What is Umeå about in 2014?
A Study on Gaps between Stakeholders’ Perceptions of Umeå Brand Identity as a European Capital of Culture in 2014

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And here we go, into the real world.

“What’s done is done [...] and tomorrow brings the sun.” (Ian Broudi)

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Abstract

During centuries, places and cities have made efforts to make their land more attractive, efficient, democratic and secure. This aspire has accelerated due to globalization and other external factors. Today, there is fierce and global competition between cities and nationalities to create arenas for more investments, productive inhabitants and vibrant culture. The place brand has been a good tool and a key for success. Nevertheless, place branding is challenging; it includes the investment of all stakeholders – possessing different agendas and target markets – and at the same time their coordination and collaborations to ensure there would be no conflicting messages, misusing the place and harming the brand. Therefore, strong collaboration among stakeholders and consistent perceptions – about the city potentials – is substantially important.

There are debates among scholars to choose the best initiative for involving all the groups, cultures, interests of a society into branding a city and exploit the potential of the city simultaneously. Place branding is a relatively new but growing field of research. The topic is multifaceted and therefore is considered advantageous to study place branding from a stakeholder perspective. In this current study, the stakeholders are viewed as the actors that are engaged in the act of presenting Umeå based on the cultural potential of the city during its hosting the European Capital of Culture event in 2014. Based on the purpose and research problems of this thesis, it is aimed to provide a framework to examine the gaps between the stakeholders’ perceptions about their city cultural potential during a cultural event.

For this qualitative research, a single case study design is used and eight stakeholders – divided in two main groups – are identified for the data gathering by using in-depth interviews. The identity-reputation gap model is used as an analytical tool and gives guidance to the research. This study fills other research gaps by contributing with an understanding of the stakeholder’s role 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 – the image and the branded potential of the city – and findings can be regarded as a starting point for brand managers as well as cultural coordinators working to develop the place brand identity consistently in other contexts.

KEYWORDS: Umeå2014, brand identity, stakeholders, perceptions,
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1. Introduction

1.1 Context
Cities use branding as an advertising tool in shape of a logo and slogan to promote themselves to targeted audience including investors, visitors with a help of proper media (Ashworth, 2007). In order to have a correct implementation of city branding, there should be a balanced match between people’s perceptions of the city identity and the branded/projected identity by the city marketers, which is used by operators and government agencies for promotional purposes. Therefore, branding needs to be created as a thorough and continuous process to sustain this balance (Ashworth, 2007).

There has been a growing body of work focusing on branding the identity of the city as a holistic concept that differentiates the places within their competitive environment (van Riel et al., 1997). As Simoes et al. (2001) believe a strong identity is very important for transmitting a consistent internal and external image among stakeholders.

In order to brand a city successfully, all the distinctive and representative characteristics owned by city should be adopted strategically. City’s characteristics are varied from both functional and nonfunctional features; i.e. city physical appearance, cultural attractions, history, nationality diversity and demographics, economics and governance, residents and visitors’ experiences and their perceptions of the city. According to Zhang and Zhao (2009) agreement on the city’s identity and core values among the city authorities and general public is one of the key success factors in city branding. They believe that the big-scaled-events, such as Olympic Games, are considered as an important chance for presenting the identity and core values of the host city widely.

Creating a unique identity exploiting the potential of the city is easier said than done (Zhang & Zhao, 2009); in order to face the global competition, places must think globally but act locally to identify what they can offer that someone else– somewhere in the world – needs, and then serve these customers locally. As the European Capital of Culture has been, so far, the largest event held in Umeå, some argues could be mirrored in this case as well.

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 would tend to assign the place brand a meaning that suits their target market. Some scholars argue that 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 in 1963. The original definition was, “those groups without their support the organization would cease to exist” (Freeman, 2010, 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. Basically, “Stakeholder theory” is about how an organization works at its best and how it could work effectively manage the organization and at the same time, create value and trade (Freeman, 2010). In order to connect the theory to the purpose of this thesis, the place branding is relatively considered as the organization/firm branding as there seems to be no general criteria for how to classify stakeholders into groups; hence authors of previous studies have chosen different ways in order to do so.

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 – because of the importance of their investment, communications and actions in communicating the city identity. Still, simply working together is not enough. All stakeholders need to understand and agree upon the brand’s core attributes, since in this sense, it 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. The challenge is to find ways to communicate and accommodate the issues around the stakeholders (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). Similarly, Anholt (2007, p. 3) argues that the lack of coordination of the key actors promotion of products and services leads them sending out contradictory messages about the city. 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 perceptions 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 leads to the identification of the most appropriate research areas and several knowledge gaps. First, it was 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, there is a lack
of empirical research on which the prerequisites are for measuring the gaps between stakeholders’ perceptions of the city brand identity. Kavaratzis (2012, p. 17) highlights an interesting aspect for future research within the area of city branding, which is distinguishing 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 is considered too immense. However, the stakeholders’ desires can be related to – and is the foundation of – their respective objectives. In this paper, the key stakeholders’ objectives are viewed as a central part of the existing gap between their perceptions of Umeå brand identity. Third, despite the comprehensive literature on the importance of the place brand identity, there seems to be no sufficient tool for analyzing brand identity development. Fourth, most studies on place branding have been made on countries or larger cities (e.g., Rainisto, 2003; Morgan et al., 2003), which presumably 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 stakeholder perspective – within a mid-size city.

The empirical study is performed in the city of Umeå during the year of European Capital of Culture in 2014, which is the 11th largest city in Sweden in terms of inhabitants (SCB, 2011), thus to be viewed as a mid-size city in this study. The case that this thesis seeks to investigate is the gaps between the stakeholder’s perceptions of Umeå brand identity in 2014.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The focus of this research is placed upon the brand identity of Umeå, as a mid-sized city, during its hosting a cultural event, the European Capital of Culture, in 2014. The investigations are sought from the cultural stakeholders’ perspectives in order to see the gap between their perceptions and the brand identity promoted by Umeå2014 project leaders. In order to gain insight about their perceptions, it is aimed to firstly, investigate the consistency within the actors’ objectives. In this sense, a better foundation for the next research problem would be created, hence the first empirical research problem of the study is:

1. To what extent is there a consistency between Umeå2014 team objectives and the stakeholders’ objectives during this event?

There is a clear link between the first and the second research problem. As stated earlier, one of the vital implications of a successful branding city identity is the internal stakeholders’ congruent objectives (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2007, p. 522). These authors argue that congruent objectives of stakeholders, are actually derived from their congruent perceptions of the city identity, meaning they all strive to achieve common objective(s). Based on investigating the chosen stakeholders’ objectives consistency during this event, it is aimed to examine their perceptions of the branded identity, in order to identify the reasons of existing gaps within their activities:

2. To what extent is there a gap between Umeå2014 promoting brand identity (based on cultural attributes of the city) and the stakeholders’ perceptions about it?
1.3 Relevance

1.3.1 Practical Relevance
Providing an understanding of how the project leaders and the involved actors perceive the quality of brand identity within the city’s re-branding process can benefit decision makers, in that any successful destination branding strategy requires consensus practices (d'Angella & Go, 2009). Healey (cited in D’Angella and Go, 2009) stresses that it is only through collaborative and inclusionary branding strategies amongst the managers and their stakeholders that social capital, exchange of ideas and mutual understanding can emerge.
Decision makers could therefore better understand how cultural actors and stakeholders of their city perceive the city’s re-branding process and the role of specific actors and events. This type of insight can then be utilized to determine how involved actors in the re-branding can be positive contributors to the reputation of Umeå or if they constrain it. City branding efforts and policies would then be tailored to the characteristics of the city, due to a holistic approach considering both managers and service providers. Since more than half of the event is left by the time of this study (June 2014); hence, some reconsiderations – regarding branding the city based on the cultural attributes – might be applicable. And last but not least, all the efforts taken before and during this event are not solely dedicated to fulfilling hosting ECOC event, but to making the practical changes long lasting in favor of the city vision; therefore, the result and outcome of this study could be applicable to the future as well.

1.3.2 Academic Relevance
Place branding and city branding are widely explored in the academic literature available, especially regarding re-branding processes. Conversely, there are limitations in the documentation of branding a mid-sized city during hosting the ECOC event. Additionally most of the studies are focused on the consumer/demand/visitor side, i.e. brand image. Presumably there are limitations with the focus on the supply side, i.e. the managers and the stakeholders especially (re)branding a city during a long-lasting event.
Therefore, it seems appropriate to improve the understandings about the processes of communicating between the involved actors in branding city under theme of hosting the ECOC. In addition, a literature search did not provide knowledge on specific methods that could be applied for measuring gaps, if any exists, between the perceptions of two different involved groups in creating a city brand, i.e. the manager and the stakeholders. It should be noted that there are numerous studies concerning the supply side focusing on product branding, country branding, attraction branding, etc.

1.4 Delimitation and Contribution
In order to specify the research objectives and clear the boundaries, sufficient delimitations, i.e. defining of what the study will not investigate and reasons for this are decided upon. The emphasis of this thesis is to find the stakeholders’ perceptions of the promoted Umeå2014 brand identity – based on the core cultural attributes of the city – to see the gaps between their perceptions and the city branding managers’ (Umeå2014) perceptions. Thus, the study neither
reveals how a strong place identity is created, nor should be. Furthermore, the study does not seek to evaluate whether the most appropriate strategies are chosen or not. The study focuses on the brand identity influencers and creators, i.e. the key stakeholders and the managers. The focus is partly directed on the Umeå2014 managers (two representatives) in order to create a well established point of reference and to describe whether there is a gap. Then, the focus is primary and largely directed upon six stakeholders involved in various part of culture during the ECOC event in 2014.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Culture
Culture has recently been identified as a competitive advantage for cities regarding a variety of aspects; this also applies in case of the Capital of Culture process in the UK, which has had led to fresh thinking on what culture can do for a city (Griffiths, 2005). Both culture and tourism have been incorporated to illustrate and promote national identities as a new open-minded and willing place to welcome wider European identity. Culture has been utilized as a positive image in cultural tourism; however, the process of image-projection has been selective with development of some aspects of culture and at the expense of others (Light, 2000). Moreover, there is a possibility that majority of residents may be unwilling or uncomfortable with the image generated to attract tourists and it might be contradicting with their own concepts of self-identity. It may also be approved by residents in a sense that there will be a consolidated national identity. In majority of cultural tourism studies, there has been an emphasis on the heritage element and how it is beneficial in terms of sustaining ‘heritage for future generations’ (Prohaska, 1995, p. 33). Nevertheless, others find ‘the process of tourist experiencing culture and the way culture is utilized by the tourism industry and host communities, are increasingly characterized by conflict’ (Robinson, 1999, p. 1). The main issue is commodifying culture and transforming some aspects of culture into saleable products; as Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) state history has been transformed into commodity of ‘heritage’ to fulfill contemporary consumption. Commodifying the history requires generalization and simplicity to suit the expectations of tourists (Palmer, 1999). All in all, it is claimed that the relationship between tourism and culture is mutually beneficial as it creates increasing revenue streams for both and, consequently sustain and promote cultural resources that otherwise might disappear (Hughes, 2000).

2.1.2 ECOC
Starting as ‘The European City of Culture’ in 1985, Athens gave home to the now well-known event European Capital of Culture (ECOC). The aim of European City of Culture, later named European Capital of Culture, is “to open up to the European public particular aspects of the culture of a city, region or country concerned, and to concentrate on the designated city a number of cultural contributions from other Member States” (Palmer/Rae Associates; International Cultural Advisors, 2004, p. 41). The annual event should enhance Europe’s cultural variety, at
the same time creating the feeling of one big European community. The idea behind this event is to “help to bring the peoples of the member states closer together” (European Commission, 2006). Most of cities put their best to be designated as the ECOC to use it as a means of enhancing economic status, image transformation and uplifting the culture. Griffiths (2005) sees Glasgow as a successful example in using this opportunity to de-industrializing the city in favor of a more secure post-industrial future. Other previous capitals including Antwerp (1993), Rotterdam (2001) and Lille (2004) have had made the same attempt considering the fact that they have no major cultural reputation. Notwithstanding the fact that it is tricky to form an assessment of this event on capitals, notably Palmer (2004) have made some attempts to draw some conclusions. In general, each nominee has different set of motivations and goals, but the motivations mostly include triggering the economic benefits, image enhancement, urban refreshment, and promoting the creative industries (Palmer, 2004, p.18).

Moreover, Richards (2000) believes that economic assessment of ECOC is not merely based on the number of visitors as “it is not easy to sustain the higher visitor levels beyond the title year” e.g. the Glasgow experience; the city managed to modify the cultural image of the city despite of a decline in number of visitors each year from 1991 to 1995. Consequently, Richards (2000, p. 175) asserts that there is a need to make the innovation of the product long lasting in order to repeat visits and also cover one of the weaknesses of such event-led strategies. According to Griffiths (2005, p. 419) there are certain positive cultural benefits that each of the ECOC programs have gained, including “increased participation in cultural activity by young people, and the use of new and usual places for projects and events.” Previous studies about ECOC have undertaken different disciplines; however, there is only one study about Umeå as an ECOC during 2014 (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012). Also, Umeå2014 branding is also mentioned in Eriksson’s discussion about place identity in Northern Sweden (2010). Åkerlund & Müller (2012) investigated whether Umeå’s focus on co-creation has been transparent within stakeholders’ participation with the tourism industry. In their study, there are various discourses from the official as a critique againsts issues such as power relations and the ways of presenting indigenous (Sami) lifestyles, distribution of benefits, and they believe that the official discourse needs to be consciously elaborated to adapt to these counter-discourses in order for the process to be truly about co-creation. Following the research of Åkerlund and Müller, it is worth to study perceptions of the stakeholders about the process of branding the city during the ECOC year, because as stated earlier, collaboration is one the most crucial prerequisites of branding a place. Previous studies on other ECOCs place identity and planning have been conducted on places such as Liverpool (O’Brien, 2011; Boland, 2010; Griffiths, 2006), Glasgow (Tucker, 2008; García, 2005), Istanbul (Gunay, 2010), Cork (O’Callaghan & Linehan, 2007), Lille (Paris & Baert, 2011) and Marseille (Andres, 2011). One common argue within these studies reveals the importance of the role of branding a city with culture and its contribution to destination development.
Analyzing branding studies in previous ECOC cities, Garcia argues that one of the important aspect for improving is to “ensure that all levels of the community are involved in local consultations, thereby avoiding the predominance of a top down approach to decision-making” (2004, p. 325).

2.1.3 Umeå2014 as the European Capital of Culture

The first preparation steps for the bidding process for the ECOC started in autumn 2007. To make this happen many open meetings and seminars were held to discuss and collect citizen ideas and thoughts which to be included in Umeå proposal, e.g. Open Source discussions. As the first bid embarked in October 2008, Umeå were in competition with other Swedish cities – Gävle, Lund and Uppsala. In December 2008, Umeå and Lund proceeded to the second stage (Umeå2014, 2013). Eventually, Umeå was rewarded as the ECOC 2014 in September 2009 (European Council, 2006). The unique strength of Umeå’s proposal was due to the co-creation concept. The main objectives of Umeå2014 are “to promote human growth, strengthen the role of culture as a driving force for sustainable development and reinforce the international relations and dimensions of cultural life” (City of Umeå, 2008, p. 11). According to WCED, sustainable development is the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs” (1987, ch. 2, para. 1).

The concept of co-creation is loaned from an ‘Open Source’ strategy to grow creativity and cultural capital among people with new idea and answers to the existing problems (City of Umeå, 2008, p.12). To encourage co-creation, creativity and innovation of “cultural operators” were the focus rather than being a traditional project manager (Umeå2014, 2013a, para. 3-4). In line with the open source strategy, they are always open to new project ideas from anyone interested and supportive with coordinating actions, fundraising and granting funds.

Also, the Umeå2014 has a special call called “Cultural Boost” or “Kulturskjutsen” attached to institutions and independent actors to conduct pilot projects and events during the ECOC year (Umeå2014, 2013b, para.1).

The Umeå2014 program is based on the eight Sami seasons (i.e., Early Spring, True Spring, Early Summer, Summer, Early Autumn, Tre Autumn, Early winter, and Deep Winter) and the projects/events are designed according to the characteristics of these seasons (City of Umeå, 2008, p.12).

