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 4)

The authors Malone and Crowston (1994, p. 101) note that one challenges with coordination is that the actors may have objectives that come in conflict with each other. In order to understand these situations, it is best to attempt to identify the goals that are conflicting and to analyze the behavior of the process. This is well linked to one of the objectives of our study. An example of conflicting goals happens in market transactions: All of the partakers in a market may have the objective of maximizing their own benefits, however, the observer might evaluate the market as a coordination mechanism in terms of how well it achieves some global objectives such as allocating economic resources to maximize consumer utilities (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 6). This example can be applied for a place as well: Even though the stakeholders have their activities and goals to maximize their own benefits, the consumer (visitors, investors, residents), evaluate the city as one entity – and will judge the city according to how well it (i.e. in reality the stakeholders) can supply what the individual demands.

3.5 Preliminary framework

The previous sections in this chapter reviewed theories and models related to the three main areas that we find relevant to better understand the phenomenon. From these sections, and with a clear connection to the study’s research problems and purpose, we identified the components – from different models and theories that in our opinion were both comprehensive and appropriate – that combined serves as a more holistic framework of place brand identity development. The preliminary framework (see figure 15) of place brand identity development consists of three main blocks that shape this thesis – Stakeholders, Coordination and Place branding. All three are affected by external factors (similar to the environmental challenges presented by Rainisto, (2003, p. 228) such as globalization – leading to for instance increased and tough competition – and technological advancement. The framework in itself is not a rigid manifestation, but is rather to be viewed as a dynamic process – constantly changing as a result of the
stakeholders’ goals and actions, the entrance and exit of key stakeholders, varying and changing interdependencies as well as the constant changes in the external environment.

The stakeholder category map developed in section 3.3.3 (based on models of Freeman 1984, p. 91-92; Post et al., 2002, p. 22-24; Placebrands, 2003 in Allan, 2006, p. 7; Kotler et al., 1999, in Rainisto, 2003 p. 35), serves as one part of the preliminary framework. The core though is to identify the key stakeholders from the categories. Next, the preliminary framework presents the element “Official place brand strategy and core values”. In our opinion, this is to be viewed as similar to what theory defines as the corporate mission (Freeman’s, 1984, p. 112-117) and the place brand’s agreed and shared vision (Allan, 2006, p. 6) – set up by for instance public city planners. This element is seen as rather static – at least over some years – and we assume that all identified key stakeholders take this element into consideration when setting up the individual goals and activities. Then, as the framework shows, each of the stakeholders’ individual goals and activities – directly or indirectly related/connected to the place brand – is to be recognized. In order to view the current and potential coordination, the common goals and activities are thereafter to be tracked. The common goals can be viewed as areas where the key stakeholders are interconnected and where they can be/are depending on each other for the best outcome/performance. These are called the areas of interdependencies, for which common activities can be coordinated. The goals, activities actors and interdependencies are all components of coordination (Malone and Crowston, 1990, p. 4). The basic thought in the framework is that for coordination to exist; multiple stakeholder engagement in the place branding process (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 467) is needed. All of the three boxes – belonging to the area of coordination – impact the development of the place brand identity. The identity in itself represents the outcome of the process – how the key stakeholders want the place brand to be perceived – and can be seen as the result of planned activities (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73). The place brand identity is not static, and will be adjusted, updated and changed as a result of for instance stakeholders’ entrance and exit or change of their goals. The arrow connecting the element of Place Brand Identity with the Stakeholder category map explains this. As mentioned earlier, the external environment impacts the whole process of place brand identity development. Globalization and other changes affects and challenges all places (Kavaratzis, 2005, p. 329) – hence it is important to achieve a correct and precise picture of the external environment (Freeman, 1984, p. 91-92).

Figure 15. Preliminary framework of place brand identity development.
4. Practical method

The choices of this chapter are closely connected to the preliminary framework developed in the chapter 3. First, this chapter argues for and describes the selection of respondents and the sampling techniques employed. Then, the key stakeholders are portrayed and the interview guide is presented. Last, the collection of the empirical data – from interviews, secondary data and observations – is described and we explain how the data has been structured and analyzed using the preliminary framework as a guide while also employing categorization and pattern matching techniques.

4.1 Respondent selection & Sampling design

In quantitative studies it is important to distinguish the population from which the sample is drawn and to choose respondents through statistical methods. However, for a qualitative study like this, it is not necessary to choose respondents representative in a statistical manner. The qualitative researchers rather strive for a large variation of the respondents – within given boundaries (Trost, 1997, p. 105). As stated in earlier chapters, the study aims to gain in-depth information by interviewing key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003, p. 96) suggest that talking to experts within the subject is one way to conduct exploratory research. This is just in line with our choice of conducting interviews with key stakeholders of brand Umeå. When choosing which stakeholders to interview, we first searched for acceptable and broad benchmarks of how to choose and group stakeholders. We recognized a large amount of different ways of defining stakeholder groups and criteria. Some principles were seen as more appropriate for the purpose of this study and the combination of these lead to the development of the stakeholder category map of Brand Umeå (see figure 14). This map was also included in the preliminary framework (see figure 15).

The precise criteria for the choice of respondents are threefold. Firstly, as can be found in our definition of key stakeholder, the respondent had to have a clear connection to the Place brand Umeå – in someway be directly or indirectly “selling Umeå” – and be depending on the place brand for goal achievement and success. Secondly, we were determined to choose stakeholder targeting different markets. Kotler et al. (1999, in Rainisto, 1993, p. 35) present four place marketing target markets – visitors, residents and employees, business and industry, and export market (see figure 7). As a starting point for the selection among all possible stakeholders, covering all four of these markets was prioritized. Thirdly, Kotler et al. (1999, in Rainisto, 2003, p. 41) also divide local actors, i.e. the stakeholders, into two groups; the public sector and the private sector (see figure 8). Making sure that the respondents selected was divided fairly even between these two groups was considered appropriate for this thesis. However, as many stakeholders are partly private and partly public, this division is not that straightforward, and can therefore be seen as problematic. Using our network of people in Umeå, the identification of nine respondents fulfilling the criteria outlined above was possible, and these were selected as the key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå. Some of the key stakeholders were contacted during the first weeks of our study – as they also assisted with brainstorming of research areas in the introduction phase – but the main part of them where contacted by email in the end of March, 2012.
Sekaran (2003, p. 296) states that when qualitative research is employed for exploratory purpose, the sampling design will almost always be convenience sampling. This means that the researcher find the respondents that are conveniently available, that is, the most easily accessible members are chosen as subjects (Sekaran, 2003, p. 280). However, even though we did use our network to get in contact with people, the selection of key stakeholders was driven by theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 45) explain this as theoretical sampling. Hence, we want to stress that the respondents chosen for this thesis are not representative in a statistical manner (Trost, 1997, p. 108).

4.2 Respondents

A summary of the chosen respondents – as representatives of key stakeholders – and their respective interview information are presented in the table 3. This section also provides a short presentation of each key stakeholder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Stakeholder category</th>
<th>Interview date (yyyy-mm-dd)</th>
<th>Interview duration (min)</th>
<th>Interview order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Promotion Department (EDPD)</td>
<td>Head of city marketing</td>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>2012-04-12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InfoTech Umeå</td>
<td>Marketing manager</td>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>2012-04-13</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå C</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>2012-04-20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå Municipality</td>
<td>Director of communication</td>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>2012-04-17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå Tourist Information</td>
<td>Director of tourism</td>
<td>Tourism/Public sector</td>
<td>2012-04-12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå University</td>
<td>Head of communication</td>
<td>Education/Public sector</td>
<td>2012-04-18</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Umeå AB</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Tourism/Private sector</td>
<td>2012-04-12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce (VCC)</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Export/Private sector</td>
<td>2012-04-18</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Västerbotten Investment Agency (VIA)</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Investors/Private sector</td>
<td>2012-04-19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Overview of the selected respondents and respective interview information.
4.2.1 Economic Development and Promotion Department (EDPD)

The Economic development and promotion department (EDPD) is a part of Umeå municipality and operates to favor the industrial life and growth of the city. EDPD functions in close cooperation with the local and regional business life, the universities and other public stakeholder. EDPD’s job is to launch and support activities that encourage growth, and they are often seen as the most obvious linkage between the municipality and the commercial/business life (Umeå kommun, 2011b).

4.2.2 InfoTech Umeå

InfoTech Umeå is a strategic initiative within Uminova Innovation with the focus on marketing and development of the IT innovation environment in the region of Umeå. Uminova Innovation is a limited company with public owners, and public financing. The initiative is funded by Umeå Municipality, Umeå University, Region Västerbotten, Västerbotten’s country council and the European Union structural funds (InfoTech Umeå, 2009).

4.2.3 Umeå C

Umeå C takes on the responsibility as the city center developer – to make the shopping, culture, tourism and the commercial life flourish. In short, the organization acts to make the city center a living place. Umeå C is founded and owned by the business and property owners in the city center and the municipal parking corporation UPAB (Umeå C, 2012).

4.2.4 Umeå Municipality

Umeå municipality strives to bring together ideas and visions that concern all individuals of the city. Their official areas of responsibility contains for instance that of the social security service, the educational system, issues regarding construction, health- and environmental care, handling of waste and usage, the emergency services, water supplies, as well as recreation activities, culture and energy (Umeå kommun, 2012c).

4.2.5 Umeå Tourist Information

The tourist information is a part of Umeå municipality but is partly run as a self-standing entity (in Swedish “intraprend”). The tourist center provides its customers (visitors and inhabitants) with information on events, activities and sites in the Umeå region, i.e. Umeå, Vännäs, Vindeln, Robertsfors, Bjurholm and Nordmaling (Umeå Turistbyrå, 2004; Umeå Turistbyrå 2011).

4.2.6 Umeå University

The university was first founded in 1965, and is considered Sweden’s fifth university in start-up order. Umeå University strives to include international and multicultural influences, together with the best environment regarding education for its students (Umeå University, 2011, p. 6). The campus contains a library, several restaurants, student pubs and one of the worlds biggest sports facility – IKSU Sportcenter. The university has several premises outside of the campus area. Umeå art campus – offering
educations within architecture, design and art in the Umeå School of Architecture, Umeå Institute of Design and Umeå Academy of Fine Arts. The Campus is also present in other cities, such as Skellefteå, Örnsköldsvik (Umeå Universitet, 2011, p. 6).

4.2.7 Visit Umeå AB

Visit Umeå AB is the very recently founded destination corporation. The organizational structure is the following; 49% is owned directly and indirectly by Umeå municipality via Umeå C and UPAB, 31% is owned by the industrial/commercial life organized through a cooperative society. Today, the organization employs three people (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012).

4.2.8. Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce (VCC)

VCC is owned, controlled and financed by the member companies. The member companies (about 300) include both smaller and larger companies and represent all industries. VCC acts on behalf of its members, to make them have the best opportunities to run their businesses. This is accomplished through economic-political work, arranging meeting points for the companies and service for the members. In addition, VCC influences the creation of public opinion and speaks for trade and industry to politicians, authorities and the public sector (Västerbottens handelskammare, 2012).

4.2.9 Västerbotten Investment Agency (VIA)

VIA is a regional investment promotion agency dedicated to make the Västerbotten province the most attractive choice for foreign investors and companies thinking about establishing or expanding their business operations in Sweden. VIA helps letting potential investors know about various business opportunities and they also aid in establishment processes (VIA, 2012).

4.3 Interview guide

Before the interviews took place, interview themes as well as broad questions were prepared and gathered in an interview guide. The interview guide was constructed from the preliminary framework with the intention to provide us with the necessary information to answer the research problems and fulfill the purpose of the study. Hence, the interview guide included all components of the preliminary framework and was to be used as a tool structuring the empirical data and for the empirical analysis. This is just in line with the suggestions of the authors Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 483-484) who argue that that the researcher – planning an interview – ought to create sufficient amount of themes and questions to enable the interviews to run smoothly and develop the questions with a clear link to the research problem. Our interview guide was not to be seen as a fixed manual but rather a dynamic document that would have to be supplemented as we increased our knowledge and understanding of the topic. The first questions intended to reveal information about the background of the stakeholder and was seen as valuable for a larger understanding. The remaining parts of the questions were more flexible and the use and order depended on the interviewees’ responses. The interview guide was constructed in English (see Appendix 2), and then translated by us into Swedish (see Appendix 3) – which was the language used in all interviews.
A pilot study, with a group that responds to the “real” research objects, can be executed in order to try out a certain setup of the study (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 60). To evaluate if the research questions were suitable for the selected respondents, a pilot study – with a local politician – was carried out. We chose this respondent as we considered it vital to “test” the interview guide on someone with good knowledge about the city. The pilot study took place a week before the first interview, which gave us plenty of time to adjust the interview guide before the first interview took place.

