

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**  
**BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY**

**SUSTAINABILITY AS A BRAND PROMISE:  
A CASE OF SWEDISH COMPANIES**

**Master's Thesis**

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**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY**

**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
MARKETING**

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## ABSTRACT

### SUSTAINABILITY AS A BRAND PROMISE: A CASE OF SWEDISH COMPANIES

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how and to what extent the notion of sustainability is integrated into certain brands. It reveals what facets of brand and its sources are congruent with company's sustainable strategy and approach. The study also represents companies' positioning.

The importance of sustainable development has been noticed in the international forefront in the early 1970's and has attracted enormous attention of the specialists in different areas. By today, sustainability has become widely recognized by marketers and can be considered one of the main trends that influences marketing today. With new challenges, the need for more sustainable offerings has created new opportunities. A large number of companies have developed their own sustainability strategies and approach in order to meet customers' needs.

Since brands are believed to be companies' most valuable intangible assets, sustaining comprehensive and consistent brand requires certain activities from the company's side. In this paper the level of integration of sustainability into brand's identity with the example of five Swedish companies that are ranked as top five sustainability-oriented is discussed. Furthermore, research limitations, suggestion for further studies and research implications are offered.

As a result, the main trends and findings are discussed. The study revealed that each company has integrated the sustainability notion in its brand's essence and it is in agreement with official sustainability approach. However, it also showed different levels of integration into organizational culture and different associations that companies try to create about them.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Sustainable development, Brand Identity, Sources of Brand Identity, Organizational culture, Positioning, Swedish brands.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Sweden is one of the countries that developed various sustainability philosophies as early as the end of the 19th century. Among the important historical experiences to draw on in future efforts towards sustainable development there can be noticed a structural adjustment in Sweden from an agrarian to an industrialized society and from an industrialized society to an information society, alongside the development of democracy and the building of a welfare state. The striving for social and economic development paved the way in the second half of the 20th century to a striving to achieve ecologically sustainable development <sup>1</sup>. As early as the 1960's, it was recognized by Sweden that the rapid loss of natural resources had to be confronted. It took a leading role in organizing the first UN conference on the environment - held in Stockholm in 1972. During the oil crisis of the 70's and 80's, a tremendous effort was made to find new sources of energy, create new ways to insulate buildings and develop automatic energy saving systems (Sweden and sustainability, 2012).

Over 20 years of instructing the consequences of global warming at elementary schools in Scandinavia resulted in a long-standing awareness and understanding the threats, the consequences of pollution and the price to be paid for damaging the richness and variety in flora and fauna. Scandinavians have the conviction that this time climate warnings may finally be for real. (Gad and Moss 2008).

Scandinavia has a social tradition which encourages state-initiated consensus between politicians and industry, with a reliance on entrepreneurial creativity (Carlgren, 2008). Thus, Sweden's responsible environmental consciousness is largely political and grew up in combination with the social-democratic tradition and the idea of a welfare state (Lundquist, Middleton, 2010). The Swedish government is putting substantial efforts into promoting sustainable urban development that will lead to a better environment and the

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of Government Communication, 2002

reduction of greenhouse gases, and in facilitating Swedish green tech export (Carlgren, 2008). Sweden is a country in which all political parties in the parliament – from left to right – embrace a welfare model in which relative high taxes allow for a public sector to provide healthcare, education and social security for all citizens. This welfare model can be considered as synonymous with the government driven public sector. However, the social and societal responsibility on the Swedish populous expands beyond the public sector and the term of “societal entrepreneurship” has emerged to describe initiatives taken during the late 1970s to counteract the decline of large corporate and industrial activities in local communities. Societal entrepreneurship having emerged as a reactive phenomenon on the periphery of society had grown into wide national idea and since the late 1990s, Sweden has taken in strong entrepreneurial influences with other attributes (Lundquist, Middleton, 2010).

Sweden remains one of the leaders in the world, in terms of the country's corporate responsibility performance. To a certain extent this might stem from ingrained Swedish culture and the synergy between the political and business agendas of the government and companies. Swedish companies are known for being leaders in sustainability and corporate responsibility, besides that they are also world-famous for their brands and products. Branding has become one of the most important activities and brand is the strongest representative of a company, be it a company providing services or products, it is still the brand that will determine the level of success. Established brands have a great potential for increasing the ability of companies to compete as well as generating their growth and profitability (Urde, 1994).

Kapferer (2004) notices that the importance of the branding is dictated by the contemporary materialistic society in which people want to give meaning to their consumption. It is one of a very few strategic assets available to the company that can provide a long-lasting competitive advantage (Clifton, 2004). Brand is an excellent vehicle by means of which the marketers can differentiate the product and thus create extra marketable value (Pelsmacker et al, 2004). The core offering needs to be augmented with values strive to reinforce in order to move a commodity to a brand. Starting from the 1980s the value of the company has not been measured in terms of its buildings brand only, thus it became

obvious that the real values lies outside – in the minds of potential customers (Kapferer, 2004).

## **1.2 MEET THE COMPANIES**

A constantly increasing number of companies are recognizing the role of sustainability as an vital component of their business strategy. Growing environmental, social legislation and greater wide public awareness and concerns, wide spreading media coverage and changes in social attitudes are the beacons to show the companies the trends that business is supposed to follow if it wants to keep its customer and gain new ones. When investigating sustainability with its correlation to branding five Swedish companies were chosen for the profound analysis. The companies provide different services and products but as annual Sustainable Brands Index shows there are a considerable number of companies engaged in the competition in order to be associated in the consumers' mind with a company that has accepted responsible model of thinking and promoted sustainable development. Coop, ICA, IKEA, Lantmännen and Volvo are the companies which have gained a significant success in corporate sustainability performance.