Umeå2014 is a stepping-stone to achieve long-term developmental strategy through 2050. The short-term objectives spanning from 2009 to 2013 are about creating networks for ECOC 2014 and a long-term legacy beyond 2014 (City of Umeå, 2008, p. 8). The activities of Umeå2014 are expected to continue beyond 2014 in an attempt to bring sustainable growth in social and economic aspects that will achieve long-term development. Through culture, Umeå2014 would like to grow citizen’s curiosity and provide an environment that encourages creativity and innovation contributing to the long-term and sustainable urban development (City of Umeå, 2008, p.8). For instance, it is expected that the population reach to 200,000 inhabitants in 2050. In summary, Umeå2014 is a cultural program expected to contribute towards creative industries, nurturing talents and creativity, and boost sustainable growth.
Focus on Sami Culture in Umeå 2014
The official capital of culture program, during the year 2014, is divided into eight seasons representing the Sami calendar, which draws the attention to the indigenous Sami population throughout the year. According to Eriksson (2010) while the politicians are trying to brand Umeå as an innovative, creative, young and growing urban, it is also important to brand the opposite stereotype that they are trying to distance Umeå from, e.g. the ‘exotic’ wilderness of Northern Sweden. Eriksson (2010) criticizes how Northern Sweden is commoditized and promoted to tourists. They believe that for the Sami population of Northern Sweden, this means that “in order to sell the representations of the Sami, the Sami must be constructed and defined; the Sami ‘culture’ has to be reshaped in a form that is recognizable to tourists” (Eriksson, 2010, p. 93).

2.1.4 Brand
While abundant investigations have been done about destination image – starting from early 70s when Hunt examined image as a development factor (1975) – studies on branding destinations is comparatively a new issue (Gnoth, 1998).
Presumably, review of the destination branding studies is not quite helpful in differentiating between ‘formation of a destination image’ and the ‘branding’ of it. Hall (p.230, 1999) defines brand in a general marketing terms without explaining destination branding; solely stating its main objective as “producing a consistent, focused communication strategy”. It is important to bear in mind that branding contributes towards image formation as image embodies the core of branding and it is one step closer.
Destination branding has being named other terms such as image building (Curtis, 2011), image reconstruction (Hall, 2002), (re)inventing (Kapferer, 2001) and (re)positioning (Gilmore 2002) of a geographic location (Park & Petrick, 2006). A geographic location is sometimes considered a destination brand in the tourism literature. Cai (2002, p.722) defines destination branding a “selecting a consistent element – i.e. name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package, or a combination of these – mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building”. Over the years many definitions of destination branding have stated by a number of authors (Gnoth, 1998; Morgan et al., 2004), causing a greater controversy in the body of literature on destination branding. Most of the definitions emphasize on the external customers’ views rather the internal one, i.e. employees and stakeholders.
A brand includes an entire set of physical and socio-psychological features and beliefs related to the product (Simoes & Dibb, 2001). It is not only about creating uniqueness, but also highlighting the associations intentionally to add more value to the basic product or service.
“A brand is a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality, which comprises a unique combination of functional attributes and symbolic values”(Hankinson and Cowking, 1993, p. 10). For instance, marketing strategies have led designation as the European Capital of Culture has noticeably altered the perceptions of cities such as Glasgow in the UK and more recently Liverpool. Consequently, more cities and countries have been involved in marketing and creating brands rather being passively dependent.
on the eventually natural development of their images through news and media. In order to develop a positive brand image a proactive marketing intervention is highly requiring (Gunn, 1997).

The majority of tourism destination studies have examined the brand concept primarily from a demand-side perspective and in result, there are massive studies examining tourism destinations from a consumer-perceived-image approach (Hunt, 1975; Gallarza et al., 2002). Also, it has been a decade that a supply-side, owner/managerial perspective on tourism destination branding, has absorbed the scholars attention (Cai, 2002).

It is worth to mention that many investigators concluded that both demand and supply perspective need to be examined in branding concept as they are intrinsically intertwined (Aaker, 1991; de Chernatony, 2003).

Konecnik and Go (2007) justify how a supply-side research perspective on destination brand identity is relevant. First, considering the stakeholders’ viewpoints is of great importance, in terms of their reactions and the potential effects to a destination brand identity strategy as leader opinion makers and in a broader perspective, a host population at most. Second, there is a regenerated interest in the theme of identity in this globalization period which it is no more focused on the one-sided, demand-driven perspective on a tourism destination brand’s image. Third, as in consequence of diminishing the social, cultural, historical and natural sciences boundaries, there is an increasing interest for theoretical perspectives on the idea of place identity especially among smaller places (Konecnik and Go, 2007).

Recently, more studies have focused on the concept of brand identity in the business and management literature (Ind 1997, Aaker et al. 2000). Most of them share the common idea that brand identity development is a theoretical concept best acknowledged from the supply-side perspective (Konecnik, Go 2007). Kapferer (p. 71, 1997) emphasizes on the worthiness of the supply-side viewpoint on the brand concept by presenting a very vivid explanation, “before knowing how we are perceived, we must know who we are.” Also Kapferer (1997) adds that a tourist destination should primarily clarify its brand and offering rather its consumers. A brand identity could play a strong role in developing a common view on historical, national and cultural relationships. Since a tourist destination is of complexity based on a various range of products, services and experiences; managed by different stakeholders (tourism industry sector, public sector, government, destination management organization, locals) (Konecnick & Go, 2007). According to Aaker (1991) and de Chernatony (2001) defining the brand identity has dual purpose in analyzing brand, once from the inside and also to measure the brand equity that and how the consumers value that particular brand, moreover their loyalty to a brand (Arnould et al., 2004).

Konecnik and Go (2007) define the roles of brand identity and how it shows the brand purpose. Firstly, the brand identity is a set of union that the brand strategist put forward to create and sustain. Secondly, it gives an idea to its target consumers about how it should perceived. Thirdly, the brand identity should build a connection among a particular brand and its clientele by creating a value benefits or ‘providing credibility’.
Kapferer (1998, p. 11) defined ‘Brand’ in two perspectives; in the legal perspective, brand is ‘a sign or set of signs certifying the origin of a product or service and differentiating it from the competition’. According to him, the other definition ‘captures the essence of a brand: a name with a power to influence buyers’. He also states certain qualities that makes a name become a brand; saliency, differentiability, intensity and trust attached to these associations. He distinguishes the common knowledge about brand, which is simply a name or logo, with brand management recognition which is a united system, connecting the ‘concept’ with ‘inherent value’ to products/services under an identifiable name or set of signs, i.e. the logo and other symbols (p. 12).

2.1.5 The components of the brand

De Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) found twelve perspectives on the definition of the brand in the literature and after a deep investigation of those perspectives, they suggest that the brand is a multidimensional construct whereby managers augment products or services with values and this facilitates the process by which consumers confidently recognize and appreciate these values. The brand construction in one side is the activities of the brand owner and on the other side is the perception of the consumer. The brand becomes the interface between these two. A number of elements lie at each end of the boundaries of the brand construct. For the brand owners, these elements are the features and beneficial attributes imbued in the brand. In addition, marketers may choose to stress symbolic, experiential, social and emotional values (De Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley 1998), creating the brand identity. But these elements are not enough by themselves to construct a brand, because the brand relates to quality and values as perceived by the consumer.

Branding is a mode of communication and communication is always a two-way process. From the consumer’s side, central to the concept of the brand is the brand image, which incorporates perceptions of quality and values as well as brand associations and feelings (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). In summary, brand identity, brand positioning and brand image are related as in Figure 1.
2.1.6 From products to places

Recently the idea of branding has started to developed into places as well as tourism destinations and become a topic to research in the field of tourism (Pike, 2004). Here, a destination brand can be defined as:

“a name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination […] it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination […] serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of destination experience.” (Kerr, 2006, p. 277)

With noticeable changes, places are easily expected to have the above features of identity, differentiation and personality and can thus be managed to maximize equity, value and awareness. The importance for the consumer of a place is consistency of the city branding and to cultural geography.

One clear objection to this argument is that the places are too complex to be considered like products. This would explain Hankinson’s (2001, p.129) comments that; “in contrast to the marketing of locations, there are relatively few articles to be found in the academic literature with regard to the promotion of locations as brands. This is in contrast to the increasing evidence in the press that branding, at least as a concept, is increasingly being applied to locations.”
According to Hankinson, place branding, like place marketing in general, is impossible because places are not products, governments are not producers and users are not consumers.

As Cova (1996) states, all branding process are taken in an attempt to show a product with a unique and competitive identity, same scenario is in marketing and branding the city. City marketers by branding the identity, distinct the city for several reasons; first, being more visible; secondly, to be in consumers’ mind superior to the competitors with same features. Thirdly, to be consumed align with the objectives of the place. Hence, identity, differentiation, personality and thereby positioning in competitive arenas are all transferable concepts as long as the implications of this transfer are fully understood, meaning that places, like products, are capable of branding to highlight its characteristics. Table 1 shows the conceptual differences between product/corporate branding and place branding.

Table 1. Conceptual differences between product/corporate branding and place branding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Product/Corporate</th>
<th>Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Aim</strong></td>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>Political &amp; Socioeconomic Achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complexity</strong></td>
<td>Relatively Low: well-defined Object</td>
<td>Very High: no clear boundaries in Space and Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>A specific organization legally owns the brand (and the brand equity)</td>
<td>Ownership not defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of action</strong></td>
<td>Branding is viable (e.g. the launch of a brand new product)</td>
<td>Re-branding (a place image normally exists regardless of branding efforts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Anholt (2007) and Hankinson (2001).

2.1.7 The definition of destination branding

There are some subsequent implications within the definition of destination branding as it is a collective phenomenon. Firstly, for the sake of creating and managing a destination brand, collaborative effort among stakeholders is a must (Morgan et al., 2002). As Hardin (1968) refers destination branding to a ‘common good’, it is the result of continuous process of collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, collaboration among stakeholders in destination branding must be balanced with the consideration, meaning that within a single tourism destination, each stakeholder plays different roles and agenda and also benefit from tourism in a different way (Aas et al., 2005). From this it could be understood that each stakeholder of a tourism destination is inclined to expand their benefits (Buhalis, 2000).

2.1.8 City Branding and Evaluations

“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 than brand creation and maintenance for products and services. In this study, the following definition about City branding is adopted; “brand 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)

For more than two decades, during 1980s, branding has been known as a representative tool in marketing destinations and events, which made corporations aware of the potential of branding in absorbing attentions (de Chernatony, 1999). Cities tend to be erratically perceived by stakeholders, having volatile images dependent on events, promotions and trends. Countries conversely, tend to have a more stable image, with more difficulties in fulfilling self-expressive needs of stakeholders (Caldwell & Freire, 2004). A more volatile image arguably allows more flexible geo-branding policies, capable of adapting to changing consumer needs and the competitive environment. City branding resembles therefore corporate branding, turning territorial units into entrepreneurial ones (Kavaratzis & Go, 2007).

Place branding, similarly to product branding, augments destinations with values in line with those requested by stakeholders to facilitate recognition and appreciation (Ashworth & Kavaratzis, 2006). In this sense, territorial units need to draw upon common associations of stakeholders of interest to allow for a psychological leveraging process while simultaneously promoting distinctiveness to allow competitiveness (Fan, 2006). Therefore, place brands face the challenge of balancing differentiating and standardized components.

Gnoth (2002) highlights how no destination can emerge as a brand unless four essential systemic elements are present: transportation, accommodation, attraction, and hospitality structures. As systemic elements, they can be considered standardized components of any destination, prerequisites for any place brand (supply) to be considered by the demand side. Presence of these systemic elements allows therefore commoditization of the destination within the marketplace, developing economic, social and political capital (Aronczyk, 2008). Differentiation can occur within systemic components of a destination and within others aspects, providing distinctiveness for survival in the hyper competitive market.

Place branding as a match-making framework between the demand and supply sides of the market, through consistent functional, experiential and symbolic elements, is especially important for the process of place image formation, as literature describes it “as the development of a mental construct based on a few impressions chosen from a flood of information” (Govers et al., 2007, p. 15). Arguably therefore, place branding should provide consistency through all contact points available to stakeholders for creation of a destination image, may these be tourism
promotions, vicarious consumption occasions, visits to the place itself or situational events (Govers et al., 2007). As reputation is a matter of perception and not a substitute for reality, for successful place branding the selected pool of attributes should be based upon valorization of the place identity to generate stakeholder expectations (Govers et al., 2007). It is therefore important to meet expectations during the place experience (place identity becomes most evident) to deliver satisfaction and sustainable brand reputations (Hankinson, 2004; Govers, 2012).

In an attempt to analyze the pros and cons of place branding, the process of brand development and brands need to be defined by showing their complexity which could boil up their effectiveness. Notwithstanding the fact that there is a huge absence of a specialized theoretical framework for place branding (Hankison, 2004), solely minor marketing assumptions are practical in place marketing. Thus, majority of concepts are from ‘an emerging synthesis of public and private sector theory and practice’ (Anholt, 2007, p. 6).

Considering the conceptual difference between product/corporate and place branding (see Table 1), using the business paradigms in place management absolutely brings commodification of place as a notion, hence affirming the trend to “transform[ing] competitiveness of spaces in the place market” (Pike, 2004).

Various definition of place brand exists in the body of literature. Figure 2 shows the multi-faceted nature of a brand, which shows a decrease in level of manageability starting from the core to outer layers. Brand managers may have control over the definition of the brand identity; the brand core includes both tangible and intangible attributes representing the way that a place is to be perceived (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005). In other words, brand represent include tangible and intangible elements and with representing deeper value and meaning to consumers, it includes a vibrant personality which through its transcendence highlights certain associations (Keller, 1993).

As a matter of fact, the designed brand identity is believed to be at the center of the entire represented messages concerning the place. However, place brand managers could implicitly and partially influence the brand image, i.e. ‘the perception of the brand that exists in the mind of the stakeholders and consumers or audience’ (Anholt, 2007, p. 5).
Greenberg (2008, p. 33) points out that brands are created in people’s minds and it is tricky to access people’s mind. Likely, the definition of brand identity is difficult and debatable. Based on unique attachment of brand identity to the place, the majority of the studies focus on the role of culture as a crucial element in ‘competitive identity’ (Anholt, 2007). Choosing all the elements related to the culture representing past, present and future and reflecting the entire social groups living in the same place yet with different cultural background is fairly problematic as it may lead to conflicts among local communities (Philo & Kearns, 1993, p. 3). Moreover, Greenberg (2008) mentions some local actors protesting against any place branding campaigns since it might be perceived as separating excluding part of local community. Figure 3 shows an active and synergistic branding in the shape of a ‘structures social process’ which is a non-linear shape; representing that branding is a non-linear process and in order to sustain and increase the value to the brand it is essential to collect as much as feedback throughout the process. Hankinson (2004) believes there is a chance to change the perceptions about a brand into ‘brand reality’ along with these loops, i.e. a combination of tangible and intangible assets that really represent the place. Brand reality includes the formal and informal actors that feature the local community, e.g. the set of norms, rules, habits and routines (Pike et al., 2006). These are the features that usually help to keep the power of relationships among diverse social groups. Hence, by having communities involving interacting, a suitable learning opportunity raises, thus lead to constant updating local motivations and values.
In order to sustain interactive and iterative process, a continuous sense of direction provided by a clear vision is needed. Nevertheless, the concept of vision is a bit debatable. Based on the majority of literature, while the vision should be created strategically in the long term, politicians, who usually run place branding, tend to be temporary and under next- election pressure and as a result seek for quick – win interventions (Pasquinelli, 2010). As Anholt (2007) states, the vision is supposed to be designed hierarchically and yet should come out of interacting ‘loose networks’ of spontaneous and interested actors engaged in branding. Although engaging communities may lead to governance efficiency challenge, communication as a part of branding especially with great level of stakeholders involvement – helps to avoid conflicting and misleading messages (Pasquinelli, 2010).

2.1.9 Place Brand Identity and Image
The main purpose behind brand identity is providing direction, purpose and meaning for the brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2002, p. 68). Another idea behind brand identity is to be a help for brand to stay credible to itself by covering the brand specific characteristics (Rainisto, 2003, p. 73) and the goals that distinguish the brand from other brands (Kapferer, 2001). 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”. Through brand identity, stakeholders could communicate the distinctive and special characteristics of the place in a frame for overall consistency and also display their 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 represent all the organization offers to the consumers which is crucial to be prosperous and deep and consistent.