4.4 Empirical data

4.4.1 Interviews

The primary source of data was collected through qualitative interviews. The respondents were contacted via email where we explained the purpose of the study and the value of their participation. All of the approached stakeholders replied with a positive confirmation and we responded directly with the interview themes. In order to make the respondent feel comfortable and calm, the place, date and time of the interview was decided upon by the respondent. All interviews were held in the natural habitat of the respondents – in an office or a conference room during office hours, except one that was held in a local café post working hours. Two of the respondents brought a colleague with them who also participated in the interview. We suspect that these co-respondents were necessary to give the main respondent support and we felt that it provided additional insight in the areas of our study, hence we saw it as an advantage. Each interview began with a short explanation of the purpose and background of the study. The preliminary framework was shown and explained and it was again stressed that the interviewee’s participation in the study was relevant and impactful for our research. We made sure to clarify what the collected data would be used for during and after the study and it was stressed that the participant had the option to refuse answering any questions at any time. The issue of confidentiality (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 74) and anonymity was highlighted and we made a promise that the data gathered from the respondents would not be utilized with the intention to harm the person. Because of this, and also in order to keep the focus of the data collected on the key stakeholders rather than on the specific representatives, we decided on not using the respondents name in our study. A summary of the interview was to be sent to the participant before it went into publication. Having a transparent interview structure and being clear about everything was seen as vital for the credibility of the research, and we noted that the respondents understood the gravity of our study.

We attempted to incorporate a limited approach in our expressions – body language, tone of voice, and choice of words during the interviews in order to make the respondent feel less heedful and increasingly calm. All interviews followed a similar pattern: In the beginning the respondent acted with a clear anticipation – behaving in an alert and cautious manner. After about 10 minutes, the interview took on a more relaxed mode, and once the conversation fell over the acquaintance threshold, the respondents started to speak more freely. In many cases the respondents revealed more information than what we had asked for. Some of respondents chose to include PowerPoint presentations while they were being asked questions. This was not a problem, however, we noted that the conversation around the content of the presentation became very rigid. Also, the responses sometimes lacked in context when the interviewee simply referred to the presentation as answers to our questions. The majority of our respondents had
read the interview themes in beforehand and although it was not seen as an obstacle, it was clear to us that the unprepared respondents were more nervous and gave more unstructured answers, compared to those that were prepared. We truly feel that the respondents provided the answers we needed in order to complete the thesis. As far as we can interpret, all stakeholders were genuinely interested in the topic and honest while answering our questions. In fact, most of them expressed the importance of our investigation and made very clear that they were interested in reading the completed thesis.

According to Fontana and Frey (2003, p. 68), the interviewer shall not interrupt the respondent’s story when interviewing, in particular when making a qualitative study. However, since we had a time limit to consider, we had to ensure ourselves to cover all interview themes, and thus had to interrupt some of the respondents when the answers were too long or lacking in consistency. We managed to keep all nine interviews within the time frame of 45 minutes. Both of us were present during all interviews and all respondents approved of being recorded. Bell (2006, p. 165) states that recording an interview can prove to be beneficial in terms of transcribing the exact replies. To be on the safe side, all interviews were recorded with two cellular phones with audio-recording features, and this enabled us to provide our full attention on the interviewee and thus give more credibility to the interpretation. Due to the fact that we both have limited prior experience in hosting qualitative interviews, the first couple of interviews could be regarded as starting the process where we developed skills and learned interview techniques. We noted that the quality of the interviews improved as we became more confident with our material and approach. For instance, the order of the themes and questions were much literal in the first interviews where as the last ones were more of a discussion around the themes. We made sure to give each other room to ask questions and both of us kept track of the time and the interview themes. The transcription into electronic documents was established directly after the interview – first into Swedish and thereafter translated into English – and the quality of all recordings was satisfactory. All of this enabled a more precise and accurate transcription, increased the reliability of the study and kept risk of errors and confusion to a minimum. It also enabled us to sense a pattern of questions that was more, or less, relevant for the remaining interviews. In fact we started the analysis already after the first interview, which made it possible to let every interview partly steer the next interview. This is also a recommended method of continuous analysis according to Merriam (1994, p. 137). The transcribed interview was sent to the interviewee for possible edit and confirmation before publishing.

4.4.2 Secondary Data

Before the interviews, we requested the respondents for all types of organizational documents. We received organizational brochures, PowerPoint-presentations, website-addresses and organizational reports/documents – in different forms, shapes, colors and sizes. The documents were handed to us in the end of each interview or presented during the interview and sent to us by email on request. It ought to be mentioned that a few key stakeholders did not provide us with any documents. All stakeholders’ webpages were studied (except Visit Umeå AB that does not have one yet), however for those key stakeholders that did not offers us sufficient documents – Economic development and promotion department, Umeå university and Umeå municipality – the web pages were used even more. As mentioned in section 2.6, a comprehensive
understanding of a case needs to rely on several relevant sources of data (Bryman, 1995, p. 157). With regard to the preliminary framework and the research problems, we found it necessary to incorporate the secondary data in the case study – mainly as a support and complement to the findings of the main source of data collected from interviews, but also as background information of the key stakeholders and to create credibility of the study. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 308) the decisions about what should be counted in the analysis of the content, in for instance a document, is dependent on the nature of the research question of the study. For the presentation of the empirical data, the information that was considered relevant for the purpose and the research problems was connected to the respective themes of the interview guide. Our aim was to examine if the secondary data revealed that any evidence that coordination between the stakeholders exists and also study the respective stakeholder’s presentation, thus perception, of Brand Umeå. In the documents, we looked for patterns, similarities and dissimilarities – in format, type, esthetics, paper finish, pictures and also examined what information the documents covered and if any documents mentioned other stakeholders – to recognize if some of the documents were possible to pair. To be able to evaluate the colors that had been used – a color scheme showing all key stakeholders’ chosen ways to color their document – was constructed. Since the color choice make a strong first impression on the reader, the color scheme was seen as a very obvious way to find out if the key stakeholders had been coordinating the communication. As for the transcription of the interviews, we tried to stay objective when comparing the documents and made sure that all documents were examined thoroughly.

4.4.3 Observations

For the credibility of our case study, observing the key stakeholders interacting in reality was seen as crucial. Through our large network of people, we became aware of relevant meetings and were invited to participate in several of them, in which various constellations of the key stakeholders participated. As was the case with the secondary data, the data collected from the observation could be viewed as a complement to the interviews. The structure of the data collection for the observations was drawn from the interview guide (which in turn was derived from the preliminary framework). The purpose of this was to enable the data from the observation to be incorporated in the case study in a sufficient way and keep the connection to the research problems and the preliminary framework. The aim of the observations was to gain insight into the current discussions among the key stakeholders and other actors in Umeå. We wanted to gain a general view of how the stakeholders act in reality, gain insight into the relationships between them and recognize groupings. We paid extra attention to how and which arguments that were presented (by whom) and the power of each key stakeholder in the discussion. Participating as observer in more than one meeting, and with different key stakeholders present, was seen as important for a coherent picture. All key stakeholders were aware of the reason for our participation in the meeting. Both of us were present during all observations and in order to avoid influencing or disturbing the key stakeholders we always chose a seat in the back of the room, did not participate verbally during the meetings (however before and after) and were discrete when taking notes of their actions and behavior. We divided our focus areas so that one of us concentrated more on what was said and the other one focused more on the language, expressions, tones, and body languages. Right after the meetings, we discussed and compared how we interpreted the key stakeholders and we made sure to transcribe our notes. The full
4.5 Empirical data and analysis

The analysis of the case study data is according to Yin (2009, p. 127) one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies. He argues that compared to statistical analysis, the case study investigator have few fixed formulas to guide the novice – hence must rely on thorough empirical thinking and appropriate presentation of evidence and cautious consideration of different understandings. Qualitative researchers should not suffice with the mere coding of data, nevertheless attempt to show how the material is assembled (Silverman, 2003, p. 353). We strived to make the structure of the empirical data (see figure 16) – from the collection, to the presentation and finally the analysis – as clear as possible to enable the reader to easily follow.

The empirical data collection – from interviews, documents and observations – left us with a vast amount of data. It is almost certain that the researcher will end up with much more collected data than can be analyzed, thus it is important to identify the best data
and leave the rest (Stake, 1995, p. 84). When we selected what data to present we handled according to Chenail and Chenail (2011, p. 278) who argue that the researcher must provide enough data for the reader to be able to understand the answer of the research question, and these authors continues by stating that unnecessary data will only confuse the readers and lead them from the main research question. Hence, we as researchers are responsible for being selective in the data we present. According to Attride-Stirling (2001, s. 402), researchers should brake up the data in defined clusters or themes, as this will enable the researcher to reveal key issues much easier. Hence, all empirical data was summarized and organized into the 5 themes of the interview guide (see section 4.3) – Brand Umeå, Umeå’s Brand Platform and Core Values, Goals and Activities, Coordination, Interdependencies and Unity of messages, and The external environment. These 5 themes, and the background of the city of Umeå – built up the case description (to be found in section 5.1). Compared to presenting the data of each respondent one by one, we believe that this structure makes the chapter more interesting as it provides the picture of one case. Moreover, we are convinced that the effort to clearly organize the themes helped us prepare for the analysis. This is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 276), who argue that no matter how the actual coding is done by the researcher, when the researcher has identified the themes and managed to refine these so that they can be applied to a whole body of texts, much of the interpretive analysis have already been undertaken.

The analysis of the information is the process that is about creating a meaning of the information (Merriam, 1994, p. 142). Our analytical process started as soon as the first interview was over and was an ongoing process throughout the whole data collection. When the data collection was finished, we could focus solely on the analysis. We made sure to write down and formulate ideas around the findings and looked for events with common factors and patterns. The techniques used are called categorization and pattern matching. For categorization, the categories shall mirror the purpose of the research and be exhaustive (Merriam, 1994, p. 148). Merriam mean that in order to develop the categories, two types of thinking are required. First, convergence thinking which entail deciding what belongs to what category. Second, divergent thinking – fill out the identified categories (Merriam, 1994, p. 146). Pattern matching contains comparing the empirical pattern with a predicted pattern (Yin, 2007, p. 145). According to Stake (1995, p. 78) often the pattern will be known in advance, drawn from the research questions, serving as a template for the analysis. This was partly true for this research as well. Compared to other analytical techniques – explanation building, time-series analysis, logical models and cross-case syntheses – the pattern matching was seen as most appropriate as we had developed a preliminary framework from literature serving as the predicted pattern. When structuring the empirical analysis we agree with Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 275) who argue that it is vital to connect the empirical material with findings of previous literature. The literature review normally contains rich sources of concepts, thus the researches often induce these themes from the text themselves. Since the structure of the empirical data was based on the structure of the interview guide, which in turn was developed from the preliminary framework that is derived from the literature (see section 2.10 and 2.11) – organizing the empirical data into the three main areas of the preliminary framework and simultaneously connecting the data to the relevant literature for the analysis, was manageable without any larger problems arising. The main source of data – from the interviews – was used as the foundation of the analysis, whereas the data from the documents and the observations was mostly used to fill out gaps and to build up the statements.
5. Case Description

This chapter presents the Case description, which includes empirical data collected from the interviews, documents and observations. The first part – the background – serves to give the reader an overview of the city of Umeå and is based on secondary data. Thereafter, the design of the chapter follows the structure of the interview guide, thus is structured under five sections – Brand Umeå; Umeå’s Brand Platform and Core Values; Goals and Activities; Coordination, Interdependencies and Unity of messages; The external environment.

5.1 Background - The city of Umeå

With 116 200 inhabitants, Umeå is the most populous city in northern Sweden. Since the University was founded in 1965, the population has doubled and Umeå is today one of Sweden’s fastest growing cities (Umeå kommun, 2012b), with more than half of the inhabitants coming from outside the region (Umeå University, 2012). The city’s vision is to reach 200 000 inhabitants before year 2050. As a part of the long-term development strategy, and after hard work with the application, Umeå has been elected as the European Capital of Culture 2014. The belief is that this will accelerate growth and investment – create opportunities for sport and culture to develop and increase the attractiveness of the city for e.g. students, entrepreneurs and creators (Portalen för Umeå, 2010). Umeå is the leading conference and commercial location in northern Sweden, and the most vital sectors are the large engineering companies, IT, the service industry and biotechnology (Nordic City Network, 2012). Umeå University – with for instance design, art and business schools – and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) are important actors in the knowledge city of Umeå (Nordic City Network, 2012). In fact, the city had a high educational level, readily available research and know-how and also a world leading engineering industry and forest machine clusters (VIA, 2012).