### **1.2.1 Coop**

The Swedish Cooperative Union, KF, which is the collective society for the country's 44 consumer societies, is also a retail group with grocery retail as its core business. It was founded in 1899 ([www.coop.se](http://www.coop.se)). In contrast to other European consumer co-operative movements, it benefitted from not having been destroyed or weakened by the Second World War, and so from the 1950s it became the most dynamic and innovative movement, introducing self-service, supermarkets and frozen foods and beginning structural re-organization (Birchall, 2009). KF has a long tradition of involvement in environmental issues. The focus of environmental efforts have ranged from the 1970s campaigns against littering and packaging, 1980s incipient investment in a range of organic products to the 2000s climate commitment<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.coop.se](http://www.coop.se)

KF has two main business areas – Grocery retail group and Media group. Operational areas within the grocery retail group are: Coop Butiker & Stormarknader, including Coop, Daglivs and Mataffären.se, MedMera Bank AB and Coop Inköp & Kategori with subsidiary Coop Logistik. Over three million people are members of one of the 44 nationwide consumer societies. By the societies' membership in the Swedish Cooperative Union, KF, these societies own the retail group KF with Coop as the core business. The KF Group own just over half of the country's Coop stores. The remainder of the Coop stores are own directly by 39 different consumer societies, known as retail societies. The other five societies are purely member interest societies and do not run any stores. KF and the consumer societies together form the consumer cooperative movement. Together with the retail consumer cooperative societies, Coop accounts for 21.5 percent of the entire Swedish grocery retail sector<sup>3</sup>.

Everyone can become a member of a consumer society. SEK 100 is paid as a membership fee and each member receives a MedMera card confirming membership and entitlement to participation in the member programme. Member societies must meet certain criteria. They must be a legal person, who is a politically and religiously independent legal entity with democratic governance and control<sup>4</sup>.

Coop's vision is to be obvious choice for the environmentally conscious, for customers who care about how goods and services are produced and for customers who seek healthy habits. The mission is to become the best in the market when it comes to contributing to the sustainable development of human beings and nature<sup>5</sup>.

### **1.2.2 ICA**

Hakon Swenson founds Hakonbolaget, The origin of today's ICA, Hakonbolaget, was founded by Hakon Swenson in Västerås in 1917. At the core of the ICA concept lies the idea of getting individual retailers to join forces and form purchasing centers, allowing

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<sup>3</sup> [www.coop.se](http://www.coop.se)

<sup>4</sup> In brief 2010

<sup>5</sup> Hållbarhetsredovisning 2008

them to achieve the same economies of scale as the chains by making joint purchases, establishing stores and sharing their marketing costs<sup>6</sup>.

The ICA Group is one of the Northern Europe's leading retail companies, with around 2,150 of its own and retailer-owned stores in Sweden, Norway and the Baltic countries. The Group includes ICA Sweden, ICA Norway, Rimi Baltic and Real Estate as well as ICA Bank, which offers financial services to Swedish customers. ICA AB (Sweden) is a joint venture 40 percent owned by Hakon Invest AB of Sweden and 60 percent by Royal Ahold N.V. of the Netherlands. According to a shareholder agreement, Royal Ahold and Hakon Invest jointly share controlling influence over ICA AB<sup>7</sup>.

ICA consists of not just one business model, but several. Retailing is ICA's main business and the source of its earnings. It is also where our relationship with the customer is built. ICA's revenue comes primarily from four sources. The stores, together with the goods and services supply chain, account for about 97 percent of ICA's sales. Retail real estate and banking services account for the rest. The number of stores in Sweden is 1,334 with average number of employees 6,557. ICA Sweden has four store formats: ICA Nära (Nearby), ICA Supermarket, ICA Kvantum and Maxi ICA Hypermarket. During the year 2011, another 12 pharmacies were opened as part of ICA's new Cura concept which totaled in 42 full-scale pharmacies in so called shop-in-shop in a number of bigger ICA-stores. The third ICA To Go store opened in 2011. To Go provides an alternative to fast food restaurants offering meal solutions that are easy to bring to work or take home. The concept has been developed solely for ICA to provide a tasty and nutritious alternative<sup>8</sup>.

ICA's business concept is to "make every day a little easier". Driven by profitability and high ethical standards it ensures quality and safe products and promotes a healthy lifestyle. The mission is to be "the leading retailer with a focus on food and meals"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.ica.se](http://www.ica.se)

<sup>7</sup> [www.ica.se](http://www.ica.se)

<sup>8</sup> [www.ica.se](http://www.ica.se)

<sup>9</sup> The ICA Group's Annual Report 2009

### 1.2.3 IKEA

The IKEA story begins in 1943 when it was founded by Ingvar Kamprad. It designs and sells ready-to-assemble furniture such as beds, chairs, desks, appliances and home accessories with modern Scandinavian style and design. In 1980s IKEA expands dramatically into new markets such as USA, Italy, France and the UK. Children's IKEA is introduced 1990s and the focus is on home furnishing solutions to meet the needs of families with children. In 2000s IKEA expands into even more markets such as Japan and Russia. This period also sees the successes of several partnerships regarding social and environmental projects. Their business consists of almost 180 blue- yellow stores around the world visited by nearly 300 million people.