There are some debates about having one single and clear identity or have multiple identities. Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 43) believe that successful branding – commercial, corporate or place – requires an understanding of how to create and develop a brand identity. The researchers argue that a powerful brand identity usually derives from a powerful, consistent and united sense of common purpose within the organization itself. Unfortunately, logotypes and slogans can only contribute with publicity; hence there will be no strong and vibrant identity without a common purpose. Ren and Blichfeldt (2011, p. 431-432) criticize the fact that destination branding is 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, it rather gives 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) states 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 engages 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 & Joachimsthaler, 2002, p. 71; Kapferer, 1998, 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 4 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 whereas 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, it is aimed to discover the brand identity created by the Umeå2014 team mainly from stakeholders’ perspective. Hence, the gaps between the stakeholders’ perceptions about the brand identity, which has been promoted by Umeå2014 team, would be revealed.

2.1.10 Brand Identity and Stakeholder

Brand identities are never only internally or externally developed; these two components are “dialectically related” and should be understood “as mutually constitutive parts of a whole [brand]” (Aronczyk, 2008, p. 56). Consideration of internal stakeholders – the domestic audience (e.g. residents, local businesses, administrative bodies) – is especially important, as local people are an important dimension to the delivery of a consistent brand experience (Freire, 2009). Locals impact the goodwill of the city brand, contributing to competitive positioning and stakeholder satisfaction (Freire, 2009). In addition, internal stakeholders seek for collective self-identification to be derived from the place brand (Aronczyk, 2008). Thus, in the creative rebranding process, domestic audiences should still recognize themselves in the brand to be capable of endorsing its values (Fan, 2006).

Selectivity in terms of desirable stakeholders is unavoidable, as a destination attempt to cater equally to all stakeholders is difficult to position competitively (Boisen et al., 2011). Pratt (2010) counters this, highlighting how stakeholder selectivity causes multiple and non complementary objectives, creating tensions amongst the territorial unit’s key stakeholders. A policy focused upon a particular cultural excellence may therefore not help others present in the city, failing to assist social inclusion (Pratt, 2010).

Successfully managed stakeholder selection allows a creative profile built on diversity of people and buildings, contributing towards the enhancement of a unique brand identity and reputation (Trueman et al., 2008). Arguably therefore, a process of diversity integration is necessary for the creative city to be competitively positioned in the marketplace while avoiding issues attached to the promotion of an imposed mono-cultural identity (Freire, 2009). The integration of diversity, and to a certain extent acceptance of individualistic behavior, can positively contribute to innovation and creativity, developing “[…] cultural forms, social development and economic activity” to be leveraged by the collective (Pratt, 2010, p. 19). Mono-cultural city ideals, fostering homogeneity and uniformity, should therefore be replaced by knowledge diffusion and genuine development (Pratt, 2010). Stakeholder diversity is both necessary and inevitable: it is
only through collaborative co-creation of a shared vision amongst actors operating in diverse industries that a consistent brand experience can be developed (Gnoth, 2002).

2.1.11 Defining and Analyzing the Stakeholders

Freeman (2010, p. VI) on his management theory defines stakeholders as “any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, the achievement of a corporation’s purpose”. This theory implies that an organization which satisfies its stakeholders’ interests will perform better than firms that do not fulfill these groups’ interests. Also, based on this definition, it is clear that the view of stakeholders is really broad, meaning it is not only referring to formal, official stakeholders. A destination is a place with its unique images derived from natural and man-made resources and different stakeholders trying to represent them. Starik suggests a good summary of the wide-ranging stakeholder definitions:

“...there may be numerous levels of specificity as to what the term ‘‘stakeholder’’ means, depending on what the user is referring to. The range appears to be bounded in this case, on one end, by those entities which can and are making their actual stakes known (sometimes called ‘‘voice’’), and, on the other end, by those which are or might be influenced by, or are or potentially are influencers of, some organization or another, whether or not this influence is perceived or known.” (1994, p. 90)

Starik (1994) suggests differentiating the stakeholders is fundamental in appropriate management strategies, meaning identifying relevant stakeholders is important for better differentiation. In other words, all are not equally important; hence, prioritizing the stakeholders based on assessing their relationship to the organization is incumbent for management of an organization to perform efficiently.

Some authors, such as Freeman (2010), have found differentiating the stakeholders as either primary or secondary as a useful tool. Freeman (2010) describes primary stakeholder as those who have a “formal, official” relationship with the organization and “is one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive as a going concern”; and, based on that a firm may be regarded as a system of primary stakeholders. Accordingly, he defines secondary ones as those who influence or are influenced by the corporation, but not necessarily crucial for the firm survival (Freeman, 2010).

Different concepts of stakeholder have been used on the stakeholder, stakeholder management, theory and models, presenting different arguments and proofs (Donaldson & Preston, 1995, p. 66). Olovsson & Berendji (2012) have gathered definitions of stakeholders and presented in a table (see Appendix 1). Mitchell et al., (1997, p. 854) see a need for a theory strong enough to distinguish stakeholders from non-stakeholders. These authors’ opinion proves the lack of a common meaning of concepts and the variety of definition cause misinterpretations.

There are mainly two large groups of stakeholders defined by different authors; internal stakeholders (employees, owners and managers), and external stakeholders (consumers,
competitors, government, social activist groups, media, environment and the community) (Carroll & Näsi, 1997, p. 46).

In this study, a key stakeholder has an important part in city branding, either directly or indirectly in presenting the city, and is depending on the city brand for achieving goals and success.

2.1.12 Stakeholders and Place Brand

According to Mio, brand is more than co-owning the brand by the organization and its stakeholders (2003, p. 246). Also, Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 472) have found out that the stakeholders involvement and the brand infrastructure are crucial for place branding. Based on Kavaratzis studies on stakeholders involvement in place branding “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); the study continues suggesting for reexamination and re-appreciation of the substantial role and involvement of the stakeholders in all stages of the place branding process – which is not the focus in current practice. Additionally, Kavaratzis (2012, p. 12-15) pinpoints three “new” reasons for even more importance of stakeholders in place branding.

1. **Place branding is public and political** – It is crucial to involve the stakeholders in improving the quality and productiveness of the policies through their knowledge, therefore strong communication among stakeholders and the places authorities is essential. Also, their interaction in each phase of the place branding strategy should be planned for.

2. **Participatory branding** – The branding process is a dialogue among stakeholders over the concept of the brand, hence internal audience participation is vital for successful branding.

3. **The on-line world** – The growth of the online world has affected place branding and supports the participation of stakeholders.

Kwak et al. (2009, p. 52) claim that it is necessary to incorporate the private sector within forming the values of a city brand. There should be an equal combination of public and private approach in the distribution of infrastructures services to make the decision making more effective. There are in fact hundreds of stakeholders who play the role of place managers even in the smallest place. A place managers is not similar to public administrators acting from the town hall, a place manager can also come from a leading local company. Maheshwari (2011, p. 201) argues that managing a place brand is not just the participation of the public sector, private sector or the local governing authorities. He states that what is required is a collaborative operation of the place’s key stakeholders.

Figure 5 depicts the place brand hexagon (Allan, 2006, p. 6), those key stakeholders that require collaborating in designing a place brand strategy. Allen (2006) claims that it is necessary for a place to include all key stakeholders who can support and communicate what is trending on the place and their taking actions according with the agreed and shared vision of a place. Allan’s place brand hexagon shows stakeholders that are appropriate for this study and useful.
It should be noted that even if all key stakeholders are included in Figure 5 (Allen, 2006, p. 6), it is obvious that not all of the stakeholders’ decisions can be “on brand” and adding value to place brand. However, it is vital that each key stakeholders understands the level of impact of their decision-making, communication, performance has on the brand to build their activities on each other for cumulative impact (Van Gelder & Allan, 2006, p. 18). Although synchronizing the key stakeholders is a tricky task, it is essential when building a strong place brand. Synchronizing the key stakeholders is not an easy task, however necessary when building a strong place brand.

2.2 Conceptual Model

2.2.1 Finding the Gaps
Based on Harris and de Chernatony’s (2001) model, for managing brands through limiting the gap between a brand’s identity and its reputation, it is aimed to show the gaps between the perceptions of two key groups, involved in the European Capital of Culture about Umeå2014, about the city brand identity. The first group is the managers of this project, Umeå2014, who are responsible in organizing and presenting Umeå during this one-year event and are the real players in conveying the core values and identity of the city. And, the second group is the key cultural stakeholders who are actively involved and collaborate with Umeå2014 team (project leader).

Clearly, Umeå2014 has chosen corporate branding where involving different cultural communities within Umeå to represent the city together as the title of Umeå2014 application suggests “Curiosity and Passion – the Art of Co-creation” (2014). In this sense, it requires greater focus within organization and its relationship with their collaborators, which is known as ‘corporate marketing’. One of the implications of corporate marketing is matching the stakeholders’ perceptions and interests with the core competencies to ensure cohesion and
therefore consistency in delivery (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Harris and de Chernatony (2001) believe that the employees of an organization are considered as brand’s “ambassadors”, similarly, Zhang and Zhao (2009) recognize people and stakeholders’ as brand’s “ambassadors” to pinpoint their powerful impact on the city’s image and presenting to the consumers, i.e. the visitors. Accordingly, some of ideas and implications behind corporate branding have been applied to city branding to suit the aim and the case of this study. People of the city is thus becoming central to the process of building brand as their behavior can either strengthen a brand’s promoted values or, if inconsistent with these values, weaken the reputation of advertised message (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). It is therefore essential to look inside branding team actors to realize to what extent their values and perceptions align with a brand’s desired values.

A further reason for investigating inside the stakeholders and in general key cultural actors is the shift in branding literature form brand image (Boulding, 1965) to brand identity (Kapfere, 1997). While image considers consumers’ perceptions of brand, identity is more focused on how managers and employees (in this case, the engaged stakeholders) perceive the brand and make it unique. Managers, first need to define a brand’s values and then ensure the cultural actors’ values and behavior are consistent with them to bring cohesion in defining their brand’s values. In studies of brand identity in a firm, managers are obliged to include an internal debate about defining a brand’s values with their staff (internally) and also examine their brand’s reputation among stakeholders to ensure the brand’s identity is communicated successfully and valued outcomes are consistently delivered (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). In this study, however, the focus is put on the stakeholders and basically cultural actors as collaborators in defining Umeå2014 brand identity and therefore as staff and internal players.

2.2.2 The Identity-Reputation Gap Model of Brand Management
Branding a city requires a holistic approach to brand management, in which all actors behave in accordance with the desired brand identity. Brand identity are formed by six components: vision and culture, which drive the brand’s desired positioning, personality and subsequent relationships, all of which are then presented to reflect stakeholders’ actual and aspirational self-images. The components of the model are interactive and are mutually reinforcing (see Figure 6) (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).
Figure 6 is adapted from the “Identity-Reputation Gap” model originally by De Chernatony (1999) and developed by Harris and de Chernatony (2001). However, in his model the authors show the gap in corporate branding of an organization and as said earlier. Although city branding is mainly inspired by product branding, there are some differences in terms of diversity of communities’ interests which are required to be noted. Therefore, there are some changes on the model to make it an appropriate for the aim of the study. The next section describes the six components of brand identity (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

Basically, the main difference is that the involved stakeholders in city branding are known internally, whereas on de Chernatony’s (1999) model employees of an organization are considered internally. In other words, it is argued that since the involved stakeholders in branding Umeå during ECOC 2014 are regarded as one of the key actors in representing the city, the relationship of Umeå2014 managers with them genuinely affect conveying the core values of the city and thus the performance of the city brand, likely the relationship between the managers of a firm and their employees and how it affects the delivery of the same core values to the
customers consistently. Through this shift in the model, the purpose of this study is to see the gaps between the perceptions of managers of Umeå2014 and involved stakeholders’ perception about Umeå2014 brand identity based on the cultural attributes of the city.

**Brand Vision**
The center of brand identity is brand vision. Vision encompasses the brand’s core purpose which provides a system of guiding principles (Collins & Porras, 1994). City branding managers should communicate their brand’s purpose to stakeholders clearly in an attempt to inspire them and help to understand how their roles relate to it. It is also crucial to communicate the brand’s core values because these guide stakeholders’ behavior. Each brand has a distinctive set of values that are applicable to its target market. But, aside the consistency in nature of those values, the consistency of the perception of those values is important characteristics of successful brands (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

**Positioning**
The coherence between the brand’s vision and core values and the brand’s positioning requires to be examined as well. A brand’s positioning encompasses what the brand is, who it is for and what it offers (Rositer & Percy, 1997).

**Personality**
The brand’s emotional characteristics are metaphorically regarded as personality which develops from the brand’s core values. Managers should make sure that a brand’s personality is delivered coherently by the involved actors (Aaker, 1991).

**Relationships**
Having supporting a brand’s personality, a relationship between the brand and its consumers develops, which is identified by the values built in the brand’s personality. Involved actors in branding a city significantly affect a brand’s relationship with its visitors; the consistency of these interactions is therefore important (Fournier, 1998). Managers need to help involved actors to understand the types of relationship that are appropriate with visitors and other stakeholders, based on the brand’s core values.

**Presentation**
The final component of brand identity involves the characterization of presentation styles to present the brand’s identity to reflect stakeholders’ aspiration (Kapferer, 1997) and self-images. Stakeholders respond and get involved more favorably to brands they perceive as being consistent with their self-concepts. Brand’s symbolic meanings also help different actors understand and express aspect of their selves to others. Managers need to be attentive to consistency between a brand’s desired symbolic meanings and those have actually conveyed/advertised to the actors.

**Reputation**
Successful management of mentioned components should lead to a favorable brand reputation among the stakeholders. Based on Fombrun and Rindova (1996) study, reputation is defined as “a collective representation of a brand’s past actions and results that describes the brand’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders”. In contrast to a brand’s image which
reflects ongoing and recent changing perceptions, a brand’s reputation is more stable and represents the filtered of multiple images over time (Fombrun & Rindova, 1996). By including the evaluations of all involved stakeholders, reputation offers a more representative indication of brand performance. Also, establishing a favorable reputation of brand strategy among involved stakeholders and familiarity with key stakeholders’ perception is central in city branding (Balmer, 1995).

It is urgent to manage the reputation among the external communities (consumers/visitors) as well; in this study, however, the primary focus is put on the involved actors and secondary focus on the managers to see the gap between the brand identity that managers of Umeå2014 have projected and its reputation (perceptions) among involved thus key actors (stakeholders). Adapted from de Chernatony’s (1999) model – for narrowing the gaps between brand’s identity and its reputation including both internal and external components of brand building – it is the purpose of this paper to show the gaps of perceptions among internal actors (managers and the key stakeholders).

2.2.3 Congruity and Brand Performance

de Chernatony’s (1999) model focuses the multifaceted nature of the branding concept, which engages the coordination of internal resources (e.g. functional capabilities, communication capabilities, coordinating consistency through staff, planning, pricing, customer service) to establish a consistent brand and a favorable brand reputation (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Although brand reputation encompasses the perceptions of all stakeholder groups, in this study, the focus in on three stakeholder groups: 1) one representative from Marketing office at Umeå Municipality (Umeå Kommun); 2) three representatives from institutional actors who are in charge of project(s) for Umeå2014; and 3) two representatives from individual actors who have parts in organizing events/festivals.

Brands are known as multidimensional entities, and in order to gain success there should be a congruity between firm’s functional and emotional values with stakeholders’ performance and psychological needs (Harris & De Chernatony, 2001). Therefore, ‘congruent perceptions about the nature of their brand’ is deeply crucial.

Usually brand management team is regarded as those people responsible for designing and developing the brand strategy (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001), this includes the Umeå2014 team with cultural actors collaborating with them together to present the city during the ECOC 2014. Also, potential for misperceptions of a brand either internally or externally (visitors) are equally substantial. However, the focus of this study is only on the creators and collaborators for following reasons; a) this study has been conducted during the first to fourth month of the event span, thus it is early to investigate the visitors perceptions about the entire reputation of Umeå2014; b) the activities during the ECOC have been organized based on the Sami calendar into eight seasons, each seasons embodies different theme and spirit for different groups of people, therefore seeking some of visitors’ perceptions would not be valid unless to ensure a broad variety of visitors during all the seasons have been covered; c) there are almost no studies about branding Umeå as a city especially during ECOC, hence the need for investigating the
internal component of branding comes first; as stated previously managing the relationships among the managers and collaborators affects the congruity and consistency of their identity thus Internal consistency and congruence are vital to be successful external communication of identity (Abratt, 1998). Perception depends on a person’s expectations and previous knowledge as well as the information presented by the brand (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Managers and stakeholders already tend to differ in their perceptions of their brand’s identity; indeed studies have shown that managers’ perceptions may differ from each other (de Chernatony et al., 1994). Congruent perceptions will thus be substantial in the successful management of city branding.