Umeå has a young population, significant social commitment and strong growth. The location, on the northern east coast of Sweden makes Umeå a natural transport and logistics hub for northern Scandinavia (VIA, 2012). The location is also the reason for the contrasting seasons, with warm and long summer nights and long and cold winters (Umeå University, 2012). Right now, constructions and excavation is to been seen all over Umeå. In order to increase urban density, Umeå municipality has chosen to build inwards and upward. New roads, galleries, hotels and housing will be the output – for the city that intends to be the motor in Northern Sweden (Umeå Kommun 2012a, p. 24).

5.2 Brand Umeå

No one owns the place brand, this is something all stakeholders agree on. When it comes to what the place brand stands for – the meaning and identity of Brand Umeå – each of the key stakeholders present their view;

EDPD: “Umeå is a creative and innovative place with innovative people.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) The respondent means that through workshops and in-depth interviews, Umeå’s most attractive characteristics have been highlighted. These
are growth and development, the university, the people, the city’s possibilities (the offerings and nature) and the size of the city (sufficiently large city).

**InfoTech Umeå:** “Umeå is a young and liberal place – gay-friendly and open. The city is also rapidly growing, has short ways of decisions and young educated residents.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) InfoTech Umeå emphasizes some positive things of the city – the closeness to everything (8 minutes to the airport), the successful companies in Umeå and the university and IT-research of high quality. InfoTech Umeå hope that the city will soon be seen as a part of a driven IT-region and that people outside realizes that there are thing happening in Umeå, foremost in the IT sector.

**Umeå C:** “Umeå can be explained as new thinking and open – there is an openness for different things in this city, for instance shown by the awards as the gay-friendliest city in Sweden. But, the soft values are also important, represented for instance by the birches.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) Umeå C argues that there is at least one factor that should to be highlighted further; “We ought to emphasizes that the region has the lowest rate of crime in Sweden – it is safe to live in Umeå.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) Umeå C finds that they contribute to the place brand by working hard to make people visit the city center – by making it easier for residents and visitors to find parking spots, restaurants and good shopping. Working for a good treatment of customers is also highlighted. “No matter how much marketing resources we spend, if we are failing to take care of the customers and treating them well, it will lead to bad results.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) Umeå C finds that they can help strengthen the brand identity. “We can work to make sure that the visitors gets a good opinion about the city, that they feel like they are welcome here and that it is a beautiful and clear place.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012)

**Umeå Municipality:** “The core values of the brand used today are fairly good in describing Umeå, but I also like to say the word tolerance. In Umeå one has respect for people and what they do.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Umeå municipality mentions the “engagement” as something that also characterizes Umeå and that the foremost meaning of the brand ought to be growth. “We need to make those that study here stay when they graduate and hence we need to create more jobs for them.” Umeå municipality can succeed by “being a good and attractive employer, offering good services and contributing to the creation of satisfied inhabitants.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Umeå municipality argues that they can strengthen brand Umeå by emphasizing the quality that the municipality have, the capital of culture, the festivals and Umeå as a sports city. Furthermore, the municipality notes that there are weaknesses when it comes to how Umeå municipality is marketing itself. This needs to be improved in order to create “one municipality” – which will also benefit the place brand.

**Umeå Tourist Information:** “Umeå is a very tolerant, open, youthful and new thinking city. The tourist information has chosen to not use the word creative.” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012) The tourist information states that it is important to stress the positive factors, however, it is crucial that the identity is trustworthy and they would like to add a further meaning – the esthetic part of Umeå. In order to make people stay in Umeå – the individual needs to have a job that is satisfying, has to live with people that he/she enjoys and has to have a satisfying housing environment. “We need to make sure that all of these are included in the brand identity.” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012)
Umeå University: “You grow as an individual in Umeå, and the people here has a large and positive curiosity.”, “A strong place brand is very important for the performance of the University since much of our marketing is based on the fact that the university is located in an attractive city that provides easy access to accommodation and closeness to everything.” (Head of communication Umeå University, 2012) To strengthen the brand identity Umeå municipality argue that they need to market themselves more and highlight their strengths and what they stand for, because they have not had an outspoken position until now. Umeå University stresses that making students study abroad and thus act as ambassadors for the university and Umeå, and then return with new experiences, is important.

VCC: “Umeå stands for youthfulness, new thinking and new ideas, and the cultural investments, and we strive to emphasize the commercial life and the enterprises.”, “In the future, we hope that Umeå will be viewed as new thinking, open, attractive and international city.” (President VCC, 2012) To further strengthen Brand Umeå, VCC means that the best thing would be if their members became very strong – both national and international. VCC argues that brand Umeå has a very positive rumor around Sweden and hope that Umeå in the future will be seen as the city of possibilities – an active city where there are a lot of things are happening.

VIA: “I think about the university, the capital of the region, one of Sweden’s most rapidly growing cities, creativeness, a young population, many things happening, and growth.” (Director VIA, 2012) When promoting Umeå, VIA stresses the various reasons for different industries to establish their business here. For instance the creative environment, it is easy to hire educated and competent people, and the fact that Umeå invest a lot in culture and sports. “A strong place brand helps VIA since it puts Umeå on the map which is crucial as we need to present an attractive context in which the companies will exist.” (Director VIA, 2012) In the future, VIA hopes that the place brand also shall be identified for its entrepreneurial climate. VIA wants to be an actor involved in forming the identity of the place brand and therefore argues that the municipality needs to take on more responsibility. “It is important that the municipality has a clear agenda of what they want to communicate”, “We can contribute with professional opinions of what is trustworthy internationally and we can then communicate the chosen identity on the international arena.” (Director VIA, 2012)

Visit Umeå AB: “Umeå’s identity today can be explained by growth, inspiration and trust. And a belief in the future.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Visit Umeå AB declares that a strong brand definitely is beneficial to the organization but as of the time being this is not really the case. “The knowledge about Umeå is not sufficient – the rate of cognition is fairly low and it is difficult to make the message of the brand identity reach people outside Umeå.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Visit Umeå AB underline that Umeå needs to create curiosity – that is missing in Umeå today. “Most things are allowed, but are they are not cheered on.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012). Visit Umeå AB means that Umeå has a great potential but needs to understand “what we have that is rare” and communicate this. Furthermore, it is argued for the importance of the people – the inhabitants (“they are Umeå”) and the underground subculture of music. Visit Umeå AB views the reconstructions of the city center and opening of an IKEA warehouse as very positive.
5.3 Umeå’s Brand Platform and Core Values

The brochure “The importance of wanting” (“Vikten av att vilja”), handles Umeå’s challenges for the future (Umeå. Vill Mer., 2008). As a result of the though competition, branding work to strengthen Umeå’s position as an attractive place in northern Europe has been completed. Coordinated in this work are the municipality, the university and the commercial and industrial life of Umeå. The brand platform (see figure 17) – were developed by Umeå municipality and built on a thorough analysis and development work as well as workshops where people in, and with connection to, Umeå participated. The platform is intended to work as a tool for the continuous directional, marketing and development work. Through the platform, effective coordination of the work and consistent communication of brand Umeå is ensured. In the Platform, Umeå’s offering is presented as; “Umeå is a new thinking and open University city offering large opportunities to grow and develop, in close proximity with nature and people” (Our translation from Portalen för Umeå, 2011b). The target markets are the residents – and the potential in-migrants, businesses – and potential establishers/investors, as well as the visitors – both tourists and business travelers (Rebrand, 2008, p. 1).

Together with the brand platform, four core values regarding the city were identified;
1. New thinking – to be new thinking mean to be creative, edge cutting, and to be willing to improve.
2. Open – openness for fellow human and change in the surrounding world is important. Diversity and personal individuality are valued.
3. Opportunities – constitute the foundation in the offering. Umeå is a place that offers large opportunities to grow and develop.
4. Closeness – In Umeå, individuals are close to the nature, to each other – both socially and geographically – and to the surrounding world. (Portalen för Umeå, 2011b)

The stakeholders have various opinions about the core values and how to integrate these in their work. EDPD notes that the purpose of the core values is not that the partners must know the core values by heart, as the place cannot be reduced to a few values. EDPD mean that that the brand platform is to be revised and that they have some new ideas. “The core values are very broad, and in my opinion, does not always fit the...
different target markets perfectly. Therefore, it would be good to find synonyms to each of the core values.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) All key stakeholders admit that they recognize the core values, however most did not know them by heart and some appears more positive to the existence of these. “Thanks to the core values – when we communicate and market externally – it is easier to emphasize the different parts of Umeå.” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012) Umeå C finds that it is important that the core values are working, since it gives ripples in the water and stresses that it is important that one feels satisfied with living in Umeå, that it is an open city – for instance open to diversity. “Umeå C’s values are not contradicting to the core values of Brand Umeå, but we work out of our own premises – not along these core values.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012). Umeå University expresses that the core values of the place brand does not decide how they should act. “We are not building our work on the place brand platform, but our platform overlaps, and these core values parallels ours and our work.” (Head of communication Umeå University, 2012) However, when the university for instance is marketing Umeå arts campus, they like to stress the “innovators” and “rule breakers”, which Umeå University means is more specific than what the municipality emphasizes.

VIA finds that the core values are very general, and uses these indirectly as the values are just in line with how they work. “We have no core values, but we market opportunities.” (Director VIA, 2012) VIA also stresses the regions good infrastructure and quality of life, which can be connected to the core value of closeness, as well as creativity and the fact that the region is “cutting edge” in many branches – which is closely linked to the core value of new thinking. InfoTech Umeå does engage the core values in their daily work, but adjust them to fit their specialty – IT. InfoTech Umeå also has core values – active, inspiring, challenging and fast. “We cannot implement everything that is general for Umeå. We do place marketing for a specific segment and therefore we need another strategy.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) This is in line with Umeå municipality’s view – they have just finished the process of developing core values – dynamic growths, attractive habitat and attractive competence. “We have our own profile, hence our core values are not identical to those of the place brand.” (Director of communication Umeå Municipality, 2012) Umeå municipality believes that people can see the difference between the place and the organization, and that the core values of the municipality contribute to the core value of the place brand. “We are a part of the place. The focus on the citizens is very important to us – we are here to serve the citizens.” (Head of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Visit Umeå AB argues that the core values of the place brand needs to be communicated by the organization, but also points out that the core values are almost the same for all cities and therefore not that useful for differentiating the city. VCC is also more skeptical with regard to the core values. “When marketing Umeå, we do not work with large words like openness and new thinking because we prefer to work more hands-on and concrete, for example with activities for specific businesses. The Chamber of commerce acts as a part in opinion building groups, for example the building of the Bothnia railway, and promotes Umeå’s importance from a transportation angle. We stress that we are a large center for transport, instead of working alongside with core values.” (President VCC, 2012)
5.4 Goals and Activities

The key stakeholders have their own organizational visions, missions and goals.

**InfoTech Umeå's** vision is that the region should be regarded as a driven IT region and an engine for the next IT-generation people, technology and innovations. The mission is to market and develop the Umeå region as IT region. InfoTech Umeå strives to establish the region as a brand on InfoTech Umeå’s world map and actively market the region’s strengths, its people, businesses, technic and innovations (InfoTech Umeå, 2012). “To create attention – to show the rest of Sweden and the world that Umeå, and the region, is a place where there are things happening within IT. One can invest here, move the company to this region and there are a lot of competence here.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012)

**EDPD’s** objectives are to strengthen the preconditions for the businesses and commercial life as well as to market the place Umeå in cooperation with their partners and to foster the Place brand Umeå. The organization shall also initiate and support arrangements that promote the development and renewal of the commercial life in general and within the specific profile areas (Umeå kommun, 2011a).

**Umeå C’s** vision is that Umeå shall offer a “big city experience” in northern Sweden and Umeå C shall create added value for the organizations members. Umeå C strive to make Umeå city center – known for good commerce; clean, neat and safe; offer activities and happenings; be a place known for qualitative arrangements; offer the visitor a complete experience; continue being a reason for visit for travelers. A living center offers the visitor a positive experience and constantly attracts new visitors (Umeå C, 2012).

**Umeå municipality’s** broad vision (at least one of them) is to reach 200 000 inhabitants in year 2050 at the latest. The slogan; “We are winning in Umeå” ("Vi vinner i Umeå") expresses the vision that the municipality’s all stakeholders shall experience and feel that they benefit from living and acting in Umeå. The municipality has newly developed a collective mission statement, which establishes; “With collective power we create a good life in Umeå and we contribute to a welfare that gives good conditions for business enterprise, leisure and culture” (our translation). The municipal strategic target areas are dynamic growths, attractive habitat and attractive competence (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012). The municipality aims to fully cooperate over all boundaries to create a long-term social, financial and ecological sustainability, high attractiveness and growth with the goal of reaching the vision presented above. Moreover, Umeå municipality strives to continue to empower their position as one of the leading regions regarding quality and innovation (Umeå kommun, 2012d).