IKEA is owned and operated by a complicated array of not-for-profit and for-profit corporations. The corporate structure is divided into two main parts: operations and franchising. Most of IKEA's operations, including the management of the majority of its stores, the design and manufacture of its furniture, and purchasing and supply functions are overseen by INGKA Holding, a private, for-profit Dutch company. Of the IKEA stores in 36 countries, 235 are run by the INGKA Holding. The remaining 30 stores are run by franchisees outside of the INGKA Holding. INGKA Holding is not an independent company, but is wholly owned by the Stichting Ingka Foundation, which Kamprad established in 1982 in the Netherlands as a tax-exempt, not-for-profit foundation. The Ingka Foundation is controlled by a five-member executive committee that is chaired by Kamprad and includes his wife and attorney<sup>10</sup>.

At IKEA the vision is to create a better everyday life for the many people. Thus, the business idea supports this vision by offering a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com)

<sup>11</sup> [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com)



#### **1.2.4 Lantmännen**

Lantmännen is one of the Nordic area's largest Groups within food, energy, machinery and agriculture. Lantmännen operates on an international market, where Sweden constitutes the foundation for the group's activities. The company conducts business operations in a total of 18 countries, and is a market leader in several business areas. Examples of Lantmännen brands include AXA, Kungsörnen, Start, Hattings, Regal and Kronfågel<sup>12</sup>.

Lantmännen is a producers' cooperative. This collective name refers to producers of goods or services collaborating in marketing, distribution, sale, processing and purchase of materials & equipment. The Group is owned by 35,000 Swedish farmers and it has over 10 000 employees and a turnover of SEK 38 billion.<sup>13</sup>

Company's vision is to make the best of the soil and offer all options for a more sound life. Lantmännen plays a significant role in some of society's biggest challenges - the transition to a sustainable energy supply, development of agriculture of the future and production of new healthy foods<sup>14</sup>.

#### **1.2.5 Volvo**

Volvo Car Corporation, or Volvo Personvagnar AB in Swedish, is a Swedish car manufacturer with its headquarter in Gothenburg of Sweden. The company was founded in 1927, originally as a subsidiary company to the Swedish bearing maker Svenska Kullagerfabriken (SKF). It became independent from SKF in 1935. Volvo Cars was owned by AB Volvo until 1999, when it was acquired by the Ford Motor Company as part of its Premier Automotive Group. Geely Holding Group then acquired Volvo from Ford in 2010. Since the brand of Volvo is shared with AB Volvo (which produces heavy trucks, buses,

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<sup>12</sup> [www.lantmannen.com](http://www.lantmannen.com)

<sup>13</sup> [www.lantmannen.com](http://www.lantmannen.com)

<sup>14</sup> [www.lantmannen.com](http://www.lantmannen.com)

construction equipment, etc.), usually one needs to specify these two companies when using Volvo (Wang, 2011).

Apart from the main car production plants in Gothenburg, Sweden and Ghent, Belgium, Volvo Car Corporation has since the 1930s, manufactured engines in Skövde, Sweden, parts in Floby, Sweden since 1957, and body components in Olofström, Sweden since 1969. Volvo Car Corporation also produces one of its models in a plant in Uddevalla, Sweden, a joint venture together with Italian Pininfarina. In 2006, Volvo Car Corporation commenced manufacturing in Chongqing, China, in a company owned jointly by the Chinese company Changan, Ford and Mazda – Changan Ford Mazda Automobile Corporation Ltd. In 2011, Volvo Car Corporation sold a total of 449,255 cars, an increase of 20.3 per cent compared to 2010. Relative to the strength of the brand, Volvo Car Corporation is a small producer, with a global market share of 1–2 percent. The largest market, the US, represented some 15 per cent of the total sales volume in 2011, followed by Sweden (13 percent), China (10 percent), Germany (7%) and the UK (7percent).<sup>15</sup>

Volvo's vision it to be the world's most progressive and desired luxury car brand. The business strategy success will be driven by making life less complicated for people, while strengthening our commitment to safety and the environment<sup>16</sup>.

### **1.3 SUSTAINABILITY NOTION**

The importance of sustainability came to the international forefront as early as 1972 during the United Nations conference in Sweden. The result of the meeting was formulation of a set of basic principles that established three comprehensive pillars of sustainability:

1. There exists interdependence between human beings and the natural environment.
2. There is a link between economic development, social development, and environmental protection.
3. There is a need for a global vision and common principles (Caan 2011).

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<sup>15</sup> [www.volvocars.com](http://www.volvocars.com)

<sup>16</sup> [www.volvocars.com](http://www.volvocars.com)

Later on in 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), popularized the term Sustainable Development and the most celebrated formulation of sustainable development (Atkinson et al 1999) was given with the publication of the book entitled *Our Common Future*, which is also known as the Brundtland Report. This report recommended eight key issues for urgent action in order to ensure responsible and sustainable development now as well as in the future. These eight concerns included Industry, Food Security, Species and Ecosystems, The Urban Challenge, Managing the Commons, Energy, and Conflict & Environmental Degradation (Brundtland 1987).

Most interpretations of sustainability take as their starting point the consensus reached by the WCED in 1987, which defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”<sup>17</sup>. However, it must be noticed that significant progress has been made in clarifying the many controversial issues that have emerged since the formulation of the problem in the Brundtland Report of 1987. Hence, one decade later there have been great advances in both the theoretical aspects of desirable development and the ways in which that development might be indicated (Atkinson and Pearce 1998). In 1991 the World Wide Fund for Nature, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and UNEP interpreted the concept of sustainable development as “improving the quality of human life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems”<sup>18</sup>.