3. Methodology

3.1 Personal Implication
The importance of staying objective as a researcher is undeniably important. By being objective we mean eliminating personal biases, previous commitments and emotional involvement. However, when conducting any research, it is likely that the researchers’ experiences, background and interests will affect the direction of the research and influence the results. As a matter of fact, it might be impossible to remain objective when conducting research within social science (Neuman & Kreuger, 2006, p. 125). However, since the researcher is neither a Swedish in origin, nor proficient in language, there is less possibility of reflecting objectivity within analysis. In addition, Creswell (2007, p. 21) claims that it is inevitable that researcher’s prior knowledge, background and intentions will at least to some level influence the understanding. The fact that the researcher of this study is a student at Umeå University, and at the moment of conducting this study, residents in Umeå, influence the view about the society and the priorities that are made. It should be noted that while the inhabitants and residents are known as stakeholders, this group is not considered in this study.

3.2. Research Components
Due to the nature of this study, the chosen research design is qualitative, as the inter-relations explored do not allow for a priori definition of variables (Serrat, 2010; Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to probe the topic of interest on an in-depth basis. As problem definition is critical to research design, to reduce the likelihood of errors, the topic was decomposed as illustrated in Figure 7 (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The study is consists of three main steps; the first step is to gain the managers’ perspectives on Umeå2014 brand identity, following the first step, the second step is to gain involved cultural stakeholders’ perspectives in order to complete the third step, which is examining the gaps, if any exists, between two groups’ perceptions.
3.3 Interview Structure

In this research, four different pools divided into two major groups are chosen to have in-depth interviews with; the first group in particular order is the representatives of the project team, i.e. Umeå2014 manager and the artistic director. The second group which divides into three branches is the key involved stakeholders, i.e. institutional actors, individual actors and marketing office of the municipality. Altogether eight interviewees, those who could be an appropriate representative from their organization/team, have been chosen (see Appendix 4).

- The first group:
  Two representatives from Umeå2014 office (the project leader team); the manager and the Artistic Director

- The second group:
  (a) Two representatives from individuals who have parts in organizing events/festivals, i.e.
      ● the head of Local Sami Union;
      ● One representative from Littfest festival

  (b) Three representatives from institutional actors who are in charge of a project for Umeå2014, i.e.:
      ● one representative from Kulturverket Umeå (department of the Municipality that is in charge with the organization of cultural events);
      ● one representative from Bildmuseet (center of contemporary art and visual culture); and
The aim is to collect the views of leading opinion makers who represent Umeå. Although the number of eight representatives is relatively small, this represents a convenient sample regarding the criterion chosen for the sample selection. This study is an exploratory study to investigate the key actors’ perceptions about the city identity.

In terms of content, the in-depth interview schedule consisted of parts based on “identity-reputation gap” model (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001), which is described in the following section.

The interviews were held in English, since the researcher does not have Swedish proficiency, and the study results will be incorporated in the identity-reputation gap analysis adapted from Harris and de Chernatony’s model (2001).

3.4 Interview Questions

The concept of City branding is inspired by the concept of product branding and marketing. While branding a product is regarded as intentionally broadcasting certain identities, core values and beliefs about the product (Simoes & Dibb, 2001) – in order to make the consumers confidently recognizing and appreciating those attributes (de Chernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998). Some scholars (e.g. Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Anholt, 2007) argue that cities are not products transactional in the market. However, since a city can be considered as an “entity”, the concept of product branding can possibly be transplanted to city branding (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005).

One subsequent strategy within city branding is the formation of the city’s identity embodying a wide range of contextual variables such as history, demography, economy, politics and policies. A city is usually perceived by its certain identifiable images or core values by its people. In this paper, city branding refers to a strategy that presents the city with a unique identity and using the title of European Capital of Culture as an instrument to convey the city’s core values into a wider audience. Smidt-Jensen (2006) believes that city’s identity is a mix of a city’s spatial configuration and its socio-cultural values which through branding it is important for the characteristics to be synchronized and modified into unique and distinctive identity.

One of the key challenges of city branding is defining the city’s identity and all the core values in a way that is easily presentable and reachable to people and their heart. In this respect, a strategy of product branding is less proper in the context of a city due to complexity of engaging stakeholders and ownership in branding development. (Kavaratzis, 2009).

Also, another big challenge in city branding is to profiling the identity city, i.e. a combination of diverse social values, to represent as various interests of different social groups in the city as possible (Zhang & Zhao, 2009).
It is crucial to brand a city by combining the culture, history, economic growth and social development, infrastructure and architecture, landscape and environment into a saleable identity that is desirable to all people (Zhang & Zhao, 2009). This shows how the city branding causes debates over competing representations, understanding, and identification of the city. The city’s identity and core values are more than neutral statements of fact; they are the claims and representation of a variety of interests; they are the most challenging part of city branding. Clearly, one of the determining issues in urban branding is how the city is understood. The branding could be successful if it is able to represent core urban values that are considered unique, delightful, strong and communicable (Gertner & Kotler, 2004).

Apart of the city authorities and their goals and responsibilities in implementing the city branding, people are also known as “ambassadors” to represent the city by communicating their experience with the city and their perceptions (emotions, imagery, evaluations and judgments) into their own understandable identity of the city. Therefore, city branding should carry both the intention of city authorities and the experiences of people to deliver congruence with what can be experienced by the city residents and visitors, and the city’s values to be accepted by the general public (Zhang & Zhao, 2009).

Kavaratzis (2004) presents six key questions that city branding should be answered. The questions include (1) what the city indubitably is; (2) what the city feels it is; (3) what the city says it is; (4) what the city is seen to be; (5) whom the city seeks to serve; and (6) what is promised and expected? In this study through interviewing with the involved cultural actors in Umeå 2014, some of these questions are answered. The aim is to find the consistency and the gaps between the answers. The interviewees are combination of authorities and cultural actors to see the congruency within their responses. The first question is though not have been addressed in this study, as it demands another group of interviewees, i.e. regular residents and visitors, to capture more valid and real thoughts and perceptions about the city. However, the rest of key questions in city branding has been attempted to be addressed. (See Appendices 2 and 3, interview questions)

The pattern of the interview question is based on Figure 6 – adapted from the “Identity-Reputation Gap” model (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001) – in order to see how the stakeholders perceive Umeå brand identity during 2014 and how they relate it to the cultural potential of the city. The interview was mainly divided in four sections concerning to cover all the six elements of the Gap Model – i.e. Brand Vision, Positioning, Personality, Relationships, Presentation, Reputation – (Figure 6) as follows:

1. **Influential Discourses about Umeå as a destination**
   - **Personality**: brand’s emotional characteristics
   - **Positioning**: brand’s offering and target visitors derived from core values

2. **Umeå 2014 Brand Identity**
   - **Reputation**: a collective representation of a brand’s past actions and results that describe the brand’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders

3. **Umeå 2014 Brand Platform and Core Values**
a. Brand Vision: brand’s core purpose
b. Presentation: presentation style to present brand’s identity as to reflect stakeholders’ aspirations

4. Goals and Activities
   a. Relationships: appropriate relationships between the manager and the stakeholders based on the core values

In following chapter, the analysis codes in relation to the elements of the model and sections of the interview will be discussed in details.

3.5 Respondents Selection and 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 (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The study aims to gain in-depth information by interviewing key stakeholders of Place brand Umeå. Saunders et al. (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. The sampling method used was non-random, as aims were to acquire a sample representative of a unique situation, demonstrating potential for generalization (White, 2007). Purposive sampling was used to acquire accurate and relevant information and due to the localized nature of the subject (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Furthermore, selected participants contributed to the exploration of a unique occurrence, thus the sample can be defined selective (White, 2007). The selection of participants was made in accordance to what can be considered internal, involved and cultural stakeholders during the ECOC in 2014.

3.6 Analysis Structure

This study aims to present a variety of discussion about Umeå2014 brand identity based on the core cultural attributes of the city rather than analysis of what is a ‘common’ opinion, the thematic analysis, therefore allows for an appropriate qualitative understanding of this topic. This is similar to content analysis, however, Brown and Clark (2006) claim that the main difference is that in a qualitative content analysis, the themes and codes tend to be quantified when discussed and analyzed in relation to one another. Presumably, thematic analysis is not limited to any specific theoretical understanding; however, Brown and Clarke pinpoint the need to be clear about theoretical standpoint as the author plays an active role in the research process. Brown and Clarke explain the steps of thematic analysis as:

1. Familiarizing with data;
2. Generating initial codes;
3. Searching for themes;
4. Reviewing themes;
5. Defining and naming themes;

In the case of this study, the first draft for themes was identified after listening to all interviews more than twice, and making notes about main thoughts or codes. Thereafter the interviews were transcribed: the parts where the informant discussed these themes were transcribed word by word, while some parts of the interview which were slightly relevant or were added just in support of their words were only summarized. This overview of the findings was used as foundation for further analysis and review of the themes from a theoretical understanding.

Discourse analysis could have been an alternative for this study as it focuses on the context of various discourses and understanding of them from power relations and ideology (Phillips & Hardy 2002). One reason for choosing thematic analysis in this study is the focus on both individual themes as well as the relation between the themes (Brown & Clarke 2006); which could have been discussed from a perspective of overlapping or contradictory discourses instead.

### 3.7 Respondents

A summary of the chosen respondents – as representatives of key stakeholders – and their respective interview information are presented in the Table 2 (find the information about organizations in Appendix 4). This section also provides a short presentation of each key stakeholder. It should be noted that the chosen sample is not complete, however, it is rather aimed to have representatives from different groups of stakeholders, and these were chosen among the group members from a convenience perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Representative</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Interview date (yyyy-mm-dd)</th>
<th>Interview duration (min)</th>
<th>Interview order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Government</td>
<td>2014-04-28</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Government</td>
<td>2014-04-29</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Culture and Education – Tourism</td>
<td>2014-05-01</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulturverket</td>
<td>Culture and Education - Government</td>
<td>2014-04-30</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sami Association</td>
<td>Private – People – Culture</td>
<td>2014-05-05</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littfest</td>
<td>Private – People - Culture</td>
<td>2014-04-28</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 Interview

The respondents were contacted via email where the purpose of the study and the value of their participation were explained to them. All of the approached stakeholders replied with a positive confirmation and the researcher 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 respondents’ everyday environment – in an office or a conference room during office hours. The issue of confidentiality (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 74) and anonymity was highlighted and the researcher 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, the researcher decided on not using the respondents’ names in the study and referring them as a representative to their organization.

In some cases, the respondents claimed lack of background, e.g. tourism sections. However, since the main focus of this study is based on the respondent’s perceptions, they were asked to simply express their thoughts as a representative of their organization, without considering the real truth.

As there are two individual interview groups (representatives of Umeå2014 and the key stakeholders), the interview questions were modified for each group, to allow the researcher to examine the gaps between two groups’ perceptions.

It was attempted to incorporate a limited approach in the 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 they have asked for. One of the respondents chose to include PowerPoint presentations (Marketing Office representative). This was not a problem, however, it was 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 the respondents had read the interview themes in beforehand and although it was not seen as an obstacle, it was clear that the unprepared respondents were more nervous and gave more unstructured answers, compared to those that were prepared. It was truly felt that the respondents provided the answers needed in order to complete the thesis, however, one of them refused to answer two questions as it was too early to conclude any comment about the weaknesses of the event. Also, two of the selected interviewees could not participated out of their heavy workload, so they asked one of their colleagues who believed they would be a proper respondent representing their organization; and the researcher asked them for preferably an alternative familiar with the topic and the content of the interview the most.
As far as it was interpreted, all the stakeholders were genuinely interested in the topic and honest while answering the questions. In fact, most of them expressed the importance of the study investigation and made very clear that they were interested in reading the completed thesis. However, it is assumed that when it came to the weaknesses of Umeå brand identity and 2014 project, those respondents with the closer relationship with the manager and Umeå2014 project leader, either financially or being as ‘close collaborators’, were a little bit conservative and less critical or simply refused to answer in details due to the time phase of the event (May 2014); even one of the respondents insisted on checking the quotations before stating on the text.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 68), the interviewer shall not interrupt the respondent’s story when interviewing, in particular when making a qualitative study. However, since considering a time limit, the researcher had to ensure herself to cover all interview themes, and thus had to interrupt some of the respondents when the answers were too long or lacking in consistency. Also, Bell (2006, p. 165) states that recording an interview can be beneficial in terms of transcribing the exact replies. To be on the safe side, all interviews were recorded with two devices.

4. Result Analysis

The following section presents the main findings of the study. This section is descriptive in nature, as an interpretation of findings and inferences is provided later. As stated earlier, the interview consisted of four individual sections and each section addresses components of the Brand Identity Gap Model (Figure 6) as follows;

1. **Influential Discourses about Umeå as a destination**
   1.1. Image of the city *(Personality)*
   1.2. Visitors and Offerings *(Positioning)*

2. **Umeå2014 Brand Identity**
   2.1. What is Umeå? *(Personality)*
   2.2. What is being European Capital of Culture? *(Reputation)*
   2.3. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Umeå Brand Identity during 2014 *(Reputation)*

3. **Umeå2014 Brand Platform and Core Values**
   3.1. Umeå2014 Core Values *(Brand Vision)*
   3.2. Organizations’ Aspirations *(Presentation)*

4. **Goals and Activities *(Reputation)***
   4.1. Motivation of Participation
   4.2. Collaborations and Relationships

4.1 Influential Discourses about Umeå as a Destination

4.1.1 Image of the city

**Umeå2014**

*Respondent 1*
The respondent stresses on the importance of ‘curiosity’ in creating the image of the city, hence giving some examples of their activities to build this impression as well as introducing Umeå. Ahead of this event, Umeå2014 team toured to Europe accompanying with actors from Umeå University, the Ice Hotel, Swedish embassies, Visit Sweden and their local offices in Sweden to arise curiosity about Umeå through their “unique package of selling points”, i.e. a) Umeå is the most Northern Capital ever with exoticness of coldness, ice, snow, etc in winter and midnight sun in summer; b) the only capital of culture with indigenous culture. According to the respondent, they had 70,000 visitors during their tours in Europe and were successful in getting wide media coverage to increase curiosity about Umeå. Also, the presence of nearly 270 journalists and many VIPs from EU during the opening weekend based on ice, snow and Sami culture have met the expectations in order to increase the curiosity about Umeå even more.

Respondent 2
The respondent sees Umeå as the “opposite” city, which is in peripheries in Northern yet with high standards and quality of living with people who care about issues surrounding them and issues in the world. Also thinks that city is known as University city, cultural city, sport city; above all a progressive city in the North. Umeå2014 finds the activities during the event fulfilling the expectations of the city. According to the respondent, one difference from 2014 and the previous years, is the focus on the Sami Culture which might be interesting for European perspective to know more about this culture.

Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
The respondent definitely sees the Guitars Museum as the single most important highlight of the city; “Guitars Museum is the first international destination in Umeå... If you come to Umeå, you could do variety of things, but the thing that so far gotten the most Media exposure  is the Guitars Museum.” Two main reasons were mentioned, firstly the fact that inauguration of the museum was at the same time with the start of the ECOC year; secondly the long history of musical scene and various bands playing for a long time, “...So the fact that we can continue to talk about the music life in Umeå through the Guitars Museum fits just like a glove.” Also, the respondent considered other highlights such as the Sculpture Park and Bildmuseet ‘very high class’ attractions. Concerning the image of Umeå, the respondent divided the views about Umeå historically. The first image of the North part of Sweden belongs to the 19th century, the beginning of tourism and how Umeå has been referred as the “border to wilderness” and “the exotic life of Sami culture”, “... that was the view hundred years ago... and what are the riders today say about Umeå when they visit Umeå, I think we haven’t seen all of it yet, because we are in May; it has been four months, so we cannot really say anything yet.” also adding, “I am not sure that we can really change the ways that people have been perceiving.” The respondent though continues to state her beliefs about the image of Umeå by making comparison between Umeå and other ECOCs, and how the concept of ‘co-creation’ plays a strong role in distinguishing Umeå with other capitals; “... you could say that as a city, we are known for our music, so let’s make this profile stronger... but that is not the case in Umeå and I would say that by working with co-creation, you get the
typical Umeå thing.” The marketing office argues that the concept of co-creation is really intangible and hence hard to comprehend Umeå during 2014, also notwithstanding the fact that the being ECOC “Improve the city image” in Umeå, it is not a new beginning. “... this has been a development for over hundred years and this is the city where culture has always been enormously important.”

**Bildmuseet**
Bildmuseet believes that there is curiosity over Umeå about the fact that such a small city with massive number of events and festivals, dominated by the university and young population and also very close to nature and wildlife. Furthermore, to the respondent the city is known for its cultural institutions with good reputation, e.g. Bildmuseet.