**Umeå tourist information’s** vision includes that the region of Umeå shall, for their prioritized markets, become the prime meeting place where culture, nature, competence and the treatment makes the Umeå region the premium choice for the conscious person during all of the “five seasons”. The Umeå region aims for a profile of world-class hostesship, leading quality and environmental work, safeness, authenticity and harmony, precise and broad knowledge and competence, and diversity of contradistinctive and timeless experiences. The mission is to foster the development of gaining visitors to the region (Umeå Turistbyrå, 2004, p. 4). “The endeavor is to attract
Umeå University’s mission is to integrate environments within education, research, and innovation. Additionally, the students that are attending the university shall feel that their education is of finest quality. The university strives to make sure to provide a good study environment, closeness to research and business life, competent professors and accessibility to student accommodations (Umeå University, 2012). “We have three core processes – education, research and cooperation and we are currently developing a new vision document. One of our goals is to build a strong international university, for this, one of the largest challenges is how to get access to the competitive advantage of for example the best researchers and employees.” (Head of communication Umeå University, 2012)

Visit Umeå AB is a newly created organization and has not yet any official documents regarding vision and goals. The CEO describes that the long-term objective is to make the whole region grow, for instance by making the nature consumable – making it possible to earn money from it. For the recently founded destination company, the more short-term objective is to make a list with all events and fill the event calendar with interesting events in a strategic way. The goal is to point out the health, sports and culture of the city. “These are areas that absorb a lot of people that will consume in the city, eat in the restaurants and stay in hotels.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012)

VCC’s, vision is to be the most active and attractive representative for the regional commercial life – an enterprise/commercial life organization with clear work orientation – as well as an organization that actively works with international contacts (Västerbottens Handelskammare, 2010). “In short, the vision is to help our members to develop” (President VCC, 2012). VCC’s mission is to create possibilities for growth and they strive to make Västerbotten a better place for companies to act and exist in, by influencing politicians and other groups, arranging meetings and making sure that companies get together, make business and evolve. One of the objectives is to make companies look beyond their current market and into new ones (Västerbottens Handelskammare, 2012). “Our goal is to make Västerbotten a better region for our enterprisers. It is our members that we are to support and help.” (President VCC, 2012)

VIA is a marketing organization that shall make the Västerbotten province the most attractive choice for foreign investors and businesses that consider establishing or expanding their company operations in Sweden (VIA, 2012). VIA identifies what can be offered in the home market and strives to find the demand for this internationally. Their largest objective is the number of establishments and the number of jobs created out of these establishments (Director VIA, 2012)

All key stakeholders engage and have been engaged in different activities. InfoTech Umeå has many events for people interested in IT, but also coordinates activities with other stakeholders. “Art on campus is one example, but we also have a great coordination with the commercial life. Unionova innovation, region Västerbotten and the county council.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) The head of city marketing EDPD exemplifies an activity that they did together with InfoTech Umeå – an event in Stockholm to attract educated and competent labor to move to Umeå. “We
want to find more of these events, where the branches can explain what they do.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012). Another activity, in which the municipality and the university cooperated, is the student recruiting campaigns promoting Umeå as a student city. EDPD states that the connection in this coordinated activities is “New thinking”.

The VCC arranges activities in the form of different international seminars. “Most export businesses are members of VCC and we arrange different activities for them, like education.” (President VCC, 2012) VCC has a few projects together with Umeå municipality, like Morgonpasset (Breakfast lecture) and Umegalan (award gala for the local Enterprises) – where many of the other key stakeholders also are sponsors. According VCC, the municipality and EDPD are their most important partners and they have a good relationship. The municipality agrees and states that these events create a “we-feeling” that really strengthen the place brand.

Umeå C arranges many activities and also presents other activities of interest for their members and target markets in a yearly activity calendar, for example sports events, fashion shows and exhibitions/fairs. Umeå tourist information promotes the Umeå region in their marketing material. “We have very small resources for doing marketing activities, but we market the brand Umeå in everything we communicate – for instance in all brochures that we give out to tourists and inhabitants all year around.” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012) VIA basically engage in two types of activities, first of all participation in international exhibitions/fairs. For this, VIA stresses the continuity of participation since this creates credibility and increases the knowledge about VIA. “One has to nag during many years. Our work takes a long time, but this gives results.” (Director VIA, 2012) Secondly, VIA bring the business leaders to the region to show them around and to enable to eliminate the negative preconception of the Sweden as a dark and cold place, with high taxes. “Promoting investment includes hard as well as soft values, where the first is crucial in the beginning to get the investors attention to establish their business here and the latter is vital in a later stage. Hence, it is important to give great service and make their experience as good as possible.” (Director VIA, 2012)

5.5 Coordination, Interdependencies and Unity of messages

“Coordination is beneficial and it is important to watch what the other stakeholders are doing and communicate with each other.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) Also, Umeå University finds that there is an existing interest for coordinating the work with other stakeholder in Umeå to find common solutions. And more of key stakeholders agree. “For growth to appear, a lot of coordination is needed.”(Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012). Umeå Municipality stresses that the “new coordinated way” of working can be exemplified through the property owners and local entrepreneurs that are right now rebuilding the streets of the city. EDPD is also very positive to coordination. “We want to work, and should work in, partnerships, that is our goals – together with the university, the culture organization, within the municipality, with the residents and with sport clubs as there are benefits for all with this. Together we can stress those factors that make the city attractive and when there are very different opinions – these factors must not be highlighted. We are best when we work together – and we have improved within this area. But, we need to understand that all stakeholders have different agendas. We work to strengthen the place Umeå – if one wants to work with us, then one needs to want this as well.” (Head of city marketing
EDPD, 2012) Visit Umeå AB argues that the benefits of coordination activities depend on the formation of the cooperation and that all stakeholders can benefit from it, however in various ways. All key stakeholders agree that there could be more coordination between them. VIA claims that they are initiating coordination, as it is important for their fairly new organization. “We try, but there are very many stakeholders and it is difficult. We are a young organization and more and more actors are gaining knowledge about our existence – our core thought is that we should work with a company until they decide that they want to invest in the region – then, it is the municipality that ought to take the responsibility. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t.” (Director VIA, 2012) Also, Umeå tourist information and Umeå C argue for improvement and state that it is possible to coordinate the work with more stakeholders.

Before, during and after all of the observations (see table 4), the participating stakeholders showed a general positive attitude to the meeting and to each other. They know each other quite well, and they acted in a relaxed, but professional way. During the meeting “Commercial life day for the municipal council” where many of the key stakeholders participated, a fairly tough discussion on responsibility issues – who does what, who pays and who gains – was started, and the stakeholders started to blame each other. Some of the key stakeholders clearly had more authority than others – some wanted to be in the spotlight constantly where as others barely were visible in the discussions. The financial side of things decides a lot of what is actually happening when it comes to promoting the city brand and its identity.

Most stakeholders identify problems or at least challenges with coordination. InfoTech Umeå means that different interest is a problem. "Umeå municipality, for instance, works very broadly with everything in the city that we do not necessarily feel that we want to focus on since there is no clear benefit for us.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) In line with this, Umeå tourist information also finds that the difference is a problematic issue, but even more of an issue is the fact that all stakeholders, both private and public, “have a hard time to look beyond their own organization’s work” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012). The difficulty of seeing the whole picture, and how it will benefit the single organization in the longer run seems harder for the smaller firms, says Umeå C. Different messages is a challenge to overcome, but should not be seen as a problem according to the director of VIA. “We want to market the region as a dynamic place with a lot of possibilities and a strong commercial life, however, the tourism want to market the wilderness, this does not really correspond, but the understanding for each others goals is really important.” (Director VIA, 2012) Umeå C argues that greediness can be an issue when a project succeeds. “Then everyone wants show that they are the reason for the outcome.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) Also, EDPD admits that the messages can be a bit diverse, but argues that this is a strong argument for increased coordination as it has positive effects and creates an understanding for other stakeholders. “The largest problem is the lack of money, we hope that we will have more resources in the future so we can coordinate the stakeholders more.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012)

On the contrary, Visit Umeå AB means that it does not seem to be that hard to coordinate the stakeholders in Umeå, since the wishes are not that different. Visit Umeå AB continues by stressing that the coordination must be loaded with positive energy so that everyone wants to participate, despite of this, the marginal utility of coordination declines fairly quickly. “It is through the organizations’ acts that the important things
happens, what is written in the common objectives is what to strive for – but it does not help the businesses in reality.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) VCC refers to those attempts that have been done to coordinate activities, seminars and larger arrangements. “It is almost impossible to keep track of everything as there are so many actors, and this results in a lot of bureaucracy, and of course some things collides.” (President VCC, 2012) The key stakeholders have suggestions on how the coordination between the stakeholders and their activities can be improved. InfoTech Umeå stresses the importance of direct and personal contact with each other. Taking this a bit further, both the EDPD and Umeå C supports the idea that everyone working with the brand ought to sit closer to each other and, Umeå C adds that a common calendar including all larger events would be beneficial to all stakeholders. “Then, we could see that 300 nurses are coming to town and could prepare and ask ourselves, how can we profit from this? The stores could make a fashion show, and the nurses would shop down town. Everyone would probably profit. And brand Umeå would definitely profit.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) EDPD argues that very effective meetings will make it easier for smaller businesses to take part in the coordination. And there are other suggestions as well. “By forming the target markets more clearly, and the missions, it is easier to see where coordination is and can bring something positive.” (InfoTech Umeå, 2012)

“Since no one owns the place brand, but everyone takes part in the creation of it, all stakeholders are interdependent.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) EDPD mentions the close connection between the university, Visit Umeå AB, the tourist information and Volvo. “There are many stories of the stakeholders, for example the history of Volvo, that is very interesting. Storytelling is important for the brand and can strengthen the whole identity of Umeå”. (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) As a certain area of interdependence, the EDPD mentions the issue of getting competent employees. In the IT and engineering industry, Umeå municipality and InfoTech Umeå has coordinated their work and some activities already, for instance campaigns about Umeå in other areas – for example Stockholm. InfoTech Umeå means that this coordinated activities creates synergies but also adds that since Umeå municipality is one of InfoTech Umeå’s financiers, there is an underlying interdependence because of this fact. Umeå tourist information means that they could take part in these activities as well, for instance by offering good weekend packages for visitors. They also mentions the financial interdependence with the municipality and makes clear that their work really do contribute to the growth of the city. “To make the tourist companies get customers and grow is how we can and do contribute to the municipality’s goals.” (Director of tourism Umeå tourist information, 2012)

In general, attracting educated labor is an important issue for all stakeholders. “We could coordinate activities with the VCC to easier reach the objectives of growth.” (Director of communication Umeå Municipality, 2012) Umeå municipality also mentions the university and the hospital as important partners for coordination in order to keep the competent labor force. VCC shares the fact that they have coordinated a few projects with the University with the goals of connecting students from the technical programs to the applicable companies, which is said to really be an area of interdependence where it is all about making the students stay in Umeå. In line with this, Visit Umeå AB stresses the clear interdependencies between the University, the hospital, the municipality and some of the companies. “For example, the research is important to the University and the hospital – these two helps, and ought to help each other. The municipality on their side helps to bring companies here that establishes and
drives these type of questions.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Visit Umeå AB finds that
Umeå tourist information and the meeting industry have many common denominators.

“To us it is important to get researchers from all over the world – we want to become a
strong international university. But to get this work, Umeå needs to be package as a
destination – to travel here, participate in the conference should be easy. Then,
hopefully, some people want to move here to work or study.” (Head of communication
Umeå University, 2012) Umeå University believes in working together with other
stakeholders to build a strong brand even outside Västerbotten and Sweden. Related to
this, VIA argues that international exhibitions – that they today participate in “alone” –
is a very good example of where the stakeholders could cooperate, since it is an area of
interdependence.