As a result of official responses to both the Brundtland Commission and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, most governments have adopted sustainable development as a national goal (Atkinson et al, 1999). In May 1999, the Government published “A better quality of life” – a strategy for sustainable development for the United Kingdom. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It means

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<sup>17</sup> Towards a green economy 2011

<sup>18</sup> Towards a green economy 2011

achieving social, economic and environmental objectives at the same time<sup>19</sup>. As stated by Her Majesty's Government, sustainability seeks to “enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations” (Her Majesty's Government 2005 cited in Jones et al 2008). Such integration and adoption of the notion of sustainable development by governments have been the motivation for developing environmental accounting<sup>20</sup>. It has also resulted in a number of concepts such as the ‘sustainable business’ or ‘corporate environmental responsibility’ (Atkinson 1999).

Sustainable development is undoubtedly a complex notion open to numerous interpretations (Atkinson et al 1999) and it is difficult to give a unique definition of sustainability and/or of sustainable development because of the availability of alternatives that it is possible to find in the literature (Biondo 2010). A study conducted by the Board on Sustainable Development of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences sought to bring some order and analyze what sought to sustain and what they sought to develop, the relationship between the two, and the time horizon of the future. Thus under the heading “what is to be sustained,” the board identified three major categories—nature, life support systems, and community—as well as intermediate categories for each, such as Earth, environment, and cultures. Similarly, there were three quite distinct ideas about what should be developed: people, economy, and society (Kates et al 2005). Weitzman (1999) notices that sustainability has become a popular catchword in recent years; and the word itself is a subject to various interpretations. The meaning of sustainability is the subject of intense debate among environmental and resource economists (Ayres et al n.d.). Development has been referred to as a process of portfolio management.<sup>21</sup> While there is no single unified theory of sustainable development, Atkinson et al (1999) notice that all theories share a common theme in recognizing that future welfare or well-being is determined by what happens to wealth over time. The creatively ambiguous definition by WCED remains the most widely accepted (Kates et al 2005).

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<sup>19</sup> DETR 2000

<sup>20</sup> The World Bank 2005

<sup>21</sup> The World Bank 2005

The notion of sustainability has approximately 40 years history and appeared in environmental literature in the 1970s. There are definitions which recognize the lack of natural resources and fragile ecosystems on the one hand. On the other hand there is more wide understanding which includes social and economic issues to be tackled in order to meet human needs. In my research I will consider sustainability as term encompassing the following facets: economic development, social development, and environmental consideration.

## **1.4 SUSTAINABILITY MARKETING**

### **1.4.1 The notion of sustainability marketing**

Recently the natural environment has become recognized as a “key variable” in the “marketing environment” (Sodhi 2011). Sustainability can be considered to be one of the key trends that shape marketing today, but at the same time one can notice that it is one of the most significant problems marketing practice face today. Sustainable marketing is a phenomenon dictated by the changes in attitudes of customers and society that wants more than just product and service performance - they want it with a conscience.<sup>22</sup>

Lepla and Parker (1999) notice that as the world get smaller, society will demand companies and their brand respond to issues that once were thought to be outside the corporate landscape. Thus, every U.S. company, for instance, is now expected by the public at wide to work towards environmental sustainability, or, at a minimum, to do nothing that would harm the environment. Beyond the environment, one of the responsibilities of a brand aware company is to keep watch societal issues and determine what, if any, issues the brand needs to address (Lepla and Parker 1999). Erik Hedén, head of the survey at IDG Research, points out that sustainability and social responsibility has emerged as a “vital factor for companies to attract customers, employees and investors and to boost corporate image” (Nylander 2011).

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<sup>22</sup> The Sigma Project, n.d.

Many companies understand the need for sustainable development and are making progress towards this end, driven by stakeholder concerns, government regulations, supply chain imperatives, altruistic concerns and/or perceived competitive advantages (Stuart 2011). Companies that do not clearly state and acknowledge environmental sustainability will weaken their brands (Lepla and Parker 1999). Obermiller et al (2008) reminds as sustainable practices have affected the competitive value of brands. Some firms have clearly suffered, at times, because they were perceived not to be sustainable in their behavior (e.g., Exxon, Enron, McDonalds, Nike) while other firms have had at least modest success because the perception was that they were sustainable (e.g., Body Shop, Patagonia, Green Mountain Coffee).

However, the continued growth of consumption in the 1990s, together with the global financial crisis and materials shortages have tested “the marketing system’s ability to fully meet its objective of achieving customer satisfaction, long-term profitability, community satisfaction and accountability to the stakeholder” (Sodhi 2011). According White (2009), building sustainability into the rhythm of its business goes beyond social investment programs, addressing sustainability in product design, manufacturing operations, employee engagement, stakeholder partnerships. There is a notion that the sustainability marketing has a nexus with the inclusive business that succeeds to integrate people in living poverty into the value chain as consumers and producers, thus making a positive contribution to the development of company, the local population and the environment (Gradl and Knobloch 2010). Sustainable marketing can and should only result from the adoption of sustainable business practices that create better businesses, better relationships and a better world (Anderson 2011). Sustainable business is often loosely defined as operating in a way that could be maintained indefinitely without degrading the larger system (Obermiller et al 2008).