**Umeå Tourist Office**
The respondent believes that before the event in 2014, Umeå was basically known as a university town in the North with nothing special; and now as that they have received this title, the picture of the city is changing, because there should be something special during capital of culture.

**Kulturverket**
Kulturverket sees Umeå well-known for the music stage during the last 10-15 years, “... Umeå is known with very big musical festivals in different genres...” besides being known as “city of music” according to the respondent, being known as “University city”, “young, left-winged and uprising city”, and “democratic city” are other images of Umeå. Also, Kulturverket explains that discussions about gender, integration and racism, and involved people in democratic issues are other images of Umeå.

**Sami Association**
The respondent believes that Umeå is known as a small city, in North of Sweden, big university with no special attractions, and of course the center of Northern Sweden. “In my opinion, Umeå’s known history to others belongs to Sápmi, the Sami land.” In continue the respondent states that Sami people have lived in Umeå before the creation of University.

**Littfest**
Littfest mainly sees Umeå with the picture of “Punk Hardcore Movement” in the 90s, which caused Umeå to receive a lot of media coverage unlike the years before it. According to the respondent, Umeå is a town with creative youngsters, with strong DIY (Do It Yourself) culture, open for arranging gigs, bands and art events; and branding the 2014 event was primarily based on these images. However, the respondent argues that Umeå capital of culture has not managed to show these images during 2014 event, “... they just talked about it, and show it in brochures, but they have not supported economically...” Also, the fact that “Verket”, as how the respondent calls it “the most important venue for Hardcore culture”, has moved out to the outskirts of the town and only showing the history of Umeå Hardcore in museum, is considered disturbing; “... Umeå Hardcore hasn’t been fully written yet, it’s an ongoing process...”
Littfest names some of the real images of Umeå as follows, “solidarity, creativity and political awareness” and stressing on the importance of reflecting the real images and avoiding the “the sterilized image of Umeå” only for the sake of attracting visitors and tourists.
4.1.2 Visitors and Offerings

Umeå2014

Respondent 1
Umeå2014 states that they worked hard to get more ambassadors for marketing Umeå through their networks as well as social media to attract variety of people, “.... we want to attract enterprises, financial capitals, students for the university... not only tourists... because we believe growth is built on all those different pieces, not only tourism.” Continuing, the respondent talks about the variety of activities, programs and places in Umeå satisfying different target groups as well as every group of citizens also adding that how creativity is visible through them all, “we want people say Umeå is amazing, surprising, creative, different...”

Respondent 2
The respondent believes that the visitors would relate pretty much everything they visited to the potential of the city. Also by naming some attractions unique – e.g. the Guitar Museum, the Sculpture Park, the Art Campus, Sami culture, etc. – sees the chances of attracting people high. In continue, Umeå2014 would like to people feel they are part of the city development and feel safe to explore nature around and above all to see the possibilities of living in Umeå and exploring their visions and ideas; “... we want dedicated people to come and make difference...” In general, the respondent assumes that curious people would come to Umeå; “... it’s kind of effort to come here... I think Umeå is perfect hub for investigating north.” According to the respondent’s observations, the coming visitors are, in particular order, mainly from Northern region, Sweden, Scandinavia, and Europe.

Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
The respondent names the target market for visitors firstly with the neighbors, secondly their collaborations with Västerbotten Tourist Board towards Germany and Switzerland. And recently they are looking into the Great Britain.

The Marketing Office argues that the idea of going to a European Capital of Culture and consuming the culture is a bit unclear and certainly find Umeå as a preferred destination for curious people where the city “is doing things in another way to make people feel at home and get people to be creative and have fun.” In continue, the respondent in answer to the question of why people from different parts of Europe should come to Umeå, believes that they need to develop the tourism industry especially evolving around the music scene and the guitars; “... because we know that people are traveling on the globe to come to the Guitars Museum ... we got fan tourism and that makes it important for us because we have in Umeå a new destination for the Swedish tourism industry.”

In the end, concerning to the theme of Umeå2014 which is based on the Sami seasons, the respondent stresses the importance of projecting Sami culture by Sami entrepreneurs and not people/organizations without Sami origin; “I think it’s absolutely correct to expose Sami Culture and use the European Capital of Culture as a platform for the Sami culture to make it visible... as they are the only indigenous people in the European Union and it’s a culture that has been depressed for centuries...”
**Bildmuseet**
The respondent believes that Umeå impresses people with the fact that there many activities and events planned throughout the year to boost the culture; which might be invisible to ordinary tourists. “The city mainly offers a combination of urban culture and nature, forest, mountain, etc.” According to the respondent most of the arrivals are students who are also passionate about culture and sport, such as skiing, etc.

**Umeå Tourist Office**
The respondent believes that people find Umeå surprising, since it is a small town with few people yet high standards and quality of life and culture; “If they compare this town with a similar size town in their countries, they will be surprised.” Tourist Office sees Umeå a great city with different inexpensive activities for young people, who can access to nature, reindeers and Sami culture so easily. “We have the possibility, but we have not worked on it in that way.”

**Kulturverket**
Kulturverket thinks that the main visitors are Swedish people who have relatives in Umeå and make the effort to come up North, the ECOC could be their second reason as well; “…to most people in Sweden is still unknown that the European Capital of Culture is in Umeå this year…” Basically, the respondent thinks that Umeå is a hub for those who are on their way up North and they pass by.

According to Kulturverket, the general reasons people might visit Umeå are being close to sea, water and art, culture, the museums, etc. In answer to the question to what kind of visitors Umeå is/could be as a preferred destination, Kulturverket says; “we don’t have the main attractions that actually draw people just because of it, nothing special, maybe music festivals.”

**Sami Association**
The respondent believes that Umeå attracts people who are interested in culture and are on their way to go up North of Sweden; “We want to show that Umeå is a hub for the rest of Sami land.”

Sami Association stresses on the importance of spreading knowledge about Sami culture nationally and internationally, as well as introducing Umeå as a part of Sápmi (Sami land).

Also, the respondent believes that the fact that the city is small yet with huge number of activities and events is impressive; “…we have different activities with strong traditions.”

**Littfest**
During this year, Littfest considers Umeå as a destination for businessmen for arranging conferences and also being close to the nature with good food and experiencing something exotic; therefore finds it paradoxical, since the facilities that are created for this event are mostly and firstly used for other reasons than culture, “That’s been really calculated, those who has been involved in lobbying for Umeå to be a capital of culture, are also the ones building the hotels, the conference halls, houses…”

The respondent also explains that how the city audience has been changed due to these major changes in image of Umeå, “…our audience is not a backpacker from Germany or Denmark anymore who comes here for Hardcore Punk… I can see there always been a lot of people in
suits and ties coming here for conferences, booking all the hotel nights and taking part of the culture events.”

Moreover, the respondent clarifies that Sami people do not live in Umeå; “they’re living further in North... for like one hundred years ago, we had Sami people coming here for selling and buying goods, merchandize.” In continue, the respondent believes that regardless the fact that there were no discussions whatsoever about Sami culture before, it is really important since Umeå 2014 won the bid by highlighting Sami culture constructively.

4.2 Umeå2014 Brand Identity

4.2.1 What is Umeå?

**Umeå2014**

**Respondent 1**

The respondent clearly sees Umeå a city with open-minded and creative people that they create innovatively, “... that is the brand of Umeå; it’s not because of European Capital of Culture, it’s because of the investments in culture started in 1970s.” The respondent explained about the policy from government, “the really first policy from government”, in 1974 to the politicians of Umeå to invest more on culture and how politicians considered culture as “a good thing to attract people” after building Norrlandsoperan, Västerbotten Museum, the largest Umeå Theater Association supporting many culture and young music scene.

Also, Umeå2014 describes their strategic model showing “culture driven growth” for decades in Umeå to depict Umeå’s success in strategy investing in culture, meaning their long-term development process was not started with this event, nor would finish. All in all, the respondent describes Umeå as follows;

“Umeå is not the most beautiful city, it’s one of the most creative and feminist city; open for homo-sexual and different religions. In Umeå we are curious about different cultures…”

**Respondent 2**

The respondent finds Umeå a city where culture was always been a topic of discussion; “... I came here from a place where it wasn’t a cultural city, at least no topic for discuss. When I came to Umeå, I was immediately invited to cultural network and to be part of it.” Also, the respondent finds Umeå a city with people connected with each other for different purposes.

**Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office**

The Marketing Office firstly clarifies that the answers are based on their profession, i.e. brand of Umeå city, neither city municipality nor Umeå 2014 branding and from there by using a metaphor expresses the opinion about branding a city, “... marketing a city is completely different from a product, a city is glittery like a disco ball... you have to allow every little pieces of mirror to be shown... the city brand is not owned by anybody.” Marketing office believes that many of strong characteristics of Umeå is visible in the brand of Umeå2014, i.e. collaboration and Cooperation. The respondent shares understandings about Umeå identity and say, “... it is clear that we have very very long traditions of working together for centuries.”
The respondent sees Umeå with a great energy coming from their forefront researchers, sports men and women, cultural entrepreneurs, etc. to make the world a better place to live, in an innovative, engaged and closeness way, “Wherever there is engagement, the passion starts.” According to the respondent fact that Umeå2014 has out talked to different groups of society and involve them into the program reflects Umeå to a great extent.

**Bildmuseet**
Bildmuseet sees Umeå as a young, open-minded, without conservative culture city, where a) people are free to express their opinions; b) the borders between producers and consumers are very thin in events/festivals. “... People are welcome to be volunteer in events and also experience, if they want to work with culture in future, to get practical experience through festivals, it’s really easy in Umeå.”
Additionally, Bildmuseet welcomes international artists, either amateurs or professionals, with great deal of interests in local as well as global culture.
In general, the respondent does not see any major difference between Umeå during 2014 and previous years, except the fact that events naturally become bigger with the extra money they receive, “... cultural institutions have always high quality level...”

**Umeå Tourist Office**
The respondent sees Umeå with great deal of unexplored possibilities, “Umeå is future...” Tourist Office believes that the town has not appreciated tourism as a business, “... tourism is something more than leisure... tourists can be our future residents.”

**Kulturverket**
Kulturverket sees Umeå as an open-minded city, safe for expressing opinions with huge number of events, shows and exhibitions for such a small city. However, the respondent sees Umeå during 2014 something else, “Umeå in 2014 is the EU project, it’s not something chosen by us, it’s chosen by politicians.”

**Sami Association**
The respondent sees Umeå as the central city in North Sweden, with creative people, dominated by University. Also, Sami Association sees the ECOC event an important opportunity for introducing the contemporary Sami culture to the rest of Sweden and the world.

**Littfest**
Littfest believes that the city is really open-minded with everything, carrying a great deal of solidarity since 60s. Also the respondent seems very critical about the new image projected about Umeå as a ECOC, which to the respondent has changed the audience of the city as well, “... they built hotels, houses, offices, etc... you need to go out to the gigs, small events, small exhibition halls or some book cafes and that’s really defining the real Umeå culture.”
Littfest argues that their festival is known as “just like the hardcore movement alternative festival for literature and culture”.

4.2.2 What is being a European Capital of Culture?

**Umeå2014**
Respondent 1
The respondent answers this question by relying on in-depth researches about other ECOCs, interviewing and reaching out to them to understand their legacies to build Umeå2014 goals based on it. Umeå2014 has five goals stated by the respondent which will be mentioned in ‘Core Values’ section. However, the respondent named some groundbreakings regarding their project, including a) the fact that Umeå2014 has done much more with the ‘co-creation’ than other ECOCs; b) the way they marketed in Europe was unique to Umeå214; c) uplifting an indigenous culture has never been done by other ECOCs; and d) the most groundbreaking of all is the mission of culture driven growth,

“... which is not made in the year of cultural activities, but having long-term strategies for development of city; which is groundbreaking in the history of European Capital of Culture, because most of them exposed their culture, but they did not connect that to the long-term city development.”

Respondent 2
The respondent, in general, believes that ECOC could turn out into huge success, or it could be something that passes by, “... it very depends on how much the city is involved... I think the size of the city is really important too. Riga (another ECOC in 2014) is a capital city, so there are more projects within big framework of Riga” Additionally, the respondent clarifies that it is almost ‘impossible’ to involve everyone within the program.
In the end, the respondent adds that ECOC can support the city in many ways, but not solving problems in society, “It helps to make things visible, but it’s not a magic wand...it’s about people doing things together and also join together the next year.”

Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
According to Marketing Office, being chosen as ECOC is an important honor, but from the consumer perspective the idea of consuming culture at a European Capital of Culture is hard to understand.

“If you are a capital of culture people understand that you have a little more culture than rest of the cities and Umeå has that. Umeå for a long time has been giving the cultural sector a lot of money that other cities by comparison don’t.”

Bildmuseet
Bildmuseet generally indicates that culture can attract people, therefore cities get more attention, and also it gives life to the depressed cities, “... in Umeå it’s not that case, we are university city already. For us the identity to be cultural city is around twenty years.”

Umeå Tourist Office
The respondent generally notes that being a ECOC is a great honor that happens only one time. Also, stresses on the differences between the capitals of culture based on the structure of the city and how there is many possibilities in Umeå which might be hard to choose one type of theme for the city to represent.

Kulturverket
According to Kulturverket, being a ECOC is mainly about attracting tourists, bringing money to the city for the businesses to appreciate it. On cultural level though, Kulturverket feels a bit worried about future.

**Sami Association**
To Sami Association, European Capital of Culture puts focus on the culture for one year, and the main problem would be sustaining and continuing the path. In general, it is a “kick out” for a lot of cultural projects.

**Littfest**
Littfest finds this event as an opportunity to expand the networks and marketings as well as broadening financing. “... thanks to the Umeå capital of culture, not just because of extra money we received, but also because of the term ‘European Capital of Culture’, we used it to contact a lot of people...” More importantly, Littfest describes how they have used the ECOC platform to introduce the real image of city not for the sake of tourism and money, “what we tried to do was to say to everybody we’re using this project with our seminars to show another side of Umeå and what is Umeå about... this is the chance to reconstruct this whole project... I think in some way we have managed to do that.”

In general, Littfest based on the studies of other ECOCs, believes that ‘gentrification’ is common in all the capitals of culture as well as Umeå 2014, where small organizations and the grassroot movements would be torn out and the whole idea of being a capital of culture initiates around “rebuilding the city”, tourism and hotel industries.

4.2.3 The Strengths and Weaknesses of Umeå during 2014

**Umeå2014**

**Respondent 1**
Umeå2014 generally sees the wide media coverage, networks in Europe and their co-creation strategy very successful and rewarding.

Speaking about the weaknesses the respondent implies that there is always room for doing things better and discusses that how Umeå2014 takes the most effort to get best out of their limited budget and small team and also the fact that the year of the event is not over make it hard to answer. Nevertheless, Umeå2014 states that they have hired a team well-experienced in local and regional development in 2011 to give them annual report about their weaknesses. It seemed the respondent was not quite willing to reveal the reported weaknesses voluntarily, therefore the researcher asked for some examples of their weaknesses so far, “…we need to do even more efforts in reaching out, in co-creation... we have invited everyone, but doesn’t mean that we have reached out to everyone... also we need to make clear to outside that how we organize the works, and who is responsible for what.” Regarding local media, the respondent believes that having critical local media and newspaper is typical and Umeå2014 has chosen to be “transparent and open”, “we have a lot of debates in local media and newspapers about shortcomings... they can see all the receipts and kroner we have spent.”

Moreover the respondent points out other weaknesses through their program regarding “the lack of immigrant culture presentations”. Umeå2014 expresses that it is important to have a program
inclusive for all cultures and not isolated immigrants; “... we invited everybody, but we cannot force them, I believe we didn’t reach out.”

The researcher asked about the challenges of the city and brought up the weather of Umeå as an example; “... we believe we have to market the weather in an exotic weather; that’s why we brought Ice Hotel to Barcelona, to show the difference, to increase curiosity about coldness, darkness.”

Respondent 2
Seemingly, the respondent was open to talk about the weaknesses and overrated issues related to the event. Another representative of Umeå2014 believes that the idea of city development, rearrangement of the city, and the constructions have made the capital of culture more “vulnerable” and difficult for Umeå2014 team to handle, “... we don’t have those authority to work with city planning, but since everything is connected to European Capital of Culture and it will be criticized from city planning perspective... so it has weakened the team...”

Moreover, the respondent 2, in contrast to respondent 1, argues that the idea of culture as a driven force for growth has received too much focus:

“... it is more than the team wanted... it was just an effect for motivating municipality to invest more in culture... in this case the culture has to be commercialized... so easy to be misunderstood and misinterpreted.”