“Visit Umeå AB is maybe the most logical partner for coordination.” (Director of
communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Umeå C also recognizes an area of
interdependence with Visit Umeå AB, as they both want to increase the number of
visitors and conferences to Umeå. Visit Umeå AB will try to be the initiator for
coordination. “We have already talked to the university about technical visits.” (CEO
Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Visit Umeå AB mean that to cross-fertilize the development
needs, with the commercial life, through events, is “the” possibility. “Umeå is the place
where Zlatan Ibrahimović goes when he is injured. We should use this – create a large
conference on knee joint operations and simultaneously bring all the worlds large sport
shoe producers here and let them present what they can do to discourage injuries. And,
then, we’ll have a fashion show with the shoes down town.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB,
2012)

Umeå tourist information tries to coordinate work with EDPD and the information
department of the municipality, even though they have different target markets. “We
also work with the university, mostly international office, regarding international
students, and Umeå C – as we share the same target market.” (Director of tourism
Umeå tourist information 2012) However, according to Umeå C, this coordination
could also be improved. “We could communicate better what tourist groups that are
arriving when, so that the stores also would be aware of this and prepare for it.” (CEO
Umeå C, 2012) Umeå C finds that there should be a set plan and strategy – for what to
show and how to do it – for different types of visitors as groups, conference
participators etc., so that one “does not have to invent the wheel every time”.

When it comes to the messages that are sent out and communicated, Umeå C finds that
there is a lot to do before all stakeholders are talking the same language and
communicating unified messages. “Today all stakeholders are as drainpipes side by
side vertically, we need one going horizontally as well.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) But it is
possible to get at least a common ground; someone needs to take the lead, this should
not be seen as a problem, but an opportunity. The tourist information, on the other hand,
believes that the stakeholders have a common core view of Umeå, “We did a good job
when developing the brand and brand platform, however, when the implementation
processes was done, unfortunately the work with it stopped.” (Director of tourism Umeå
tourist information, 2012) The marketing manager at InfoTech Umeå identifies that
there is a difference in the communication among the stakeholders. “We all strive to
create attention around Umeå, but at InfoTech Umeå, we do it in a different way and it
can get pretty heavy in a technical way.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012)
InfoTech Umeå argues that Umeå municipality wants to reach everyone, whereas InfoTech Umeå’s target market is foremost the IT business, people and students – and their target market are not interested in Umeå as a vacation spot. Umeå University goes even further in this discussion. “The food industry’s wants to sell the picture of Umeå as a bunch of dumb farmers that have a lot of cows – they want Umeå and this part of the country to stand for the “natural”, as this makes them sell more products. It is quite obvious that we communicate different messages.” (Head of communication Umeå University, 2012)

“It might be possible to communicate the same message – not exactly the same though – but it becomes a very shallow and thin message, and the question is what a message of this kind can penetrate and if it reaches the target.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) However, Visit Umeå AB does state that it might be possible to strive in the same direction, where the common denominator is similar messages. However, Visit Umeå AB also emphasizes that if the actors agree on the brand identity, there also needs to be an agreement on how to take care of this identity and take responsibility of its development – the smallest level of ambition is that no one tries to go the opposite direction. Visit Umeå AB stresses that changes in a brand’s identity are built on evolution, hence one cannot make changes drastically. EDPD finds that the messages can only be partly common among stakeholders. “It is not always so that the goals corresponds, and the different stakeholders needs to be clear about what different objectives and missions they have.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) As an example, EDPD mentions the coordination with the university today, versus a few years ago. The course catalog from the university has much more information about the attractive city of Umeå today, than it had a couple of years ago. “The university’s mission is not to sell Umeå, it is an educational organization, but, it is still important for them to describe the environment – since this is the context in which the students will live.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012) EDPD also argues that it is difficult to be very clear with the communication of the place brand identity, since no one can decide exactly what the brand means for every single resident in the city.

Furthermore, the municipality explains that the brand hierarchy among the different visual identities of the city is not sufficiently investigated and argues that this needs to be done in order to reach a distinctiveness of the brand identity. Visit Umeå AB agrees. “Umeå has lost the grip of the different profiles, for example Umeå 2014.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Visit Umeå AB means that the profiles seem to want to be understood differently, but is not sure if they have considered what Umeå should stand for after 2014. “It is a really large investments, and it ought to be assured that this investment does not turn into a cost for the future.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012). In the university’s opinion, Umeå is so much more than just a visual identity, and one can probably never agree on a common visual identity. What is more important for the university is what respective stakeholders thinks. “The university and EDPD have similar opinions on how to profile Umeå which helps us when working together.” (Head of communication Umeå University 2012) VCC views the existence of several profiles as something valuable. “I believe that it is really good for the companies that exists here and would like to exist here.” (President VCC, 2012) VCC adds that the thought of having someone deciding over the coordination around a common message or a common five-year strategy will inhibit the creativity.
5.6 The external environment

All stakeholders strongly agree upon that Umeå is in fact competing on a global market, and it is their job as stakeholders to better unite and raise their view beyond the borders of the region and seek to reach people from other nations to better nourish the development of Umeå. “We have to take a good look at what is going on around the world and combine interesting concepts and ideas. One of the challenges that we see is that there will most likely be an increase in the unemployment rate all over Europe, and Umeå per se has also to compete with that” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012). InfoTech Umeå shares the same opinion and argues that constant environmental monitoring is crucial, both near and far. “If you shut your eyes for one second, that brief moment can be enough to make a valuable treasure slip away.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012), Visit Umeå AB argues that the place brand is the only force that Umeå have to compete with.

“We have yet to discuss the internationalization of the brand Umeå.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Umeå municipality argues that Umeå needs to seize the moment while they have it, referring to the year of 2014. “In a couple of years the title will be gone, and the purpose of having it is that it should contribute to the city.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) The municipality also expresses the impact globalization has on the place brand, “The competition among cities are fierce and we must strive to be more clear when presenting who we are, what we stand for, and what we can offer. I truly believe that the people inside of this community have a totally incompatible image of this city than those individuals outside of it.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012) Hence, the municipality does no longer market Umeå as the capital of northern Sweden – the globalization has made Umeå compete with cities in the whole of Sweden, but also internationally. This goes well with VCC’s opinion. “I would like Umeå to be perceived as taking on a more international approach because the chamber of commerce regularly plays on the global arena.” (President VCC, 2012) VIA understands the opportunities of the globalization, but stresses that the region needs to adjust its information material to the new reality – hence more information in English is questioned.

Umeå C highlights that one of the biggest challenges they are facing, as a result of globalization, is e-commerce. “The concept of purchasing products online changes the whole structure of how people shop.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012) Umeå University claims that a positive effect of globalization for the university is the inflow of international students. However, since Sweden has stopped paying for students outside the EU the inflow from these countries has dropped significantly, thus in order to compete with other universities by other means than the price, international marketing is now even more important. Umeå tourist information means that the international students are crucial for the city in many ways, one is that they become ambassadors for Umeå once they are back in their home country.
6. Empirical Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the empirical data is analyzed and discussed. The preliminary framework is used as the analytical tool giving guidance to the structure of the analysis. The 5 themes of the previous chapter will be restructured into the 3 main areas of the preliminary framework – Stakeholders, Coordination and Place branding. The analysis is based on our interpretation of the empirical data and the theories presented in chapter 3 that will be used to compare and evaluate the data. Then, the revised theoretical framework – with case specific findings – is presented, and the answers to the research problems are given.

6.1 Stakeholders

According to Carroll and Näsi (1997, p. 47) effective stakeholder management starts with finding out who the stakeholders (and their stakes) are. The correct identification of the stakeholders is regarded as necessary for prosperous stakeholder management (Neville, Bell & Whitwell, 2011, p. 360). Our interpretation of the stakeholders – their engagement in the interviews, organizational missions, goals and activities and their wishes for increased coordination with other stakeholders – is that they all have a clear stake in the Place brand Umeå. The fact that each of them agree of being key stakeholders, i.e. that they have a clear connection to the place brand – are in some way selling the place – and is depending on the place brand for goal achievement and success, further justify that the correct stakeholders were identified.

The combination of Kivits (2010, p. 4-5) three components – stakeholder salience, frame of reference and network – offers an overview of who the stakeholders are. First, stakeholder salience. In our understanding, to apply this component on the stakeholders of our case, we identified which of the stakeholder/s that are more/most involved, initiating and driven regarding the Place brand Umeå. Our observations, which was also partly confirmed in the interviews, showed that some of the key stakeholders had more authority than others and wanted to be in the spotlights constantly, where as others barely were visible in the discussions. However, this is not the same as taking the clear leader role. For this, our interpretation is that the EDPD stands out in comparison with the other stakeholders. The entity is the single key stakeholder that is directly engaged in the place branding of Umeå through its mission and vision and can be seen as the node initiating, supporting and coordinating many of the common activities. In our opinion, and related to Rainisto’s (2003, p. 228) success factors of place marketing, the EDPD takes on the roles as the leader, as the planning group and as initiator of the Public-Private Partnerships, which seem to add value to other stakeholders and the place brand. “We work to strengthen the place Umeå – if one wants to work with us, then one needs to want this as well.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012). Even though non of the other stakeholders expresses that the EDPD have sole authority, are the planning group or the main leader, we interpret that the EDPD does clearly enforce Public-Private Partnerships by, for instance, initiating coordinated activities. However, many stakeholders, including EDPD, argue that their organization is to be seen as an initiator for new ideas and common activities. We argue that the other eight stakeholders are more indirectly working with and for the place brand. Nevertheless, these stakeholders still influence the place brand to a large extent. However, since no one owns the place brand (and all key stakeholders agree on this), interpreting the
relative importance of the key stakeholders when it comes to their influence on the place brand identity is very problematic and subjective. Their respective target markets are extremely different both in focus and size – ranging from focusing solely on Umeå to the whole region, Sweden and the whole world.

Second, Stakeholder frame of reference. Theory argues that stakeholders can be driven by different motives, yet have similar goals or the opposite way around (Kivits, 2010, p. 5). The key stakeholders are active within a wide variety of areas and each stakeholder’s worldview is fairly narrow with a focus on the organizational mission, vision and goals. However, even though key stakeholders target markets and the motives of their work are different, they are sharing some goals, for instance the key stakeholders strive to create attention around Umeå. Working together to increase the awareness of Umeå would probably benefit all stakeholders’ individual and more specific objectives.

Third, stakeholder network. According to Asplund et al. (2011, p. 96), in smaller places, compared to metropolis, the key private and public stakeholders can more quickly communicate and closely coordinate. This is just in line with our findings. In Umeå, the key stakeholders meet regularly in both formal and informal settings and our observations of them before, during and after the meetings, showed that there was a general positive attitude among the key stakeholders. They acted in a professional but relaxed way and seemed to know each other quite well. The stakeholders also confirmed this during the interviews. We interpret this fact as a competitive advantage that ought to be seized through more coordinated work. However, one key stakeholder, VIA, with the head office located in Skellefteå (but with a smaller office in Umeå) does not feel similarly included in this group of stakeholders. VIA strives to become part of the existing coordination but finds it difficult.

For successful management of a place, Asplund et al. (2011, p. 16-17) argue that the diverse competence of both the public and private sector is needed and is equally important. When observing some of the key stakeholders during one of their meetings, we noticed that actors from both the public and private sectors were present and active (communicating) in the meeting. We interpret this as evidence that the participating stakeholders consider it necessary and important to be involved in the discussion and coordination. However, Kavaratzis (2012, p. 12-15) argues for the importance of involving all stakeholders in all stages of the place branding process. We noted that many of the key stakeholders were not present during the meeting and the interviews showed that not all of the key stakeholders feel that they are involved in the place brand identity creation and coordinated activities. Hence, we interpret that the key stakeholders participation in the place branding process can be seen as incomplete.

Freeman (1984, p. 91-92) proposes a two-way relationship between the firm (the place) – and its stakeholders. Also Post et al. (2002, p. 19) acknowledge this andstate that the benefits flows in both directions. The model of Ahlstedt and Jahnukainen (1971, in Akpinar 2009, p. 34) explains this relationship as inputs (from the stakeholder to the firm) and compensation (from the firm to the stakeholders). The empirical data of this research confirms these theories. All of our stakeholders approve that it is in fact a two-way relationship; the stakeholders benefit from, and contribute to, the strength of the place brand.