### **1.4.2 Relationship between marketing and sustainability**

The challenge of clear definition of the relationship between sustainability and marketing derives from the fact that both of them are often understood in different ways. Kyle (2004) points out that there are “as many definitions of marketing as there are marketers”.

There can be mentioned two basic and contrasting meanings of marketing. The first one is accusing marketing for its encouraging consumerism. Marketing has been at the center of criticism for unethical activities. Lacniak and Michie (1979) even see the broadened concept of marketing as a danger to diminish social order as “the marketing has penetrated through the borders of its initial task of efficient distributing of economic goods”. It is also sometimes viewed as being “manipulative, devious, unethical and inherently distasteful” (Brown 1995 cited in Jones *et al* 2008). Many critics see it as promoting materialism thus encouraging people to work hard in order to obtain “seemingly prized lifestyles” and view marketers as corrupt agents of commerce aiming to mislead and manipulate customers (Jones *et al* 2008). Some associate marketing with ever growing consumption and creating desire for unnecessary things. Besides that cynics might say marketing concept to be built having in mind obsolescence, limited durability and endless product or service extensions that keep people coming back for more (The Sigma Project n.d.). Kyle (2004), however, argues that though some may see marketing as “a series of tactics or gimmicks” promoting and advertising, analyzing customers and the business environment, identifying key opportunities are not forgotten or cancelled so there should not be the equal sign between marketing and sales.

Another point of view seeing marketing as the basics of business philosophy is represented by Kotler *et al* (2012) which argues that marketing concept focuses on customer needs, and integrates all the marketing activities for creating lasting relationship. It is a social and managerial process which results in exchanging products and values that are needed. Some authors take into account MSN Encarta Dictionary definition which describes marketing as “the business activity of presenting goods and services in such a way as to make them desirable” (MSN 2007 cited in Jones *et al* 2008).

As it was discussed in the previous section the definition of sustainability has derived from Brundtland Commission Report and developed over time. While sustainability has attracted a lot of political support and became applied in many different areas it has also faces criticism. Jones *et al* (2008) refers to Robinson's (2004) attempt to summarize the critical points. The concept of sustainability is vague and means different things to different people; it attracts hypocrites that use the language of sustainability to promote their actions; it fails to recognize that current economic system is unsustainable itself and draws attention from the need for fundamental social and political change (Robinson 2004 cited in Jones *et al* 2008).

The Sigma project argues that though at first sustainability and marketing might seem incompatible they can offer each other a lot of opportunities. Marketing has the ability to understand customer expectations, behaviors and patterns and to influence them by persuasive communication and to influence product sourcing, design and packaging. Sustainability offers marketers new opportunities: the potential to build reputation and brand value; outstanding loyalty; meaningful differentiation and an impetus for radical innovation<sup>23</sup>. Marketers have a chance to impact on those areas critical to engagement with sustainability – processing, packaging and distributing a product. Their communication skills keep the customer and the rest of the company informed on the viability of sustainability practices. The role of the marketer in enhancing responsible consumption becomes more highlighted due to her chance to meet opportunities to (customers, unmet needs, products, reduce costs etc.) or threats (competing offers, disloyal customers) (Sodhi 2011). White (2009) adds to this engagement another pillar of responsibility that means to operate ethically, and ensure that products and operations are safe for humans and the environment. Though technology is often hailed as a solution to the environmental problems, it is equally as important is creativity and the marketing profession is well placed to rise to that challenge (Williams, n.d.).

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<sup>23</sup> The Sigma Project, n.d.



### 1.4.3 Sustainability marketing challenges

Sustainable marketing is still a new area thus there are still relatively few experiences and extensive case studies to draw on. No one can deny the fact that it is not an area without risk. Companies claiming sustainable credentials may find themselves under even more exacting scrutiny and vulnerable to charges of green wash or hypocrisy if found wanting. It is still necessary to do the usual marketing homework of understanding the customer (The Sigma Project (n.d.)).

Many companies are already taking some useful steps e.g. good employment practices, supporting the local community, reducing environmental impact. But, as stated by Sodhi (2011), “doing a bit is not enough”: a few trees planted or charity is just lip service if your products, services and business operations are part of the problem. In most cases this means some fundamental rethinking about how you operate. Setting new standards is what people often think of as sustainability marketing, but there is a danger if it is only about making your virtue more visible. Even if it is absolutely genuine, people do not particularly like companies making capital out of the issue because it seems like profiteering (Grant 2008). Besides that, Williams (n.d.) calls upon not to be myopic and realize that sustainability isn’t a marketing tactic, it’s a business ethos. Thus a ‘green offering’ may not be sufficient unless the business is committed and sustainability impacts are assessed and addressed across the board (Williams n.d.).

Furthermore, Arthur D. Little report conducted among major international companies including Sony, P&G, HP, and Vodaphone was aimed to explore how leading companies are using sustainability-driven innovation to win tomorrow’s customers. The report suggests that relatively few companies display the capability to pay explicit attention when setting strategy and designing products. The main barriers to sustainability initiatives are considered to be the followings: a lack of understanding among strategists of the significance of social and environmental trends; internal and external skepticism, often combined with a perception that these activities involve high risk and uncertainty; an absence of appropriate business models, particularly for emerging markets; a tendency to

use available capital for “more of the same” rather than new business models; and, an unwillingness to finance new projects, particularly at the bottom of the business cycle (Little 2005). Sodhi (2011) adds that, unfortunately, in many companies, marketing teams, which are best suited to create this shift in thinking, have been left out of the process of driving sustainability agendas. Obermiller et al (2008) reminds that though marketing strategy can be complex, involving a wide variety of environmental concerns and dozens of tactics, in essence the goal of marketing strategy is to attain a position that is desirable, different, and defensible.