According to the respondent seasonality is one of the weaknesses, “... there are many activities in spring and summer, but it completely dies in summer... we need to make the city interesting during June, July and August...” In continues the respondent talks about the big events including “UxU” etc. which are mainly in summer.

**Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office**
Marketing office in answer to the question of the strengths and weaknesses of Umeå2014 brand identity stresses that the given answers are based on the respondent's knowledge and profession not personal thoughts, therefore refuses to answer the question, “... we’re in the beginning and haven’t seen the complete picture yet... I am too close and involved; I can’t really answer that question.” The Marketing Office instead states some of ideas for developing tourism industry, including finding more friends and creating support activities around the highlights of the city, “I talked about the Guitars Museum because it could attract a lot of people, of course not only the obsessed ones but also the mildly interested ones... we will get a new museum ‘History of Women’ museum, but then again, we have to find other things for this target market besides visiting the museums, what the visitors would do on day number two or in the afternoon...”

When questioning about the weaknesses of the city during this event and how they are addressed, the respondent asked for an example and the researcher brought up the issue of weather, as an example, in Umeå; “...the weather could have been better in the inauguration of the event, nevertheless we can find a broader target markets when it comes to visitors...” The Marketing Office also argues that in order to develop the tourism industry they need to “step out of our shoes a little bit...” meaning they, as inhabitants of Umeå, do not consider the easy access to the nature in the city as wilderness which according to respondent’s studies absorbed a lot of
international students’ attention. Also, refers the midnight sun as a unique competitive advantage of Umeå that needs to be more projected.

The respondent clearly sees Umeå with a very long traditions of culture by referring to some travel journals and the book, The Midnight Sun, back in 1871 about the abundance of piano and importance of education even from the beginning in Umeå, which according to the respondent needs to be projected outside and also inside the city.

In the end, the respondent points out one of the images of Umeå that needs to be dealt with it to make Umeå interesting, which is projecting towards wilderness and coldness, “If the image of this part of the world for the rest of the world is we are the wildlife and almost at the border of something that it’s not really made for people to live, then with how large marketing budget we should have, we cannot change anything.”

**Bildmuseet**

The respondent firstly starts with the existing debates – which means it is not necessarily the respondent’s belief – “Maybe the opening ceremony wasn’t really thought through, with the number of people coming...” The respondent calls the idea of “too much Sami culture” unfair, and believes that the Sami culture has been silent for many years and this year could be a great chance for them to be visible.

Bildmuseet believes that youth culture, the music scene, have been almost neglected despite of all the expectations. Also, by referring to late opening of Culture House, November 2014, in the year of capital of culture, points out the debates around it.

In general, the respondent sees the small size of the city center as a weakness, therefore calls Umeå as either visiting or conference city, and not sightseeing.

**Umeå Tourist Office**

The respondent believes that this event is a great opportunity for Sami people to be recognized, because they are not only unique in Europe but also unique in the world. However, the respondent claims that Umeå and Sami people have never done anything together, “… they are here, but they don’t live in Umeå.”

As for weaknesses, Tourist Office believes that Umeå unlike other ECOCs is small, therefore the budget is limited and less people are involved. Moreover, the respondent finds it difficult to make the “soul” of Umeå 2014 understandable for people outside.

**Kulturverket**

The respondent thinks that the Guitars Museum has received too much attention and money which is not for everyone; “… it is really really narrow field of interest.” Also, adding that the fact that the tickets for the ‘Elektra’ show, presented by Norrlandsoperan, costs 750 Swedish kroner makes it exclusive for some people. The respondent stresses that this specific show has received lots of money and attention.

Besides the overrated activities, the respondent believes that the Sami perspective and the gender issues, despite of huge support in the bid application, have not been well-received.

Regarding the Sami culture, Kulturverket finds it as a given-take process, “… I don’t think that Sami culture has been presented really genuine, it has been used as a kind of alibi, everyone is
aware of it... I think the Sami representatives are aware of it... they’re being used, but also they have this year to teach us about their culture.”

In general, the respondent believes that they don’t have a real main attraction, “... we are in the North Sweden, that’s our main attraction...” In continue, the respondent think the weaknesses of the city has been attempted to be solved through ‘Open Source’ method to encourage people to put even more effort in the program. However, it does not seem to the respondent that the huge number and the big scale of the events make any difference for the culture.

**Sami Association**

To Sami Association, the democratic idea of involving different people in the program is considered as strength. In continue, Sami Association strongly refuses the idea of “too much focus on Sami culture” during 2014, and says, “... those people do not have knowledge about the history.”

According to the respondent, projects involving children and young people have not received enough attention.

The respondent describes some structural problem in 2014 program regarding financing, “Big organizations with strong competencies could make strong applications to get money, but small organizations have had difficulties to get funding and help... Sami organization, like small organizations, lives on trying to get money from here and there, so we’re very weak and we don’t have competency and time to find more money.”

Above all, in Sami perspective, the respondent believes that despite of all the archeological findings, the lack of presenting “historical physical sights” of Sami culture is a weakness of 2014 program; “... to make historical places visible, then Sami culture could be survived for future.”

**Littfest**

Littfest finds the strengths in the opportunity that lies in this year for all the festival organizers and their determinations to show their creativity and presence in an attempt to project a real authentic culture. “I think that Umeå in terms of culture has risen even more because it is 2014.”

According to Littfest, the weaknesses exist within regrouping and rearranging of some cultural groups such as “Verket” in the beginning of 2014. The process of “Open Source” is another weakness considered by Littfest; which every association was supposed to apply to get financed during 2014, “...in reality most of budget has gone to the Norrlandsoperan, to the Västerbotten Museum and Bildmuseet... these were the money has gone...”

Littfest does not see the size of the city as a negative point, since they, as cultural coordinators, have always been interested in culture with identity and not big events.

Last but not least, the respondent finds the idea of being described with images such as, “winter wonderland with reindeers” provocative and describes, “... everybody who lives here knows that Umeå is like a center to Northern Sweden... Umeå hasn’t got that identity yet...”

### 4.3 Umeå2014 Brand platform and Core Values

#### 4.3.1 Umeå2014 Core values

**Umeå2014**
Respondent 1
As said earlier, Umeå2014 has 5 goals based on the legacy from the other ECOCs; 1) to empower the citizens, “first and mainly this is for our citizens, we’re building this for our citizen and their creativity.” 2) To empower the culture as a driving force for growth, not only for increasing the curiosity in Europe and having more partners and funds, but also for the citizens to be more involved and interested in culture; 3) to empower the city planning growth/development, by building new landmarks and places; 4) to empower the regional corporation in the Northern region; and 5) to empower the international relationship with Europe and the world.

Respondent 2
The respondent thinks that the core values are easy to communicate and understand with no weaknesses in the criteria of admitting the applications, while generally criticizing, “... we have been trying to find the European level or dimension with other actors, it is not easy...but we should not forget that it is a EU project, and not local project...”

Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
The respondent refers to the collaboration and co-creation spirit of Umeå2014 and how it is important to reflect real Umeå, also believes that from the huge marketing office they have been successful to bring the most out of it. All in all, the respondent sees the core values of 2014 program promising and good for the image of Umeå.

Bildmuseet
Bildmuseet finds their core values and Umeå2014 core values pretty much the same, mostly because they are working in public and welcoming different kind of people, “... it’s equality, we do the same in our exhibitions...”

In addition, Bildmuseet explains their main three projects financed by Umeå2014 to showcase 2014 project as follows; 1) the Surrealist project, especially for European project, since Surrealism have been really important in the history of European art; 2) inviting eight artists with Sami background to deal with Sami identity in contemporary art; 3) the Contemporary Chinese Collection to emphasize that they have brought the world to Umeå.

Umeå Tourist Office
The Tourist office representative confesses the lack of knowledge about Umeå2014 core values. However, generally thinks that Umeå2014 goals are to lift the culture and make the citizens feel good about themselves and the city. Also, the respondent finds the project team’s responsibility hard to keep everyone happy as well as being part of Europe.

Tourist office states that they are not organizing any events, “... we mostly communicate with journalists, PRs... showing them around, send them information about city...”

Kulturverket
Kulturverket finds their activities important since they are part of the Municipality and the event 2014 is runned by the municipality, “... everyone in the municipality were invited to participate, especially us, as we work with culture and art... so we were invited from the beginning.”
According to Kulturverket, Umeå2014 have had mainly two core values; 1) Open Source, that everyone should be involved; 2) the Sami perspective, to lift the culture and create knowledge about it in Europe.

“I think they’re still struggling with those two... but they’re trying their best... they weren’t really prepared for these two big things, because it sounds easy, but that also comes with certain expectations, and they haven’t really met with all the expectations.”

**Sami Association**
The respondent believes the fact that they have been invited to participate in the 2014 program recently and not quite from the beginning is an unfortunate. Also, the respondent doesn’t seem to be aware of the core values of Umeå2014, therefore asked the interviewer to pinpoint some of them. After few hints, the representative implies that it is difficult to disagree with it and says, “Of course I agree with them, who can’t?”

**Littfest**
The respondent, once again, pinpoints that despite of existence of all the positivity around projecting Punk Hardcore movement during 2014 – in the brainstorm sessions with Umeå2014 and other two-hundred informed people – this event had nothing to do with it.

**4.3.2 Organizations’ aspirations**

**Umeå2014**

**Respondent 1**
Umeå2014 sees financial opportunity in this year as an important step for the continuous growth of cultural actors in fulfilling their own dreams; “... that’s what Norrlandsoperan is doing with the outdoor performance, the ‘Elektra’.” Also, Umeå2014 stresses on their limited budget and importance of cooperation, networks, private sponsors, long-term plans for the cultural actors to prolong their activities for future.

**Respondent 2**
The respondent sees a great opportunity in future for those cultural actors that have received money from Umeå2014 to get financed by other organizations. Also arguing that since this event is in European level the actors are pushed to find networks, connections and source of money. However, Umeå2014 finds some actors highly ambitious which could make their organization exhausted since this period is very demanding, but also could be very rewarding in the end.

**Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office**
The Marketing Office sees this event as an opportunity to change the images and thoughts about Umeå and to breakfree the stereotypes, “We’re part of Sápmi, we’re part of Lapland and of course we are part of Norrland...” The respondent continues with showing the Google picture results of Norrland and winter in Sweden and how almost all the results are showing remote areas covered in snow with absolutely no people in the pictures, “Norrland is good when it comes to tourists, but Norrland for an investor is sparsely populated with few people...” The Marketing Office finds breaking free from image of Norrland provoking and difficult which this event has helped them to at least shake the stereotypes about Umeå.
**Bildmuseet**
Bildmuseet finds ‘publicity’ as the main benefit of this event for their organization, since they have accomplished to receive a lot of media coverage from Europe, special people such as politicians arrivals to Bildmuseet, etc. Additionally, Bildmuseet stresses that they are not one of the products of 2014 as they have opened Bildmuseet about two years ago; therefore no possible damage has been received during this year.

**Umeå Tourist Office**
Tourist Office believes that this event made a lot of people to write and talk about Umeå and show it in media; and they have received many attentions than previous years. Moreover, the respondent adds that Sami culture should not receive the main attention, “...I don’t say they should not receive any attention, but not the main attention.”

**Kulturverket**
Kulturverket sees the ECOC as an opportunity for their organization to reach out to the collaborators from other countries in Europe, however, the fact they were pushed to work on longer than usual projects was really exhausting to them.

**Sami Association**
Sami Association sees the ECOC as an important opportunity to be visible and teach the world about their culture. Besides, receiving funding has helped them to own a place, being independent and have different projects. Also, to respondent it is important to be presented in-depth and high quality.

**Littfest**
Littfest considers “solidarity, compassion and insight” as the main important reasons for their team and other festivals to use this year. Through this project, their network has been broaden and they are more capable of finding finance sources for the future. In general, the respondent doesn’t see negative effect on culture during 2014, except for those who have been pushed out, i.e. ‘Verket’, etc.

**4.4 Goals and Activities**

**4.4.1 Motivation of Participation**

**Umeå2014**

**Respondent 1**

Umeå2014 sees this event as an opportunity for the actors to improve and not having necessarily the same goals, “... it’s not we decide only these core values should be adopted, because of course they have their own. But we tried to challenge them in these five goals to think about future and to build networks for future.” The respondent welcomes the variety of goals and mission and do not consider this as a problem.

“We asked all the actors to fulfill your dreams, what is Umeå for future?, start to build it and continue.”

**Respondent 2**
Umeå2014 argues that this event introduces a new level of understanding towards culture, “...culture has much stronger position now and it is really good that the associations could maintain that because that’s the whole idea of Umeå2014.”

In general, the respondent seems happy that the Sami culture has gained focus in this year, since Sami people has never been supported by media while they have been in Umeå for many years. Also adding, “... it’s hard for the stakeholders to embrace the European dimension into the work...”

**Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office**

The respondent refers to the previous answers and concludes that since the Marketing Office and Umeå2014 organization are part of same organization, it is part of their job to be involved actively in this event. Also, repeating the fact that this event is a marketing opportunities, “... I am a marketer, therefore that’s my objective.”

**Bildmuseet**

Bildmuseet hopes people come to Umeå because of their institution, since they are “big variations of culture expression” by working in international field. Bildmuseet points out the importance of receiving finance for working with children and young people, “There will be a lot of cutdowns in municipality, and we know that.”

**Umeå Tourist Office**

Tourist office hopes everyone finds Umeå a city so European and so Swedish at the same time with Sami culture, “... because nobody knows that...” The respondent believes that there should have been constant activities happening in the city center to show that the city is alive. Also, according to the respondent, the museums and the Opera have not presented and reached out very well despite of all the efforts in the production.

**Kulturverket**

Kulturverket prefers to be understood as an open-minded and “constantly moving” city. The respondent believes that this year was a great chance for Kulturverket to be visible and make people in Umeå aware of their organization and their activity. Kulturverket does not expect tourism from abroad, “... we would really like people more from Umeå come and see our shows.” Kulturverket specifies that their target group is children and young people and their families in Umeå.

According to Kulturverket, the children perspective has not been supported well this year, “It’s a democratic perspective, you want everyone to be involved, not only as participants, but also as audience. We have good programs for kids, but we have them every year. I would have liked to have them increased in this year.”

In general, Kulturverket criticizes the adopted concept of culture during this year, which is so wide and inclusive, “...sure, everything is culture, but if you want to lift the culture, you should specify it and be more careful about what is culture.”

**Sami Association**

Sami Association desires Umeå to be known as part of Sami land. The association’s motivation is mainly being strong, independent, and economically safe with good reputation.
Littfest
The biggest motivation of Littfest in participation was to show the character of the town by arranging critical seminars discussing the concept of EU project and bordering the Schengen Countries, “Although the capital of culture is a EU project, we used this platform to present another image of Umeå... Umeå is young town with the university, people want to discuss things, they want to activate themselves. That was kind of topic for the festival.” Through year 2014 they accomplished 10,000 visitors and are more determined to approach other financial sources.

4.4.2 Collaborations and Relationships

Umeå2014
Respondent 1
Umeå2014 challenges the actors about the program – based on the ideas of ECOC, “... building networks, interchanging the culture not locally but internationally...” and based on the other core values “equity and diversity” – to make their activities lie align with the long-term strategy of city development and ask them to connect their activities with the five goals and challenge the actors to think about future.

Respondent 2
Umeå2014 by stressing on ‘co-creation’, as their core value, talks about their meetings and discussions with cultural actors to help them fulfilling their goals but not Umeå2014 office’s. But as far the EU project, there are certain expectations from cultural actors; a) connect to the city cultural life; b) there should be big events shining all over Europe. “Finding lines between these two is very difficult. Some associations can deliver huge things, but there are maybe two or three people in some small associations...”

The respondent generally believes that the more independent the stakeholders would be, the more Umeå is, “...that is the Umeå label pretty much...”

Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
The Marketing Office in answer to the question about collaboration in favor of their activities and in support of Umeå2014 team says, “We are the same organization, I am part of the city Umeå, we have been working with Umeå2014 for the last seven years, so there are so many events that we have been participating in.” Since this event is really important to them they have run a lot of activities under logotype of Umeå2014, also the fact that the respondent and and colleagues devoted themselves couple of months to this event shows their constant collaboration and the both sides belief in the growth of Umeå through ECOC.

Bildmuseet
Bildmuseet declares that they have mentioned Umeå2014 as their main financial support in running their main three projects; also sees Bildmuseet institution very important in cultural life in Umeå. “We keep up our integrity, as we are part of University and not runned by municipality, also collaborating with Umeå2014.”