- The stakeholder input: “We can contribute with professional opinions of what is internationally trustworthy, and we can communicate the chosen identity on the
international arena accordingly.” (Director VIA, 2012), “Being a good and attractive employer, offering good services and contributing to the creation of satisfied inhabitants.” (Director of communication Umeå Municipality, 2012), “We can work to make sure that the visitors gets a good opinion about the city, that they feel like they are welcome here and that it is a beautiful and clear place.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012)

- The stakeholder compensation: “A strong place brand helps VIA since it puts Umeå on the map which is crucial as we need to present an attractive context in which the companies will exist.” (Director VIA, 2012), “A strong place brand is very important for the performance of the University since much of our marketing is based on the fact that we are located in an attractive city that provides easy access to accommodation and closeness to everything.” (Head of communication Umeå University, 2012)

6.2 Coordination

Malone and Crowston (1990, p. 2) argue that for coordination to exist, there must be actors performing interdependent activities directed towards some goals. Yet, the process of coordination can also start by the identification of interdependencies for which alternative ways to manage these can be suggested (Malone & Crowston, 1990, p. 8). Hence, we argue that if there are common goals, one can possibly identify interdependencies for which coordination between key stakeholders would be beneficial. By following the structure of the preliminary framework, we identified individual goals and objectives as well as the common ditto in order to find the areas of interdependencies. The key stakeholders investigated in this study clearly have different focus areas for their work and different target markets, however, by mapping out their visions and goals, it becomes clear that several of these are common or similar. Even though the vision and goals are quite broad, the map clearly shows goals that more than one of the key stakeholders are striving for. For each area of interdependence, activities can be coordinated for the benefits of the involved stakeholders and to strengthen the place brand. Table 5 shows the map of the key stakeholders common goals and visions. The empirical data stems from the interviews and the documents – hence only these goals and visions presented in the empirical data are shown in the map.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Make Umeå an attractive place</th>
<th>Increase Growth</th>
<th>Offer events and activities</th>
<th>International focus</th>
<th>Attract competent people</th>
<th>Strengthen the businesses/commercial life</th>
<th>Attract Visitors</th>
<th>Create more jobs</th>
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Table 5. Map of the key stakeholders common goals and visions.
Even though the key stakeholders larger goals and visions are very different, the goals presented in table 5 show that there are quite many areas of interdependencies where coordination of activities would be beneficial for all participants, directly or indirectly. By adapting this type of thinking – for instance when planning a larger event – all stakeholders involved, the event itself and the place brand would benefit. That this type of philosophy exists to a certain extent among some of the key stakeholders becomes clear to us when they share ideas of how to coordinate events. The focus of these ideas is that many actors can contribute to the creation of a larger event by employing their specific competences, for the benefit of their organizations and the customers – including many different target markets. “Umeå is the place where Zlatan Ibrahimović goes when he is injured. We should use this – create a large conference on knee joint operations and simultaneously bring all the worlds large sport shoe producers here and let them present what they can do to discourage injuries. And, then, we’ll have a fashion show with the shoes down town.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) Most other stakeholders also confirm the value of coordinating their goals for building a strong brand. These promote that more can be done in order to work alongside other stakeholders. “We want to work, and should work in, partnerships, that is our goals – together with the university, the culture organization, within the municipality, with the residents and with sport clubs as there are benefits for all with this.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012), “Coordination is beneficial and is important to watch what the other stakeholders are doing and communicate with each other.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012), “For growth to appear a lot of coordination is needed.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012)

However, all goals are not corresponding. Malone & Crowston (1994, p. 101) note that one challenges with coordination is that the actors may have goals that come in conflict with each other. In order to understand these situations, it is best to attempt to identify the goals that are conflicting and to analyze these. In our opinion there are just a few goals that are really contradicting and conflicting in this case study (whereas individual goals and focuses exist to a larger extent). For example: “We want to market the region as a dynamic place with a lot of possibilities and a strong commercial life, however, the tourism want to market the wilderness, this does not really correspond.” (Director VIA, 2012) All stakeholders agree to promote and thereby selling the things they do best, in accordance to the customer needs. The tourism industry clearly can make money out of the nature and the quietness, in the same way that other stakeholders can profit from promoting a dynamic and rapidly growing city with a broad event and activity calendar. The key stakeholders are very much aware of this and after all seem to respect each other. “It is not always so that the goals corresponds, and the different stakeholders needs to be clear about what different objectives and missions they have.” (Head of city marketing EDPD, 2012)

Malone & Crowston (1990, p. 6) argue that even though the actors’ work to maximize their own benefits, the customers (the visitors, residents and investors) understand the market (the city) as a coordinated mechanism – as one entity – and view the larger result of the performance. Hence, the customer of the key stakeholder might interpret Umeå only according to the actions and behavior of a specific key stakeholder. Building a place brand is a long term endeavor, and we believe that it is important for the key stakeholders of brand Umeå to take the arguments presented above into consideration, even those key stakeholders who prioritize to maximize profit in the shorter term. "Umeå municipality, for instance, works very broadly with everything in the city that
we do not necessarily feel that we want to focus on since there is no clear benefit for us.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012) Our interpretation is that the focus on one’s own “business” is overwhelming in this case. Thus, the benefits for strengthening the place brand – and indirect strengthen one’s own organization – are likely to be forgotten in relation to other more direct profit-enhancers. The director of tourism also confirms this when stating that the stakeholders “have a hard time to look beyond their own organizations work”. This is further confirmed by organizational documents that do not reveal any evidence of coordination among the key stakeholders (the exception is the activity plans/calendars which provides a fair amount of coordinated activities). When reviewing and comparing the key stakeholder documents, we spot differences in content, format, ethics and colors – the last can be noted from the color scheme of their document (including hard copies, web pages, Power Point presentations and other material) in figure 18. In fact, we note that the brochures/documents more or less lack similarities and are focusing on the organizational respective mission and vision with no common visual identity. We interpret that the key stakeholders does not see the larger picture of the whole city, which is unfortunate since this is how the customers view the city. A change in this behavior – and in the brochures – could be beneficial for all key stakeholders and the place brand.

Likewise, to enable the stakeholder activities to be built on each other for cumulative impact there need to exist an understanding of how the key stakeholders’ work effect the place brand (Van Gelder & Allan, 2006, p. 18). In an attempt to map out the activities that the key stakeholders have and had engaged in, we found that almost all of them have worked together directly, or indirectly, at some point. However, we interpret that there is a lack of understanding of how their respective actions – which might be “off-brand” affect the place brand. Again, we note that most stakeholders foremost care about the own organizational objectives.

During the interviews, many of the stakeholders pointed out that there has not been enough done to enhance the Umeå profile, but none of the key stakeholders seemed to blame any of the others for this when we interviewed them one by one. However, VIA notes that for them to be an actor involved in the brand identity, “it is important that the municipality has a clear agenda of what they want to communicate”. Observing one of

Figure 18. Color schemes of the key stakeholders documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourist information strategic plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Information’s summer Guide</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Västerbotten Investment Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umeå C</td>
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<tr>
<td>InfoTech Umeå</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umeå Municipality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development and Promotion Department</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå University</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the meetings where many of the key stakeholders participated, it became clear that they want to work together, at least at some levels and they are curious about what have been said and decided about the different topics. But, their different opinions and thoughts make it problematic to come to agreements. We observed a fairly tough discussion on responsibility issues – who does what, who pays and who gains – and noted the coordination issues that exists (a finding supported by all three data collection methods). We also got the impression that one group of key stakeholders wanted to keep “planning”, whereas another group see the benefits of “doing”. We interpret that their behavior shows that many of the key stakeholders want to strive in the same directions, however, each one of them have an individual agenda that does not fully correspond to the others and hence their opinions are highly divergent. Hence, all stakeholders are doing “their thing” and do care about the brand identity, however, no one really takes the role of a coordinator – to coordinate all independent agendas. This is also confirmed by some of the stakeholders who notice many of the stakeholders’ individual activities, for example - “Today all stakeholders are as drainpipes – side by side vertically, we need one going horizontally as well.” (CEO Umeå C, 2012)

6.3 Place Branding

Influences of a place brand improve the residents’ identity, increase self-esteem and attractiveness of business and investments, encourage the goals of the tourism industry as well as the interests of the exporting industry (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009, p. 1). In line with this, the key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå confirm that the strong place brand identity is important for their work, hence has an impact on their goal achievement. According to Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 472) the place brand identity is determined by its stakeholders and is the essence of the place. It is the sum of the characteristics that differentiate a place from another (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73). The depth and the richness of the brand associations are crucial since they infer a promise from the place brand to the customers (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 43). When describing the city of Umeå today – during the interviews – it becomes quite obvious that the stakeholders share similar opinions. Words like “New thinking”, “growth”, “creative/innovative”, “open – gay friendly/tolerant”, “young/youthful” are mentioned several times. Thus, these are the characteristics that the stakeholders want to stress, as they believe that these differentiate Umeå from other cities. When the key stakeholders describe their association of Umeå, we understand these as rich and deep. We interpret the fact that the key stakeholders highlight similar aspects and associations as evidence of a fairly common understanding among them. In our opinion, this makes their descriptions of Umeå seem trustworthy and real. In contrast to this, neither the textual analysis of the documents nor the observations of the meetings do reveal this type of almost complete agreement.

When considering those things that the key stakeholders wish that the place brand identity should signalize in the future, very different characteristics are presented. Umeå ought to be seen as; an esthetic city, a safe city with low rate of crime, a city of possibilities where things are happening, a city with entrepreneurial climate, and a city that creates curiosity. We interpret the variety of wishes to be a result of the different target markets needs that the key stakeholders strive to serve. However, we believe that to add a new meaning of a city, the “association” needs to be communicated by more than one stakeholder to gain trustworthiness. Hence we interpret that more coordination is needed.
According to Asplund et al. (2011, p. 90), the winners in this tough competition are the places that manage to differentiate themselves in the minds of the potential visitors, investors and residents. All key stakeholders of brand Umeå agree that the globalization has increased the competition and they are all doing what they can to see it as an opportunity. Many of the stakeholders mention environmental scanning and internationalization as the core factors of success in a globalized world. The increased importance of the place brand is also mentioned by several of the key stakeholders. “The place brand is the only force that Umeå have to compete with.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012), “The competition among cities are fierce and we must strive to be more clear when presenting who we are, what we stand for, and what we can offer.” (Director of communication Umeå Municipality, 2012)

Anholt (2007, p. 3) argues that inconsistent messages are sent out as a result of lacking coordination of the key stakeholders. All stakeholders of brand Umeå are aware of the fact that they are communicating different messages with regard to the identity of the place brand, but only a few of them see this as a problematic issue. On the one hand, Umeå tourist Information and Umeå C promote the thought of a common ground and unified messages. In line with this, Umeå municipality sees the many visual identities – and foremost the lack of brand hierarchy among these – as a problem for the distinctiveness of the brand identity. Also the Visit Umeå AB can agree on the confusion that Umeå’s different profiles create. On the other hand, VCC and Umeå University argue that Umeå is much more than a visual identity and that the number of identities should be valued. In between these two groups with divergent opinions, there seems to exist a third opinion – “a middle way” – to at least strive in the same direction. “The smallest level of ambition is that no one tries to go the opposite direction.” (CEO Visit Umeå AB, 2012) We argue that this middle way can be a first, and very good, step for the coordination of the key stakeholders.

There is a dispute in the literature regarding if a place can and should rely on a single or on multiple identities. The dispute range from the thought that a powerful identity ought to be grounded in a united and common purpose (Aaker and Joachimstaler, 2000, p. 43), to the opinion that a more diverse approach is preferable as it enriches and diversifies the brand (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011, p. 431-432) and that no single promise can match all the external audience needs (Anholt, 2010, p. 38-39). For Place brand Umeå, the “single identity thought” is not applied. An official place brand strategy and core values exist, but the stakeholders does not use this strategy and core values as a basis for their work. Many of the key stakeholders have their own core values – and argue that they prefer having it this way as their core values are specifically created for their organization – and some of stakeholders do not work with any core values at all. “We cannot implement everything that is general for Umeå, we do place marketing for a specific segment and therefore we need another strategy.” (Marketing manager InfoTech Umeå, 2012), “When marketing Umeå, we do not work with large words like openness and new thinking because we prefer to work more hands-on and concrete, for example with activities for specific businesses...” (President VCC, 2012) “We have our own profile, and hence our core values are not identical as those of the place brand.” (Director of communication Umeå municipality, 2012)

Despite the many areas of interdependencies identified in the previous section – and even though we have only identified a few goals that are really conflicting – there are a large amount of different individual goals of the various stakeholders. The reason for
this is that the key stakeholders exist for different reasons – they have various missions – and they target different markets. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 43), a slogan in itself can only contribute with publicity. A powerful brand identity tends to stem from a powerful and united sense of common purpose within the organization. In the case of place brand Umeå, the slogan; *Umeå. Wants more.* describes the situation of the case quite well; The stakeholders have many goals and want to achieve a variety of different things – this is communicated through the slogan. Hence, our findings prove that the slogan at least can be considered as trustworthy in that sense. According to the promoters of multiple identity place brands, a more diverse brand approach enriches and diversifies the place brand and will give rise to acceptance (Ren and Blichfeldt, 2011, p. 431-432). If this is true, then Umeå’s brand identity are benefitting from the absence of a common identity – and the slogan further communicates the diversity.