The purpose with this paper is to investigate how Swedish companies which are ranked as top five sustainability-oriented companies manage to interrelate the notion of sustainability into their brand identity when positioning themselves in the Swedish market. The experiences and tactics of the companies will be examined; the differences and level of success will be discussed.

The research will be following two main questions. Firstly, the sustainability approach of the company, its sustainability activities and the way they are integrated into the company’s culture will be analyzed. Secondly, relevant elements of brand identity and its sources will be investigated in order to explore their bond with the sustainability approach.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 BRAND DEFINITION**

Brand definition is one of the hottest points of disagreements between experts especially when it comes to measurement. According to Karpferer (2004), brands are intangible assets, assets that produce added benefits for the business. Brand is one of a few strategic assets that the firm has invested in and developed over time (Keller 2003). Brands are powerful entities because they blend functional, performance-based values with emotional values (De Chernatony 2006). From a marketing perspective the brand is more complex notion than at first it might seem. The brand works at different levels, conveying information about what is on offer, what the product is meant for and what the product says about the buyer (Sagar et al 2011).

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) believe that the most distinctive skills of professional marketers is needed to build and manage brands, which consist of name, term, sign, symbol, or combinations of these, that identifies the maker of seller of a product or service.

Brands exist mainly by virtue of a continuous process whereby the co-ordinated activities across the organization concerned with delivering a cluster of values are interpreted and internalized by customers (De Chernatony 2006) To convey emotional content, the right symbols and imagery is needed. Humans are very sensitive to subconscious cues in what we see to interpret the world around us (Sagar et al 2011).

De Chernatony (2006) offers brand as legal instrument as one of the brand interpretations. From the legal perspective the Swedish law states in the 1§ Varumärkeslag 1960:644 (which is the law for brands) that a brand can consist of all signs that can be reproduced graphical, such as words, names, symbols, letters, numbers and the form or look on a product or its packaging with the certainty that the signs can separate products from one organizations to another (Melin 1999 cited in Algotsson et al 2008)

## **2.2 BRAND IDENTITY**

Keller (2003) suggests brand identities, sometimes called brand elements, being those trademark devices that serve to identify and differentiate the brand. The main brand elements are brand names, URLs, logos, symbols, character, spokespeople, slogans, jingles, packages and signage.

Brand identity marks the first step in the brand positioning framework; it specifies the angle used by the brand to attack the a market in order to grow its market share at the expense of competition. Brand identity should not be bounded by the graphical identity charters. The latters define the norms for visual recognition of the brand and in case of being formulated before defining the identity they may constrain the brand (Kapferer 2004).

According to Kapferer (2004), brand identity can be clearly defined once the following questions are tackled:

- a. What is the brand's particular vision and aim?
- b. What makes it different?
- c. What need is the brand fulfilling?
- d. What is its permanent nature?
- e. What are its values?
- f. What is its field of competence? Of legitimacy?
- g. What are the signs which make the brand recognizable?

Having this questions answered by a company in a special document would help better brand management in the medium term. A clear definition of what brand actually means would help the creating of graphical identity. However, Kapferer warns that brand identity should not be bounded by the graphical identity charters. The latter defines the norms for visual recognition of the brand and in case of being formulated before defining the identity they may constrain the brand (Kapferer 2004).

Aaker (1996) developed four perspectives of brand identity which goal is to help strategists enrich, clarify and diversify the brand identity. He considers brand identity to be “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain”. Brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by involving functional, emotional and self-expressive benefits. Brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives. Not every brand has to use all of the perspectives. The dimensions will be discussed detailed later while talking about sources of brand identity. The four perspectives are:

- a. The brand-as-product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, user/ users and country of origin);
- b. Brand-as-organization (organizational attributes and local versus global);
- c. Brand-as-person (brand personality and brand customer relationship);
- d. Brand-as-symbol (visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage);

The matter of values attracts attention not only of Kapferer (2004) and Aaker (1996) but a number of different authors which highlight its essence. Lepla and Parker (1999) refer values to the speakers of the commitment a brand makes to the society at large. Since a brand and its customers operate within society, what values a brand uses in its societal interactions will also have an impact on its customer relationships. Values can strongly influence customer preference and loyalty (Lepla and Parker 1999). According to Urde (2009), rooted core values with track records supporting a brand promise represent the essence of a corporate brand, guiding internal and external corporate brand building and management. Keller (2003) suggests that core brand values are those set of abstract associations (attributes and benefits) that characterize the five to ten most important aspects of dimensions of a brand. Brand mantra is often useful to provide further focus as to what a brand represents, it is an articulation of the “heart and soul” of the brand. De Chernatony (2006) believes that values are one of the components of a powerful vision, and these are recognized as being part of the organization’s culture (De Chernatony 2006). Urde (2009) suggests that values related to a brand can be looked at from three viewpoints:

- a. Values related to the organization.
- b. Values that summarize the brand.

- c. Values as they are perceived by customers.

### **2.3 CORPORATE BRAND IDENTITY**

A corporate marketing philosophy represents a logical stage of marketing's evolution (Balmer, Greyser, 2006). A shift in marketing emphasis from product brands to corporate branding is one of the changes that businesses make as they move toward globalization. The ground rules for competition change when companies can no longer base their strategy on a predictable market or a stable preferential product range. Differentiation requires positioning, not products, but the whole corporation (Hatch, Schultz, 2003). The transition from focusing on products to concentrating the company's activities around brands often results in a new strategic outlook (Urde, 1994).