Umeå Tourist Office
Tourist office asserts that they have named the title of this year everywhere to attract people from Sweden and Europe. Besides, Tourist office knows their organizations with Umeå2014 as ‘one’ representing Umeå as a city.

**Kulturverket**

The respondent believes that they have collaborated with Umeå2014 very well, by participating in conferences where city and the program are presented in Stockholm and abroad. Also, they have a special page on their website exclusive for 2014 activities in different languages.

“It’s a big thing to be part of it, that means we’re important in Umeå because they (Umeå2014) have chosen us as well.”

However, Kulturverket believes that regardless of all the projections about importance of children and youngsters and telling publicly that Umeå2014 has invested on them, they have been kind of alibi, just like Sami Culture.

In the end, Kulturverket thinks that culture budget would be limited for the next years because of all the constructions in the city, “...lots of money is going to rents, taking care, the electricity etc... I’m scared that lots of cultural budget will go to the houses and not to people... there’s not going to be any money left, we probably have a big drop and then will back to the normal where we have been in 2008.”

**Sami Association**

Sami Association finds their networks with Umeå2014 mutually beneficial by having their support to broaden the Sami Association communication and in return, helping Umeå2014 with constructive ideas, projects, and to create better quality in the program. In the end, the respondent declares that their associations could have done more projects if their capacity was stronger and has more engaged people.

**Littfest**

Littfest finds associating with Umeå2014 beneficial in terms of reaching out to European institutions, critical writers and voices to discuss the topics regarding ECOC 2014. They have covered topics concerning the Sami culture, the exoticness of North, etc.; “We matched our activities with Umeå2014 by putting them into perspectives and look at them in other ways.” The respondent states that they have provided stage to the critical voices of Sami people and Punk Hardcore bands to express their thoughts, insights and issues.

5. Empirical Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the empirical data is analyzed and discussed. The components of brand identity in Reputation-Identity Gap model is used as the structure of the analysis to show the gaps in every six components of Umeå2014 brand identity including, Brand Vision, Positioning, Personality, Relationships, Presentation and Reputation, as the components of the model are interact and are mutually reinforcing (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

The analysis is based on the researcher interpretation of the empirical data and the theories presented in chapter 3 that will be used to compare and evaluate the data. Then, the answers to
the research problems are given, and recommendations, limitations and opportunities for further research are discussed.

5.1 Brand Vision
According to Collins and Porras (1996) the central part of brand identity is brand vision which represents the brands’ core purposes. In order to present the city image consistently, it is vital that city branding managers communicate the core purposes/values with the stakeholders. This creates congruence perceptions about the brand values among the involved stakeholders as well as the target market(s) (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Based on the data interview segmentation, the perceptions of involved stakeholders are firstly compared to the managers’, i.e. Umeå2014 Office.

Briefly, the Umeå2014 core values include empowering the citizens, empowering culture as a driving force of development, empowering city development, regional cooperations as well as international relationships. These values are not only applicable to 2014, since Umeå2014 considers this year as the beginning step towards the city strategic development. Almost most of the stakeholders are aware of the following values: empowering ‘people’, ‘culture’ and ‘relationships’ (either locally or globally). Using words such as ‘co-creation’, ‘Open Source’, etc. shows at least some knowledge about the core values. Also, just a few of the respondents does point out the idea of ‘culture-led growth’ for the city (respondent 2 from Umeå2014, Marketing Office); most of the perspectives were focused on the boosting the culture itself and using this arena to show what really Umeå is about.

There were some criticisms about ‘culture-led growth” purpose; respondent 2 from Umeå2014 believes this vision has made their team and program vulnerable since they need to put a lot of focus on constructions and facilities to suit the city to the European level, while it is hard to differentiate – for the involved stakeholders – the locally culture with the European one. Respondent 2 (Umeå2014) considers this purpose more as an effect to receive bigger finance from the Municipality. Also, Littfest believes that this vision has led to ‘gentrification’, meaning the created facilities for this cultural event are mostly utilized for non-cultural purposes. Likely, Kulturverket thinks that the idea of ‘culture-led growth’ would take most of the budget for re-buildings the city and not people, and argues that that the applied definition of ‘culture’ for this event is really broad and inclusive which makes it really hard to meet the expectations. In addition, two of the respondents do not seem to be fully aware of the values (Umeå Tourist Office and Sami Association); coincidentally, these two respondents were not quite ready for the interview, hence one could interpret that they might not conveniently remember the values at the time or the word ‘core value’ in English was not referring to the point for them in Swedish. All in all, almost most of the respondents know about the basic core values. However, every actors take different strategy to achieve these goals. Their distinct strategies are based on their individual organizations’ vision and target markets.

The main rationale behind ‘brand vision’ – according to de Chernatony (1999) – is to synchronize the values and visions among the managers and stakeholders to enable them accomplish their accepted mission together as well as their individual’s. Hence, consistent
knowledge and acceptance about the core vision/value is substantially important. Based on the results, although almost all of the respondents were aware of the core values, some of them however do not consider one of the main goals – i.e. the idea of ‘culture-led growth’ – promising for the culture and citizens per se. According to the managers and the stakeholders, most of the budget for this event has been allocated to achieve this particular goal e.g. hotels, offices, conference rooms, museums, etc. It should be noted that rebuilding the city is just one of the aspects of this vision and ‘culture led growth’ basically encompasses uplifting people and culture.

The next component discusses the results about the brand’s offerings and the target markets derived from the core values.

5.2 Positioning

Based on the core values the brand of the city needs to be positioned in a way to include the target visitors in accordance with the city offerings. According to Rositer and Percy (1996), there should be consistency between the core values and positioning the city brand in order to deliver a coherent city image to target audience. In other words, there should be congruent links between what city is, what the city offers and for whom. Since the event in 2014 is culturally oriented, almost all of the responses were about the cultural content of Umeå. However, nature and related activities, as one of the main highlights of the city, were mentioned by all the respondents as well.

According to Umeå2014 respondents, there are varieties of activities in Umeå to attract almost everyone; visitors, citizens, students, enterprises and so forth, but most importantly, those people who are curious about finding life possibilities in Umeå and are dedicated to explore their visions and ideas freely. In this sense, respondent 1 from umeå2014 claims that creativity is visible in every part of the program.

While to some respondents the massive number of activities and events – in a small city – is impressive (Umeå2014 respondents, Bildmusset, Umeå Tourist Office, Sami Association), it causes some issues as well; Umeå Tourist Office claims that the soul of Umeå as a European Capital of Culture is not really known by the audience, similarly Kulturverket argues that the term ‘culture’ in this event has been applied broadly and inclusively, hence hard to meet all the expectations. And Marketing Office argues that the notion of “consuming culture” at a ECOC event is not clear. Based on means-end theory (Gutman 1982), there should be a particular set of distinct capabilities that distinguishes a brand. This positioning will give stakeholders cues about the brand’s performance characteristics. In this case, high number of activities has caused ambiguities about the ‘unique’ identity of Umeå, hence multiple identities by multiple actors are branded.

Concerning the target visitors, besides culture and nature seekers, most of the respondents consider Umeå as a perfect hub for those who want to investigate North (Umeå2014 respondent 2, Marketing Office, Umeå Tourist Office, Sami Association). However Littfest argues that their audience has been changed due to a change in image of the city; “... our audience is not a backpacker from Germany or Denmark anymore who comes here for Hardcore Punk... I can
see there always been a lot of people in suits and ties coming here for conferences, booking all the hotel nights and taking part of the culture events.”

One could interpret that the broad core value of Umeå2014, expands the scope for misinterpretation and therefore inappropriate implementation from the stakeholders increases. It is wrong to assume that all the stakeholders should have the same mental models about brand positioning. For example, Reger's (1990) interviews with managers of a banking market showed only two positioning dimensions were common to 80% of managers. Although it is important to appreciate how each member of the brand's team assesses its positioning, the different views should be taken into considerations.

5.3 Personality

According to Aaker (1991), the image of the city – based on the brand’s values – are recognizable through the brand ‘personality’, therefore congruent perceptions – among the city branding managers and involved stakeholders – about the brand personality is really crucial in delivering consistent images about their city.

Almost all of the respondents define Umeå as a “creative”, “open-minded”, “democratic”, “University town” in North of Sweden, “close to nature” with “young population” where people feel ‘safe’ and ‘free’ to express themselves and arrange different groups – art, social, political, sport, cultural, etc. Also, “co-creation” is another important characteristic of the city – that almost all the respondents believe that it shows the real image of Umeå prior and during this event. “We have a very very long tradition of working together.” (Marketing Office)

There are mainly two ideas; firstly, some of the respondents argue that the ECOC event has changed the real image of Umeå; Kulturverket believes that this event is a “EU project” which has not been decided by people. And Littfest calls the image of Umeå in 2014 “sterilized image” where there is almost no trace of the DIY (Do It yourself) culture of Umeå within 2014 program, e.g. the Hardcore Punk movement.

Secondly, some of the respondents find this event as an opportunity to absorb attention to Umeå and draw people there, since before this event there was almost “nothing special” in Umeå (Umeå Tourist Office, Kulturverket, Sami Association).

According to Harris and de Chernatony (2001), in order to convey a consistent image of the city to the audience, the managers need to ensure that the involved stakeholders have congruent perceptions about the brand personality. One way of doing this is to create an integrated approach between brand personality (presented image) and brand positioning (the potential and the target markets) to help to reinforce the synergy between these, since both evolve from the core values. It seems that one of the challenges of Umeå2014 managers is to blend the personality presented through the media, with supporting congruent stakeholders’ behaviour. According to de Chernatony (1999), one key that managers sometimes overlook is constantly communicating the core values of the city brand to the stakeholders in order to empower the brand positioning and personality, hence creating consistent image of the city.
5.4 Relationships
According to Fournier (1998), once the brand’s personality has been defined, a relationship based on the values inherent in the brand’s personality evolves. Through several interactions, particular types of networks and relationships evolve, enabling both parties to understand each other better. Based on the results, Umeå2014 consider this event an opportunity for cultural stakeholders to improve and fulfill their dreams. According to Umeå2014 another advantage of this event is the strong position of the culture in Umeå, which the involved actors could maintain this advantage and continue fulfilling their goals in future by building their networks locally and globally and finding other sources of finance. Umeå2014 office as the project leader of this event challenge the actors to connect their activities with the five core values, build their networks and interchange culture locally and globally. Nevertheless, the respondent 2 claims that finding the european dimension in organizing the events and activities is a challenge for most of the actors, especially the small actors.
Almost all of the stakeholders find this event as a great opportunity to expand their networks and visibility in Sweden and Europe as they have marketed their activities under the logotype of Umeå2014 in an attempt to gain enough credit for drawing interested people to Umeå and find sources of finance. However, almost most of the stakeholders cast their doubts about financial support from the municipality after 2014 (Bildmuseet, Kulturverket, Sami Association, Littfest); meaning they might have some struggles in finding another source of finance in future. Also, some of the respondents see finance shortcomings especially concerning the children and young perspectives in the year of the event as well as future. de Chernatony (1999) argues that the managers need to work with the involved actors to enable them to recognize, from their core values, what type of relationships are appropriate between the stakeholders and other coordinators, and encourage them to regularly assess their relationships, since these change over time and the actors should be involved in evaluating how well their relationships and networks reinforce the city brand values, personality and positioning. One could interpret that the managers of Umeå2014 guide the actors about the appropriate relationships by challenging them to broaden their networks and finance sources in order to fulfill their dreams and meanwhile connect their activities to the Umeå2014 core values. However, it seems that the small groups of coordinators have not been enabled enough to be economically independent in future through expanding the networks, e.g Sami Association. Most of the non-governmental stakeholders despite of getting publicity in this particular event, are afraid about finding financial sources in future.

5.5 Presentation
According to Kapfere (1997), the stakeholders would engage more appropriately to the brands that they perceive it consistent with their organizations’ aspirations. To Umeå2014 this event is particularly important opportunity for the stakeholders to receive financial support from Umeå2014 and other networks in both Sweden and Europe, to fulfill their dreams through cooperation, private sponsors and long-term plans prolong their activities, since Umeå2014 budget is limited. Also, respondent 2 from Umeå2014 claims that the financed organizations
during 2014, will most likely find other sources of finance easily in future, simply because they have been a part of Umeå2014.

The entire stakeholders claim that their organization could reach out to Swedish and European collaborators, therefore managed to be more visible and receive a lot of media coverage as they have aspired. However, some of the stakeholders are worried about finance shortcomings in future (Bildmuseet, Kulturverket, Sami Association) to maintain their achievements. Some of the stakeholders argue that due to limited financial support, they have not been able to promote some of their aspirations, which are highly related to their self-image of the city as well. For instance, Harcore Punk movement (Littfest); children and young people (Bildmuseet, Kulturverket, and Sami Association). On the other hand, de Chernatony (1999) asserts that one challenge in brand’s presentation is that different stakeholder groups have different aspiration and self-images to reflect, hence there is potential for conflicting messages to the audience. While, in order to enable the brand to connect to stakeholders, it needs to resonate with their sense of self (Belk, 1988; Hogg and Mitchell, 1996) and ensure they feel comfortable with the brand to achieve their organizations goals.

5.6 Reputation

Harrish and de Chernatony (2001) argue that successful management of internal brand resources should result in a favorable brand reputation, meaning addressing the weaknesses of past actions and enriching ongoing strengths to improve the brand’s ability in order to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. Brand’s reputation represents the refining multiple images over time and by encompassing the evaluations of all stakeholders. In this current study, however, the perceptions of some of the most important key stakeholders as well as the managers of the project are evaluated. According to respondent 1 from Umeå2014, their ECOC program strengths in terms of ‘co-creation’, marketing in Europe, uplifting an indigenous culture, and most importantly the “culture-led growth” strategy is unique in Europe. While, the other representative from Umeå2014, argues that the idea of “culture-led growth” made their team weak and vulnerable, and it is more an “effect” to receive more investments on culture from municipality. The respondent 2 further describes that this strategy has ‘commercialized’ the culture and bound it to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

Concerning the weaknesses, representative 1 from Umeå2014 considers lack of ‘co-creation’–i.e. reaching out to everyone – and presentation of immigrant culture as some of their weaknesses. In addition, representative 2 argues that it is almost impossible to involve everyone and considers ‘size of city’ as one of the reasons and weaknesses. In general Umeå2014 note that this event is all about ‘joining together’ and it is neither the beginning nor end of culture development in Umeå. Almost all the stakeholders find ‘co-creation’ and collaboration as one of the most important strengths of the city, however, some of them believe that despite of invitations and supporting prior to the event (Open Source Discussions), some projects have not been suitably supported economically including; children and young people projects (Kulturverket,, Bildmuseet, Sami Association); young music scene (Bildmuseet, Littfest); gender issues (Kulturverket); DIY culture and Hardcore Punk movement (Littfest). Moreover, some
stakeholders believe the future of Sami culture – after the event – is not clear and stable (Kulturverket, Sami Association, Littfest). More importantly, some of the involved stakeholders note that the unequal financing of Umeå2014 as one the most important weaknesses of this program, meaning some projects such as “Elektra” and organizations like the Guitars Museum, Västerbotten Museum, Norrlandsoperan have received most of the budget (Kulturverket, Littfest). Also, while some of the respondents regard the size of city as a weakness, since it affects the scale of events, projects, and number of involved people (respondent 2 from Umeå2014, Bildmuseet, Tourist Office), some other respondents believe the size of the city could not be potentially a weakness in this event, since the ‘authenticity’ of the culture and uplifting the people and culture is of the greatest importance (Kulturverket, Littfest).

van Riel and Balmer (1997) note that the objective of city identity management is the establishment of a favorable reputation among the involved stakeholders and for doing so, familiarity with key stakeholders’ perceptions is central to city brand management (Balmer, 1995). Managers therefore need to work with the stakeholders to reduce these gaps and eliminate sources of incongruity by including both internal and external components in the process of city branding.

The result discussion expose the researcher to see that the multidisciplinary topic of place branding would best be studied by combining different theories and take on identity-reputation gap analysis approach. Thus, with the core in the purpose of this thesis, the Identity-Reputation Gap model (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001) is appropriately developed to investigate the gaps in perceptions internally (stakeholders and managers) about Umeå during 2014. With the stakeholders as the central focus, some insights on how they perceive the place brand have been achieved. With this background, the research problems can now be answered.