### 6.4 The Revised theoretical framework

The preliminary framework, derived from theory, is based on three interconnected areas – Stakeholders, Coordination and Place branding. We analyzed and addressed the preliminary framework in an empirical field by considering a specific case – the case of Place brand Umeå including nine key stakeholders. The empirical data from the case study was analyzed with the use of the preliminary framework (see section 3.5). For the case of Umeå, foremost similarities, however a few dissimilarities, between the preliminary framework and the empirical findings were discovered. The empirical work contributed to the further theory development in the following way:

According to Allan, (2006, p. 6) the place needs to include all key stakeholders that can invest in and communicate the occurrences in the place in accordance with the agreed and shared vision. Place brand Umeå has a brand platform and core values – many of the key stakeholders took part in the investigation and research behind the development of these – hence we have chosen to call this part of the preliminary framework the “official place brand strategy and core values”. One of the central thoughts in the preliminary framework was that all key stakeholders adhered to the place brand strategy and core values and therefore these would affect the key stakeholders individual goals and activities. This fact would reduce the existence of divergent and different goals and activities, and rather enable and promote common goals and coordination within areas of interdependencies. Therefore, the preliminary framework points out that this is how the brand identity is developed. However, the empirical data showed that most key stakeholders pay little attention to the strategies belonging to the place brand. For example, the key stakeholders show and explain that they have heard about – and in a few cases are engaged – the core values of brand Umeå, but the general interpretation of the empirical data is that the stakeholders do neither let the core values affect their organizational strategy, nor their organizational core values to any larger extent. Hence, in the revised framework (see figure 19) – which is a case specific framework of brand Umeå – the element “official place brand strategy and mission” is moved, so that it no longer directly affects the key stakeholders. In the case of Place brand Umeå, this element should rather be viewed as an element that most key stakeholders do not take into consideration when setting up their individual goals and activities. In the revised framework, a crosshatched red line shows the optional connection between these two elements.
Hanna & Rowley, (2011, p. 467) stress that shared objectives are important for developing the brand identity. Although most stakeholders are not adhering to the “official place brand strategy and core values”, our findings show that there are many shared objectives among the key stakeholders, thus many areas of interdependencies. We note that coordination of activities between the key stakeholders does exist in different constellations, but there are large opportunities for much more coordination among them. Thus, the brand identity is not only developed through coordinated activities and shared objectives. We argue that this could be stressed in the preliminary framework. Our findings also show that although there are few conflicting goals, there are many different individual goals, which are communicated to the various target markets. Hence, we interpret that the individual goals and activities do affect the brand identity directly and to a quite large extent. In the revision of the preliminary framework, a new arrow – from the individual goals and activities to the place brand identity – is added to highlight this fact. However, all in all, the preliminary framework is almost the same as the revised, case specific, theoretical framework (the revisions are marked with red circles in figure 19). We can state that the theoretical framework of place brand identity development works.

To sum up, the literature review exposed us to many research gaps and highlighted the need of a theory based analytical tool for place brand identity development. We saw that the multidisciplinary topic of place branding would best be studied by combining different theories and take on a stakeholder and coordination approach. Thus, with the core in the purpose of this thesis, we developed a preliminary framework of place brand identity development and were eager to apply this framework on a single case – to test whether it holds and to make sufficient case specific improvements. With the stakeholders as a focal point, we gained insight on which they were, how they perceive the place brand and how they coordinated towards the desirable identity. With this background, the research problems can now be answered.

First, the theoretical research problem; How can the process of developing place brand identity be understood? The process of developing place brand identity can be understood by and through our theoretical framework of place brand identity development – derived from theory. The revised, case specific, framework is essentially the same as the preliminary framework. Hence, by applying the framework on the single case, Place brand Umeå, we can prove that the framework can be used for its purpose – at least for this city – and that we have managed to combine the elements from the
literature well. Hence, our theoretical framework shows that since the key stakeholders objectives and activities will affect the place brand identity, it is necessary to identify individual and common objectives and activities in order to enable coordination within areas of interdependencies. The external factors – increased globalization and competition as well as technological advancement – affects all parts of the framework, as opportunities or challenges, thus increases the importance of constant environmental scanning. Moreover, the framework displays that there is a two-way relationship between the key stakeholders and the place brand, hence we can confirm that the stakeholders provide input to strengthen the place brand identity and get compensated – they benefit – from the place brand.

Second, the answer to the theoretical problem above is linked to the answer of the empirical research problem; *How is the place brand identity developed in the city of Umeå?* As the revised framework shows, in the branding process, most key stakeholders do not adhere to the core values of the place brand. Moreover, the key stakeholders develop the place brand identity, both through individual (hence non-coordinated) and common goals and activities. To be more specific, our empirical findings shows that for the case studied, the stakeholders’ do not coordinate all their decisions and activities, hence the brand identity is developed through common, individual and conflicting objectives – all of which affect the development of the brand identity in different ways. First of all, the common objectives create many areas of interdependencies, which give the opportunity to coordinate activities beneficial for all stakeholders and also enable a more united communication. The number of coordinated activities in Umeå (which do not nearly cover all areas of interdependencies), are both larger and smaller and includes different constellations of public and private stakeholders. Supported by theory, we interpret that coordinated activities makes the customers achieve a more holistic view of the place brand and that the communicated messages reaches a larger market and gains more credibility. Secondly, all nine key stakeholders have individual visions and objectives related to their respective mission and target markets, hence affect the brand identity directly through the communication and methods used to target their specific market. All stakeholders are aware of the fact that they are communicating different messages. With support in the literature, we interpret that this leads to a less distinct identity, and rather results in a rich and broad multiple identity. The place brand slogan – Umeå. Wants More. – describes this very well. Lastly, as a result of the different target markets and the fact that most key stakeholders strive to maximize profit without taking the effect on the place brand in consideration, divergent – conflicting – objectives exists (however to a smaller extent) and are communicated. This results in messages that are difficult to combine, for instance, a city of wilderness and nature versus a dynamic and rapidly growing city. This ought to lead to confusion and messages with weak credibility.

Our understanding of the empirical data of the key stakeholders is that there exist coordination problems between them. The evidence is clear; our observations displayed difficulty on agreeing on responsibility and financial issues, the documents showed very little coherence, and the interviews revealed that many key stakeholders feel that it is hard to work together since the agendas are different and the short-term profit maximization is more important. We interpret that even though the willingness to coordinate exists among all key stakeholders, coordination is only seen as beneficial as long as the key stakeholder feel like “I” benefit directly and everyone follows “my” agenda.
7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the main findings – answering the research problems and purpose – of this research will be presented. Thereafter, recommendations for Place brand Umeå will be offered and the theoretical and empirical contributions will be clarified. The chapter ends with a presentation of the limitations of the study.

7.1 Main Findings

Based on the purpose and research problems of this thesis, this exploratory study on the multidisciplinary issue of place branding has created new insights and produced a potentially useful tool for analyzing place brand identity development – a theory based preliminary framework. The foundation of the framework is the three areas of Stakeholders, Coordination and Place Branding – with the central connection in the notion of Place brand Identity. The framework was tested on a single case, Place brand Umeå, and was modified according to the empirical findings. We then proposed a slightly revised case specific theoretical framework of brand identity development.

With a clear link to the purpose and research problems, the key findings of this thesis are;

- The theoretical framework of place brand identity development holds, hence it can be used for the understanding of the place brand identity development process.
- There exists a two-way (input – compensation) relationship between the key stakeholders and the place brand. The key stakeholders contribute to (input), and benefit from (compensation) the place brand identity.
- The key stakeholders develop the brand identity through individual and common goals and activities, thus the framework emphasizes the correct identification of key stakeholders, goals and activities.
- Coordination can be managed through the identification of common goals – areas of interdependencies – for which common activities can be organized.
- All components of the brand identity development process are affected by external factors.
- In the case of Place brand Umeå, the key stakeholders were identified and these do not adhere to a common place brand strategy.
- No single, but rather a multiple place brand identity exists – the slogan “Umeå. Wants more.” describes the situation quite well; The key stakeholders have many individual goals directly influencing Umeå’s brand identity.
- The key stakeholders have similar perceptions of Umeå and agree to the values – however also admit to the challenges – of coordination with other stakeholders.
- Coordinated activities exist, but many key stakeholders only focus on the individual agendas and short term profit maximization.
- There are many areas of interdependencies – for which common activities can be coordinated – and very few divergent objectives. Nevertheless, clear coordination problems exist among the key stakeholders.
7.2 Recommendations

As the study has focused on the case Place brand Umeå, we would like to share our context specific findings so that these can be utilized in the development of the brand identity. We believe that stakeholders working to build and strengthen brand Umeå can benefit from these guidelines.

Our theory shows that there are coordination problems among the stakeholders – supported by the empirical data from interviews, secondary data and observations. Since all key stakeholders of brand Umeå find the coordination of activities valuable, and most of them want to increase the coordination – the improvement of the coordination ought to be manageable. However, we have noted that many key stakeholders express that a clear leader for the work with the place brand is missing. We strongly believe that the EDPD can shoulder this responsibility in a superior way. By identifying further key stakeholders and making sure that all feel part of, and informed about, the planning process and that they all realize their own benefits – this needs to be stressed – of working together, more coordination with a long term thinking can be managed. We want to emphasize that the network and close contact between – both public and private – key stakeholders in Umeå is beneficial for coordination and cooperation, hence a real competitive advantage that ought to be seized.

Although the stakeholders express similar descriptions of Umeå, each key stakeholder’s agenda and target markets are different. Hence, we find that agreeing on a single brand identity is unlikely to be a successful strategy. Instead, we recommend organizing activities for those common goals – the areas of interdependencies – identified in this study. The many areas of interdependencies presented shows that there exists a good ground for coordination, to be managed through common activities. This would mutually benefit all involved stakeholders and the place brand. However, by gathering all key stakeholders in a meeting and letting each express their specific objectives, our simple tool of identifying interdependencies can be used too enable the recognition of more areas of interdependencies. Expressing a multiple and broad brand identity might be the winning concept (at least in the opinion of some researchers) and it will differentiate Umeå from other cities with a more narrow identity.

In spite of this, and even with a multiple identity approach where the richness and diversity of Umeå is promoted – we believe that it is possible and necessary to agree on a common long term direction to strive for regarding the place brand identity development – where all key stakeholders understand that the synergy effects of working together is more beneficial than short term individual profit maximizations goals. A relatively easy way to start this work is by agreeing on colors utilized for the key stakeholder brochures. Another suggestion is agreeing on a common Brand Umeå-logotype, to be used as often as possible in activities, documents and marketing – alongside the logotype of the key stakeholder. Again, also for this work – a clear leader, sufficient financial resources and a good division of responsibility is crucial.
7.3 Contribution

With the core in the multidisciplinary field of place branding, this study has developed a theoretical framework of place brand identity development – highlighting the importance of the coordination and stakeholder perspective – with which it is possible to analyze place brand identity development in many places and thus see the advantages and disadvantages of those places. The framework is applied on a single case – Place brand Umeå – and our findings show that the framework holds. Thus, this study lays the foundation for a general theory on the topic and hence contributes to theory. Moreover, our study also contribute with an understanding of the stakeholder’s role as it sheds light on the fact that an official place brand strategy wont necessary be adhered to by key stakeholders and shows that the individual key stakeholder objectives will affect the brand identity. Additionally, through our research, we contribute with an understanding and identification of the central objectives and activities – both independent and common – as essential criteria for the creation of successful coordination of the key stakeholders. All of this is investigated in the context of a mid-size city. Thus, this research fill the theoretical gaps stated in the section 1.1.

Our findings provide a starting point for brand managers working to develop the place brand identity in other contexts. From the individual stakeholders perspective, to coordinate and work with others to strengthen the place brand, and simultaneously risk that one’s own message gets less distinct, can be regarded as directly contra productive. However, our framework highlights coordination of activities within areas of interdependencies – since this makes the message stronger – which will hopefully reduces much of the risk of conflicting messages and agendas in the coordinated work. Related to this, this study also contributes with a simple tool of how stakeholders can identify areas of interdependencies – through the “Map of the key stakeholders common goals and visions”. By sitting down together, all stakeholders can add their individual goals and visions to the map, which thereafter clearly will show all areas for which coordination of activities can be managed.

With regard to the empirical contribution, this study offers a range of insights for Umeå – highlighting the current situation, the key stakeholders common, individual and divergent goals, and coordination problems. Also, the study gives recommendations for how to manage the issues identified.