A corporate brand is a projection of the amalgamated values of a corporation that enable it to build coherent, trusted relationships with stakeholders. A successful corporate brand flags to stakeholders a set of principles that the organization stands for and that add value to the ongoing relationship (De Chernatony, 2006). According to Hatch and Schulz (2003), corporate branding works, when it expresses the values and/or sources of desire that attract key stakeholders to the organization and encourage them to feel a sense of belonging to it.

Corporate branding differs from product branding in terms that the focus of attention is on corporate brand and the company managed by CEO and delivered by the whole company. It attracts attention and again support of multiple stakeholders. Communications include total corporate communication mix having in mind long-term aims. The importance of branding is rather strategic than functional (Balmer, 2001 cited in Hatch, Schultz, 2003).

Hatch and Schultz (2003) define three elements form the foundation of corporate branding. These are:

- a. Strategic vision – the central idea behind the company that embodies and expresses top management's aspiration for what the company will achieve in the future.
- b. Organizational culture – the internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embody the heritage of the company and communicate its meanings to its members;

- c. Corporate images – views of the organization developed by its stakeholders; the outside world’s overall impression of the company including the views of customers, shareholders, the media, the general public, and so on.

Balmer and Greyser (2006) state that the philosophy of corporate-level marketing should permeate how people in the organization think and behave on its behalf and introduce a revised corporate marketing mix (the 6Cs) which can be extended to the 11 Cs and which consists of:

- Character which includes key tangible and intangible assets of the organization as well as organizational activities, markets served, corporate ownership and structure, organizational type, corporate philosophy and corporate history;
- Culture which refers to the collective feeling of employees as to what they feel they are in the setting of the entity. These beliefs are derived from the values, beliefs and assumptions about the organization and its historical roots and heritage;
- Communication which relates to the various outbound communications channels deployed by organizations to communicate with customers and other constituencies.
- Conceptualizations which refer to perceptions (conceptualizations) of the corporate brand by customers and other key stakeholder groups.
- Constituencies suggests that many customers also belong to one or indeed many organizational constituencies or stakeholder groups (employees, investors, local community, etc.) and also comes with a realization that the success of an organization (and in some cases a “license” to operate) is dependent on meeting the wants and needs of such groups.
- Covenant means that corporate brand is underpinned by a powerful (albeit informal) contract, which can be compared to a covenant in that customers and other stakeholder groups often have a religious-like loyalty to the corporate brand.

When the brand is strongly endorsed by the corporation, this involves a lot of internal ‘soul searching’ to understand what firm stands for and how it can enact the corporate values across all its range (De Chernatony 2006). Core values rooted in the value foundation of the organization are beacons in the management of a corporate brand and the organization

can be seen as a source for differentiation and the foundation of values and promises (Urde 2009). Hatch and Schultz, (2003) also agree that the values and emotions symbolized by the organization become key elements of differentiation strategies. Urde (2009), however, warns that the foundation of a corporate brand risks being undermined by hollow core values and empty promises.

### **2.3.1 Sustainable corporate brand**

The sustainable corporate brand is defined as a corporate brand whose promise or covenant has sustainability as a core value; sustainability has implications for the way in which a sustainable corporate brand is communicated and understood by stakeholders (Stuart 2011). Though many companies are making progress towards sustainability the link between the corporate brand and sustainability is not always clearly articulated in this process.

According to Stuart (2011), without a normative approach to sustainability, the organization does not necessarily follow sustainability statements with behavior. For some companies, a normative approach to sustainability is a major challenge. Too often, organizations simply develop “add on” strategies and then state that they are a sustainable company. This usually means focusing attention on peripheral issues such as recycling paper and turning off lights while deeper issues such as the sustainability of materials used in products and workplace bullying are overlooked (Stuart 2011). Stuart (2011) suggests that such elements as language of sustainability should be adopted. Development of a sustainable supply chain is a major issue for any organization contemplating the development of a sustainable corporate brand, particularly in cases where the materials are sourced globally. Products should also be sustainable which can cause some difficulties to the organization since it is not always easy to demonstrate the benefits in the case of sustainable products (Stuart 2011)

Communication of the sustainable corporate brand implies that as well as changing the discourse and ensuring the corporate story is understood and accepted by organizational members, member identification with the organization is critical in effecting changes that will led to a behavior consistent with the sustainable corporate brand (Stuart, 2011).



### **2.3.2 The importance of organizational culture**

One of the challenges of brand management is ensuring that staff has values that concur with those of the firm's brands (De Chernatony 2006). Many organizations try to manage corporate images through a mix of corporate advertising, corporate storytelling, customer relations management and other marketing communication and PR techniques (e.g. press conferences, staged media events). However, as stated by Hatch and Schultz (2003), some researchers have argued that the primary effect of these efforts is to be found among organizational members themselves. In principle, a corporate brand cannot be stronger externally than it is internally (Urde 2009). To encourage brand success, managers should not focus solely on characterizing their brand externally. Rather, they are more likely to gain staff commitment (De Chernatony,2006). Culture manifests itself in the ways employees all through the ranks feel about the company they are working for (Hatch and Schultz 2003).

The ability to create, develop and protect brands as strategic resources is a competence and a mindset of the organization. Uncovering core values and understanding the dynamics of a track record are steps towards achieving this mindset (Urde 2009). One of the components of a powerful vision is the brand's values, and these are recognized as being part of the organization's culture (De Chernatony 2006).