The answer to the first question, to what extent there is a consistency between Umeå2014 objectives and the stakeholders’ during this event? Firstly, the fact that each stakeholder believes their activities have a clear connection to the city brand in 2014 and being key, show that they are in some way dependent on the city brand and financial supports for goal achievement and success particularly in 2014, further justifies that the correct stakeholders were identified. Secondly, 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 world.

Kivits (2010, p.5) argues that each stakeholder can be driven by different motives, yet have similar goals or the opposite way around. 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. In this sense, working together would probably benefit all stakeholders’ individual and more specific objectives.
Kavaratzis (2012, p. 12-15) argues for the importance of involving all stakeholders in all stages of the place branding process. Apparently, all of the stakeholders were invited, by Umeå2014 project leader, to the discussion, e.g. “Open Source” in the beginning to brainstorm about the event and content. Nevertheless, based on results, some of the supported issues have not been as promoted economically sufficiently. Hence, one could interpret that the key stakeholders’ participation in the place branding process and during the event can be seen as incomplete. All of the 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 key stakeholders 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 3 shows the map of the key stakeholders common goals and visions. The empirical data stems from the interviews– hence only these goals and visions presented in the empirical data are shown in the map. It is important to bear in mind that the gaps in goal do not necessarily exist as the respondents might not mention all their goals.

Table 3. Map of the key stakeholders common goals and visions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision and Goals</th>
<th>Make Umeå an attractive place</th>
<th>Citizen growths</th>
<th>Offer events and activities</th>
<th>International focus</th>
<th>Attract competent people</th>
<th>Attract tourists</th>
<th>Attract investors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå2014</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bildmuseet</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Office</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulturverket</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami Association</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Littfest</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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. However, all goals are not corresponding. Malone & Crowston (1994, p. 101) note that one challenge 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. There seems to be one important goal, “culture-led growth”, which has caused the most debates; this goal, to stakeholders, has resulted in mis-allocation of the budget, since most of the budget is spent on building hotels and houses to attract tourists. One could interpret that the key stakeholders does not see the larger picture of the whole city (from outsiders perspective), which is unfortunate since this is how the customers (citizens, visitors, investors) view the city. A change in this behavior could be beneficial for all key stakeholders and the place brand. It was noted that most stakeholders foremost care about the own organizational objectives. During the interviews, some of the stakeholders pointed out that there has not been enough done to enhance the Umeå profile, and they mostly blame the Umeå2014 budget allocation behavior.

Second, the answer the next question; to what extent there is a gap between Umeå2014 promoted brand identity based on the core cultural attributes of the city and the stakeholders’ perceptions? Influences of a place brand improve the residents’ identity, increase self-esteem and attractiveness of business and investments, and 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 as a city – during the interviews – it becomes quite obvious that the stakeholders share similar opinions. Words like “open-minded”, “growth”, “creative/innovative”, “democratic” and “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 Umeå2014, it is collaborative and beneficial. One could interpret this as a evidence of fairly common understanding among them. Also, this makes their descriptions of Umeå seem trustworthy and real.

When considering those things that the key stakeholders wish that the place brand identity should signalize in 2014, 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, a city with its real authentic culture, as a part of Sápmi, a hub city to those investigating north, etc. One could interpret that the variety of wishes is a result of the different target markets needs that the key stakeholders strive to serve (based on their goals and activities). In this sense, the city is communicated by more than one identity, which in order to gain trustworthiness more coordination is needed. 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
apparently both sides, i.e. the project leader and other stakeholders, do not see as a problematic issue. They believe this is a fantastic arena to boost their activities. Despite the many areas of interdependencies identified, a few conflicting goals identified as well– 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 Umeå2014 branding, the slogan; “Curiosity and Passion– The Art of Co-creation” 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, the 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 Umeå2014’s brand identity is benefitting from the absence of a common identity – and the slogan further communicates the diversity.

The key stakeholders develop the place brand identity, both through individual (hence noncoordinated) and common goals and activities. To be more specific, this research empirical finding 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, e.g. boosting culture, expanding the relationships locally and globally, getting visible and etc.. The number of coordinated activities in Umeå, are both larger and smaller and includes different constellations of public and private stakeholders. Supported by model, one could interpret that coordinated activities makes the customers (visitors, citizens, investors, etc.) achieve a more holistic view of the place brand and that the communicated messages reaches a larger market and gains more credibility. Secondly, all groups of 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, one could interpret that this leads to a less distinct identity, and rather results in a rich and broad multiple identity. The place brand slogan – The Art of Co-creation – 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.
Overall, the stakeholders’ goals seem to be consistent, as everyone strive for Umeå to be visible throughout Sweden and Europe as a creative and democratic city for every group of society and most importantly a city which consider culture as an important tool for strengthening every aspect of their city. However, based on the results, the respondents implement different strategies, in accordance with their expertise and personal preference, to achieve their common goals.

Similarly, the stakeholders’ and managers’ perceptions about self-image of city, regardless of hosting ECOC, look congruent. The respondents know the city’s strengths and weaknesses very well. Nevertheless, each stakeholder tend to present the city based on their perceptions about being a European Capital of Culture. Their actions are diverse based on their organizations’ visions and varied target markets. One could interpret that targeting various markets deliver multiple identities, therefore coordination is less witnessed. It seems that due to financial needings in this year, the stakeholders especially the private ones, are obliged to keep their coordination, at least to some extent, with the project leader.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Main Findings

Based on the purpose and research problems of this thesis, this exploratory study on the multidisciplinary issue of Umeå brand identity in 2014 has created new insights about the involved actors’ perceptions and objectives. The foundation of the framework is the ‘identity-reputation gap’ model consisted of six components of brand identity. These components were tested on a single case, Umeå2014 brand identity, and were modified in order to examine the perceptions’ gaps in each component.

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

- The model framework for investigating the gaps in perceptions regarding the city brand identity holds, hence it can be used for the understanding the brand identity and reputation internally.
- There exists a mutual beneficial relationship between the key stakeholders and the place brand. In other words, the key stakeholders contribute to Umeå identity, and benefit from the place brand identity in terms of financial sources and broadening the networks in this particular year.
- Coordination is more transparent through common goals and areas of interdependence as it helps both sides to fulfill their goals and manage tasks conveniently. However, different strategies have been implemented for achieving the goals, in this sense, different messages from the city could be conveyed.
- There exists common perceptions about image of Umeå and the city potential, however, no single, but rather a multiple place brand identity exists – the slogan “The Art of Co-creation” describes the situation quite well; the key stakeholders have many individual
goals directly influencing Umeå’s brand identity. Thus far, one of the challenges is coordination with other stakeholders.

- Coordinated activities – based on the core values/goals – exist; although the stakeholders are challenged by the managers to focus on long-term agendas to maximize their benefits and networks, regardless of their endeavors they would probably face financial shortcomings in future, thus most likely dependent to the governmental finance.

### 6.2 Research Limitations

Although eight heedfully chosen stakeholders from different involved part of the event were studied, one of the shortcomings of this study is that potential respondents – other stakeholders from other part of the event – were left out. As the understanding of the researcher about the place brand and chosen the stakeholder increased, I became aware of the existence of additional key stakeholders. Consequently, choosing broader number of stakeholders from various departments could have made the study reach another, more informative and broader, dimension. Likely, having more in depth study about the existing brand identity and its process could made more valid and reliable point of reference to see the gap. One could blame the lack of relevant secondary data about the city branding prior to and during the event. Nevertheless, studying more than one person (the managers of Umeå2014 project) and having interview with other key people in this process would definitely touch upon other important issues of creating the city identity and branding, hence draw more concrete gap.

Moreover, this study has only investigated the existing gaps in stakeholders’ perceptions about the promoted brand identity – based on the cultural attributes of the city for the sake of ECOC 2014. This is an interesting area of research and the issue is very up to date in the context of Umeå, hence it is believed 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 the stakeholders and measuring the gap, give advice on how a strong brand identity is created – and nor was the researcher’s intention – as it needs a distinct studying. The framework only focuses on the gap between the reality and stakeholders’ perceptions. Hence, this framework cannot be used for places that seek to identify the characteristics of a strong brand identity the characteristics of a strong brand identity. However, the framework does highlight and stress the importance of identifying the goals building up the place’s identity (or identities) to clear the role of stakeholders and how it is beneficial to stakeholders and the place brand. Moreover, since the framework focuses on the stakeholders’ 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.

Finally, it is worth to mention that the interviews were held in English. Although the researcher did her best with choosing simple and vivid words and also revealing the questions, a minor loss of the tones is inevitable as interviews might express themselves better in their mother tongue.
6.3 Future Research

The findings of the study have shed light over the gaps between the brand identity of Umeå during its hosting as an European capital of culture and the internal stakeholders’ perceptions about it based on the core cultural attributes of the city. In spite of the findings, the research has inevitably been exposed to areas, which will require further research.

All organizations and people could possibly have a stake in place, therefore, this study intentionally has excluded many stakeholders. The place residents and inhabitants are large group holding plenty of subgroups, e.g. students, important to further research. Majority of key stakeholders believe that students are crucial group since they have a new kind of influence meanwhile they enhance the competence level in the place. Hence, studying how and to what extent the students influence the brand identity of the place is a must.

A deeper study investigating on the SWOT model of the brand identity of the city during this event enable a clear conclusion of the success and trustworthiness of the key stakeholders messages to be drawn. This would provide a helpful tool to those trying to organize marketing strategies and branding the city to strengthen the place brand identity. In order to bring broader dimension to the study, additional private stakeholders, smaller local entrepreneurs could be included. In this study it is argued that there is a great value in distinguishing how the stakeholders view banding the city and 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 action to the marketer and Umeå2014 team would hopefully enlarge the understanding of different influences on the brand identity.

At last, it is 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.
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Stakeholder definition

<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>
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<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>
</tr>
<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 shareowners.”</td>
</tr>
<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>
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<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 organizations successful operation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post et al. (2002 p. 19)</td>
<td>“The stakeholders in a corporation are the individuals and constituencies that contribute, either voluntarily or involuntarily to its wealth-creating capacity and activities, and that are therefore its potential beneficiaries and/or risk bearers.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition Primary Stakeholder</th>
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<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition Internal &amp; External Stakeholder</th>
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<tr>
<td>Carroll &amp; Näsi (1997, p. 46)</td>
<td>&quot;Internal stakeholders would encompass such groups as employees, owners and managers.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 - Case Study, Managers Interview Questions

Influential Discourses about Umeå as a destination
1. What is the most important touristic image/news about Umeå that has caused Umeå to receive wide media coverage?
2. To what extent do you think that visitors find the events and the activities during 2014 match with the potential of the city? Why?
3. What are the highlights in Umeå that visitors could sum up the city with in a few words? And what you want people to say about Umeå?
4. To what kind of visitors Umeå is/could be known as the preferred destination?

Umeå2014 Brand Identity
1. Describe Umeå2014 (for you and the organization). What is Umeå as a city to you? What do you think about being a European Capital of culture host?
2. What do you think about the strengths and weaknesses of Umeå2014? What are over-focused and under-focused potentials of the city during this event? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?
3. How the weaknesses in terms of Umeå cultural potential have been solved during Umeå2014?

Umeå2014's Brand Platform and Core Values
1. How the organizations and stakeholders have been involved in Umeå2014 event?
2. How do you perceive the core values of Umeå2014 and the branding strategy? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?
3. How do you think this event would benefit and damage involved organizations and stakeholders?

Goals and Activities
1. How would you for Umeå to be understood by your visitors?
2. In your opinion what would are the motivations of involved organizations and stakeholders in this event? What are you looking for to happen in future because of this event?
3. What kind of theme/activities during this event do you find the most accepted among involved organizations? Why do you think so? What kind of theme/activities during this event do you find the least accepted among the involved organizations?
4. How do you think the involved organizations and stakeholders have matched their values and activities with this event theme?
5. How do you think Umeå2014 has helped the stakeholders and their organizations to achieve their goals? How could the stakeholders and their organizations work actively to strengthen the city brand?

Appendix 3 - Stakeholders Interview Question

**Influential Discourses about Umeå as a destination**
1. What is the most important touristic image/news about Umeå that has caused Umeå to receive wide media coverage?
2. To what extent do you think that visitors find the events and the activities during 2014 match with the potential of the city? Why?
3. What are the highlights in Umeå that visitors could sum up the city with in a few words? And what you want people to say about Umeå?
4. To what kind of visitors Umeå is/could be known as the preferred destination?

**Umeå2014 Brand Identity**
1. Describe Umeå2014 (for you and the organization). What is Umeå as a city to you? What do you think about being a European Capital of culture?
2. What do you think about the strengths and weakness of Umeå2014? What are over-focused and under-focused potentials of the city during this event? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?
3. How the weaknesses in terms of Umeå cultural potential have been solved in Umeå2014? Do you agree or disagree with these strategies? Why?

**Umeå2014’s Brand Platform and Core Values**
1. How your organization has been involved in Umeå2014 event?
2. How do you perceive the core values of Umeå2014 and the branding strategy? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
3. How could your organization get benefit and damage from the Umeå2014 event?

**Goals and Activities**
1. How would you like for Umeå to be understood by your visitors?
2. What is the motivation for your organization to be engaged in the creation of Umeå2014? What are you looking for in the future?
3. If you could add/increase any theme/activity to this event, what would that be? What if you could eliminate/decrease any theme/activity of Umeå2014? Why?
4. How your organization used Umeå2014 theme in your own marketing activities? Have the organization achieved the expected outcome when doing so?
5. How have your organization worked supportively to make their activities match with Umeå2014 theme? Have this been helped you to achieve your goals?
Appendix 4 - The Respondents Representatives

4.1 Umeå2014
Umeå2014 is the office leading this project located in the city hall, city center; including 25 staff. They have received the main financial budget from the municipality to run and organize the event by the concept of “Co-creation”. The project leader is only responsible for inauguration of each season as well as funding different cultural actors.

4.2 Umeå Municipality, Marketing Office
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.se, 2014).

4.3 Bildmuseet
Bildmuseet is a centre for contemporary art and visual culture as well as a place for experiences, reflection and discussion. The museum exhibits contemporary international art, photography, architecture and design, along with art historical retrospectives. Existential, political and philosophical issues are key to the programme. The exhibitions are complemented by guided tours, lectures, seminars, films and performances. Workshops and educational activities inspire creativity. Bildmuseet was one of the top candidates for the Council of Europe Museum Prize 2014 and for the Swedish Museum of the Year Prize 2014 (Bildmuseet.umu.se, 2014).

4.4 Umeå Tourist Office
Umeå Tourist Office is open all year round. Besides knowledgeable staff, it also has brochures, souvenirs and books about the region. Staff members can help with all sorts of bookings – accommodation in Umeå and the region as a whole, interesting activities, package solutions, etc. The tourist office also provides tips on the region’s sights and attractions. Umeå Tourist Office is the destination company’s organisation for private tourism. The tourist office’s mission includes the national and international marketing of Umeå and the Umeå region as a destination (VisitUmeå.se, 2014).

4.5 Kulturverket
Kulturverket is an activity within the municipality of Umeå. Their aim is to encourage children and young people to be creative, involving school pupils of different ages in arts- and culture projects. Their future work is in many ways defined by what the kids think is important. We will keep developing methods to work with children in art- and cultural projects, and to create opportunities and situations where school children can be creative and artistic (CultUmeå.com, 2014).

4.6 Såhkie Umeå Sami Association
Såhkie was founded in 1977 with the main goal of strengthening Sami interests. It’s members are Sami and people who support the Sami. Såhkie works with spreading information about the Sami people and culture. One of many such projects is Ubmejen Biejvieh, the Sami week, which been
held yearly in March since the year 2000. Sähkie also owns and manage Tráhpie – the unique Sami cultural center with cultural events, seminars, exhibitions, café and a small store (Lindblad, 2014).

4.7 Littfest
Umeå’s international literature festival Littfest started in 2007 with the ambition to eventually build a noncommercial platform for meetings and literary adventures in Sweden’s Northern regions. Behind the project were local culture profiles, librarians, publishers and academics, who later founded the non-profit, religiously and politically, independent association Littfest. The festival Littfest was both a reaction against the centralization of culture in the South as well as the Established book fairs in Sweden, who more and more had come to resemble shopping malls. Eight years later, Littfest has grown to become the largest literature festival in Sweden. Every year in March, around 100 authors arrive in Umeå to participate in a celebration of literature that holds about 50 program events dispersed over three days. The festival, which receives annual support from the Municipality of Umeå, The Swedish Arts Council, The Swedish Academy and others, is now the meeting place the founders dreamed of in 2007: A melting pot of cultural impression where the authors are closer to their readers than elsewhere, an annual literary event with the word in focus and the love of literature at center (Umeå2014, 2014).