7.4 Limitations

Although nine heedfully chosen key stakeholders where studied, one of the shortcomings of this study is that potential respondents – key stakeholders of the place brand – where left out. As we increased our understanding of the place brand and the chosen key stakeholders, we also became aware of the existence of additional key stakeholders. This is unfortunate since we believe that these could have made the study reach another, more informative and broader, dimension. Also, with regard to those key stakeholders studied, we find that the analysis of the documents could have gone further. Moreover, this study only touched upon the issue of multiple visual identities. This is an interesting area of research and the issue is very up to date in the context of Umeå, hence we believe that further investigation of this could have brought much value to our thesis.
The framework developed in this study also has some limitations. Neither the framework, nor the perspectives of stakeholders and coordination that it employs, give advice on how a strong brand identity is created – and this was also not our intention. The framework only focuses on the creation of the identity through individual and common goals. Hence, this framework cannot be utilized for places that seek to identify the characteristics of a strong brand identity. On the other hand, the framework does highlight and stress the importance of identifying the goals building up the place’s identity (or identities) to enable coordination of key stakeholders, which is beneficial to the stakeholders and the place brand. Moreover, since the framework focuses on the stakeholder perspective (excluding the customer perspective), it can be viewed as rather narrow. Including the Place brand image – that is how the customers perceive the identity – as an additional element in the framework, through the collection of quantitative data, would make the framework more comprehensive. Furthermore, the revised framework lacks the empirical finding that some of the stakeholders have more authority – in the group of key stakeholder – than others. This is a shortcoming of the framework that the reader ought to keep in mind. All limitations mentioned above can be used as a basis for our or other researchers further studies within the area. Additional recommendations for further research is discussed in chapter 8.

At last, we want to highlight the fact that the interviews were held in Swedish, hence first transcribed into Swedish and then translated into English. Although we did our very best to not let the different tones, personalities and styles disappear through the translation, a minor loss of these elements is inevitable.
8. Further Research

The findings of the study have shed light over the area of place branding in general – particularly on place brand identity, stakeholder objectives and the coordination of these actors. In spite of the findings, the research has inevitably been exposed to areas, which will require further research.

To further strengthen the theoretical framework developed in this study, undertaking further tests of the framework in other contexts would be valuable. With new case specific empirical data, it is likely that the framework – although the elements holds – will have to be modified to fit the situations in those cases. This is considered as a strength as it will improve the framework and enable conclusions to be drawn about advantages and disadvantages, i.e. differences, between places. All organizations and people can be viewed as having a stake in the place, hence this study has, on purpose, excluded many stakeholders. The place’s inhabitants are themselves a large group of stakeholders that holds many subgroups, e.g. students, important to further investigate. Many key stakeholders argue that students are important assets as they provide new influences and also increase the competence level in the place. Hence, studying how students influence the brand identity is vital. Similarly, an important complement to this research is a quantitative study focusing on the “receiver side” – how the consumers perceive the city, i.e. the image of the place. A comparison between the findings of this study regarding how the brand identity is developed and a study handling the brand image would enable a clear conclusion of the success and trustworthiness of the key stakeholders messages to be drawn. This would also provide a helpful tool to those trying to organize marketing strategies to strengthen the place brand identity. In order to acquire another dimension of the study, additional private stakeholders – larger corporations and smaller local entrepreneurs – could be included. We argue that there is a great value in distinguishing how these stakeholders view the city, what role and importance the place brand has in their work, if they promote coordination with other stakeholders and what brand identity they communicate. Comparing their views and actions to the key stakeholders of this study would hopefully enlarge the understanding of different influences on the brand identity.

In 2014, Umeå will be The European Capital of Culture. This large event comprising a whole year, can be studied from many different angles and creates many new research ideas. It would be valuable to investigate how this event will affect the brand identity and if the present place marketing activities will decline or increase past the year of 2014. By studying the key stakeholders of brand Umeå closely we have noted that there exist a wide variety of different visual identities all communicating “Umeå”. Umeå municipality has many different logotypes to choose between and the group working with “Umeå 2014” as well as the tourist information has specific logotypes. We wonder how the use of these affects how the brand is perceived – if it is beneficial to communicate different logotypes, or if it rather creates confusion. Taking a closer look at this could be of great interest to all of those managing place brands in general and particularly for those engaged in brand Umeå.

At last, we believe that its worthwhile to further study the multidisciplinary subject of place branding as it is a relatively new, and important, field that needs more empirical research. This study can therefore be seen as a starting point.
References


SCB (Statistiska centralbyrån) (2011) Befolkningsstatistik <http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart____228197.aspx> [Retrieved 2012-01-25]


## Appendix 1. – Stakeholder definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition Stakeholder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freeman (1984, p. 46)</td>
<td>“Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll &amp; Näsi (1997, p. 46)</td>
<td>A stakeholder may be defined as any individual or group who affects or is affected by the organization and its processes, activities and functioning.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donaldson &amp; Preston (1995, p. 67)</td>
<td>Stakeholders are persons or groups with legitimate interests in procedural and/or substantive aspects of corporate activity. Stakeholders are identified by their interests in the corporation, whether the corporation has any corresponding functional interest in them. The interests of all stakeholders are of intrinsic value. That is, each group of stakeholders merits consideration for its own sake and not merely because of its ability to further the interests of some other group, such as the shareholders.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarkson (1995, p. 106)</td>
<td>Stakeholders are persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future. Such claimed rights or interests are the result of transactions with, or actions taken by, the corporation, and may be legal or moral, individual or collective. Stakeholders with similar interests, claims, or rights can be classified as belonging to the same group: employees, shareholders, customers, and so on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll &amp; Näsi (1997, p. 46)</td>
<td>Internal stakeholders would encompass such groups as employees, owners and managers.”</td>
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<td>Hillman &amp; Keim (2001, p. 126)</td>
<td>Those stakeholders who bear some form of risk as a result of having invested some form of capital, human or financial, something of value, in a firm. These stakeholders are those without whose participation the corporation cannot survive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott &amp; Lane (2000, p. 44)</td>
<td>Groups as well as individuals, and it includes employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, managers, patrons, and board members, among others-in general, it includes all those who have expectations of gain from the organization’s successful operation.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition Primary Stakeholder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarkson (1995, p. 106)</td>
<td>Primary stakeholder groups typically are comprised of shareholders and investors, employees, customers, and suppliers, together with what is defined as the public stakeholder group: the governments and communities that provide infrastructures and markets, whose laws and regulations must be obeyed, and to whom taxes and other obligations may be due. There is a high level of interdependence between the corporation and its primary stakeholder groups.”</td>
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<td>Definition Internal &amp; External Stakeholder</td>
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<td>Carroll &amp; Näsi (1997, p. 46)</td>
<td>External stakeholders would include consumers, competitors, government, social activist groups, the media, the natural environment and the community.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2. – Case Study Interview guide, English

1. Basic information about the interviewee
   i. Name
   ii. Position

2. Basic information about the organization
   i. Name
   ii. Type of organization
   iii. Target group
   iv. Main type of marketing used and main message communicated
   v. Vision/Mission/Objectives

3. Request for useful documents
   i. Organizational reports/documents
   ii. Organizational brochures etc.

4. Brand Umeå
   • Describe the meaning of brand Umeå (for you and the organization).
   • How do you perceive the strengths of brand Umeå?
   • What is the motive for the organization to be engaged in the creation of brand Umeå?
   • How does the organization benefit from the city brand?
   • What added value does the brand give to the organization?
   • Can you see any problems with a city as a brand?
   • What types of challenges/problematic issue have you been confronted with related to the creation and development of brand Umeå?

5. Umeå’s Brand Platform and Core Values
   • Have the organization been involved in the creation of the brand platform?
   • Have the organization been informed about the place brand platform and core values (new thinking, open, opportunity, nearness)?
   • How do you perceive the core values and the brand platform? Do you agree/disagree, and why?
   • Is the organization working actively to make the it’s core values corresponding with the place brand core values?
   • Is the organization using Umeå’s core values, the internal and external communication?
   • Can you communicate the organizational core values, and the place brand core values in a successful way? Is it helpful for your organization?

6. Goals and Activities
   • How would you like the city of Umeå to be perceived by your customers in the future?
   • Which of the city’s strengths ought to be highlighted?
   • If you could add any meaning to the place brand, what would that be?
   • Do you perceive the organization as an important actor for the city brand?
   • Can a strong city brand help to achieve the organizational goals?
• Have the organization used brand Umeå in marketing/marketing activities?
• Has the organization produced the outcome expected when doing so?
• Do you work actively to strengthen the city brand? How?

7. Coordination, Interdependencies and Unity of messages
• Do you know which other actors that are working actively with the Brand Umeå?
• How are you working together with other stakeholders?
• How is it beneficial for the organization to coordinate your activities/actions with other stakeholders?
• Does the coordination help to achieve the organizations individual goals?
• How do you wish to coordinate the activities and goals?
• Is coordination of stakeholders beneficial for the strengths and identity of brand Umeå?
• Which actors are most important for building the place brand in your opinion?
• What areas do you view as interdependent for you and other actors?
• Can you see any challenges with coordination and work with other actors?
• Do you feel like your understanding of brand Umeå is different from that of other stakeholders?
• How much unity of messages and activities among stakeholder is needed for the brand to be viewed as trustworthy?

8. The external environment
• How does globalization and technological advances affect your organization?
• How do you perceive the level of competition for your organization?
• Does it enhance the need for a strong city brand?
1. Kort information om intervjuobjektet
   i. Namn
   ii. Position

2. Kort information om organisationen
   i. Namn
   ii. Typ av organisation
   iii. Målgrupp
   iv. Huvudtyp av marknadsföring och huvudbudskap
   v. Vision/Mission/Mål

3. Önskemål om dokument
   i. Organisationsrapporter/dokument
   ii. Organisationbroschyrer etc.

4. Varumärket Umeå
   • Beskriv betydelsen av varumärket Umeå (för dig och organisationen).
   • Hur uppfattar du varumärket Umeås styrkor?
   • Vad är organisationens motiv att vara engagerad i skapandet av varumärket Umeå?
   • Hur kan organisationen gynnas av platsvarumärket?
   • Vilket mervärde ger platsvarumärket till organisationen?
   • Ser du några problem med en stad som ett varumärke?
   • Vilka typer av utmaningar/problem har du stött på när det kommer till skapandet och utvecklingen av varumärket Umeå?

5. Umeås Varumärkesplattform och Kärnvärden
   • Har organisationen varit involverad i skapandet av varumärkesplattformen?
   • Har organisationen blivit informerad om varumärkesplattformen och Umeås kärnvärden (nytänkande, öppenhet, möjlighet, närhet)?
   • Hur uppfattar ni kärnvärdena och varumärkesplattformen? Håller ni med den eller inte, och varför?
   • Jobbar organisationen aktivt för att dess kärnvärden ska motsvara platsvarumärkets kärnvärden?
   • Använder organisationen Umeås kärnvärden i den interna och externa kommunikationen?
   • Går det att kommunicera organisationens kärnvärden och platsvarumärkets kärnvärden på ett framgångsrikt sätt? Är detta förmånligt för organisationen?

6. Mål och Aktiviteter
   • Hur skulle ni vilja att staden Umeå blev uppfattad av era kunder i framtiden?
   • Vilka av stadens styrkor bör lyftas fram?
   • Om ni kunde addera någon betydelse till platsvarumärket, vad skulle det vara?
   • Tycker du att din organisation är en viktig aktör för platsvarumärket?
   • Kan ett starkt platsvarumärke vara till hjälp för att uppnå organisationens mål?
• Har organisationen använt varumärket Umeå i marknadsföring/marknadsföringsaktiviteter?
• Har detta gett de förväntade resultaten?
• Jobbar ni aktivt med att stärka platsvarumärket? Hur då?

7. Samordning, Beroendeförhållanden och Enighet av budskap
• Känner du till vilka andra aktörer som jobbar aktivt med varumärket Umeå?
• Hur jobbar ni tillsammans med andra intressenter?
• På vilket sätt är det fördelaktigt för ert företag att samordna aktiviteter med andra intressenter?
• Hjälper samordningen er att nå organisationens individuella mål?
• Hur skulle ni vilja samordna aktiviteterna och målen?
• Är samordningen av intressenter gynnsamt för varumärket Umeås styrkor och identitet?
• Vilka intressenter är viktigast för att bygga platsvarumärket tycker du?
• Inom vilka områden anser du att det finns ett beroendeförhållande mellan dig och andra aktörer?
• Ser du några utmaningar med samordning och att arbete med andra aktörer?
• Anser du att din förståelse av varumärket Umeå är annorlunda än andra intressenter?
• Hur stor enighet av budskap och aktiviteter mellan intressenter är nödvändig för att varumärket ska uppfattas som trovärdigt?

8. Den extema miljön
• Hur påverkar globalisering och tekniska framsteg er organisation?
• Hur uppfattar ni nivån av konkurrens för er organisation?
• Gör detta att ert behov av ett starkt platsvarumärke stärks?