The importance of employees to corporate branding and the need to better understand their behavior and thus the organizational culture of the corporation have received particular emphasis in recent work (Hatch and Schultz 2003). According to Gupta (2011), organizational culture may influence individual commitment and performance by setting the practices and values for a positive, meaningful work. De Chernatony (2006) also states that nowadays challenges demands brands being managed by teams rather than individuals.

## **2.4 IDENTITY AND IMAGE**

One should distinguish brand image and brand identity. Brand image is on the receiver's side. The image refers to the way in which these groups decode all of the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand (Kapferer, 2004). Brand image is passive and looks to the past (Aaker, 1996). Brand image is what perceptions people have regarding to a particular brand and it is then shaped by the company actions or non-actions. It can be provider-driven, product-driven, and user-driven or sometimes brand image is influenced by the manufacturer's name besides the brand's own personality (Sagar et al, 2011).

Identity precedes image, it is on the sender's side. Image is both the result and interpretation of the former. The identity concept serves to highlight the fact that with time brands gain their independence and own meaning, even though they may start out as mere products names (Kapferer, 2004).

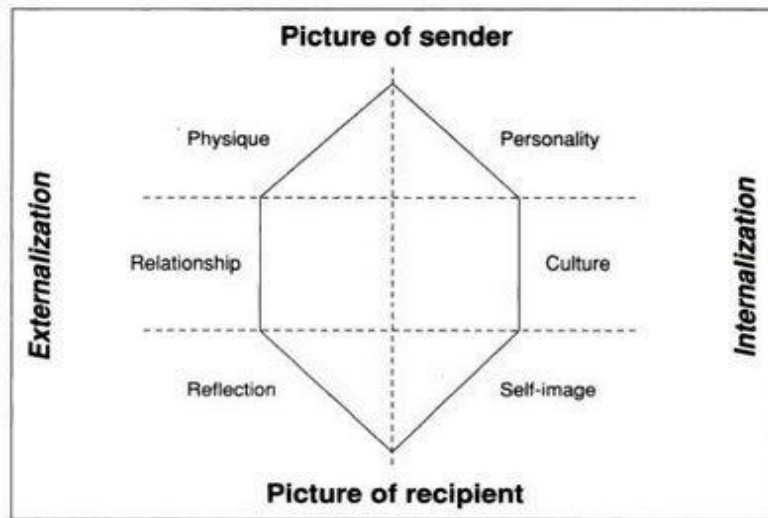
## **2.5 BUILDING BRAND IDENTITY**

### **2.5.1 Kapferer's Identity Prism**

According to Kapferer, communication theory is totally relevant when the focus of interest is brand since the latter speaks about the product and perceived as a source of product, services and satisfaction. Constructivist school of theorizing about communication says that "when one communicates, one builds representations of who speaks (source re-presentation), of who is the addressee (recipient re-presentation), and what specific relation the communication builds between them" (Kapferer, 2004).

Brand identity can be represented by a hexagonal prism that has six facets of brand's physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection and self-image (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 - Brand Identity Prism



(Source: Kapferer, 2004, p. 107)

The physique and personality form the picture of sender. Physical features are the ones that make a brand distinguishable from the others. Defining the very physical aspect is the first step in developing a brand: What is it concretely? What does it do? What does it look like? Brand personality is a character built by the brand itself as a result of its communication. The easiest way to create a personality for a brand is to give a brand a spokesman or a figurehead, whether real or symbolic. Brand personality should not be confused with the customer reflected image (Kapferer 2004).

Culture and relationship create the connection between the sender and the recipient. Relationship is a logical extension of the idea of a brand's personality; through engaging in a relationship, customers are able to resolve ideas about their self (De Chernatony 2006). Every product derives from its own culture. It is the set of values that inspire the brand. This essential aspect is at the core of a brand. The culture plays a significant role in the differentiation of brands. A brand is also a relationship. This is particularly true for the brands in the service and retail industry. This facet defines the mode of conduct: the way a brand acts, delivers services, relates to its customers (Kapferer 2004).

The picture of the recipient is formed by reflection and self-image facets. A brand will always tend to build a reflection or an image of the buyer or user which it seems to be addressing. However, reflection is not a target, though there is a quite frequent confusion about it when

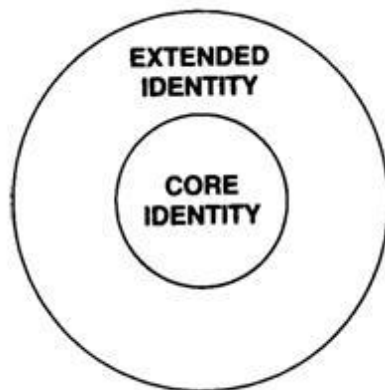
organizations find it hard to separate the reflection from the target. If reflection targets outward mirror (they are...), the self-image targets own internal mirror (I am...) (Kapferer, 2004).

The brand identity prism also includes a vertical division. The facets to left are the social facets of brand thus outward expression. The attributes to the right are those that incorporated within the brand itself, within its spirit.

### **2.5.2 Core Identity & Extended Identity**

Aaker (1996) explains the identity of the brand equity as consisting of a core identity and an extended identity (Figure 2.2). The identity elements are organized into enduring patterns of meaning, often around the core identity elements.

Figure 2.2 – The Identity Structure



(Source: Aake, 1996, p. 86)

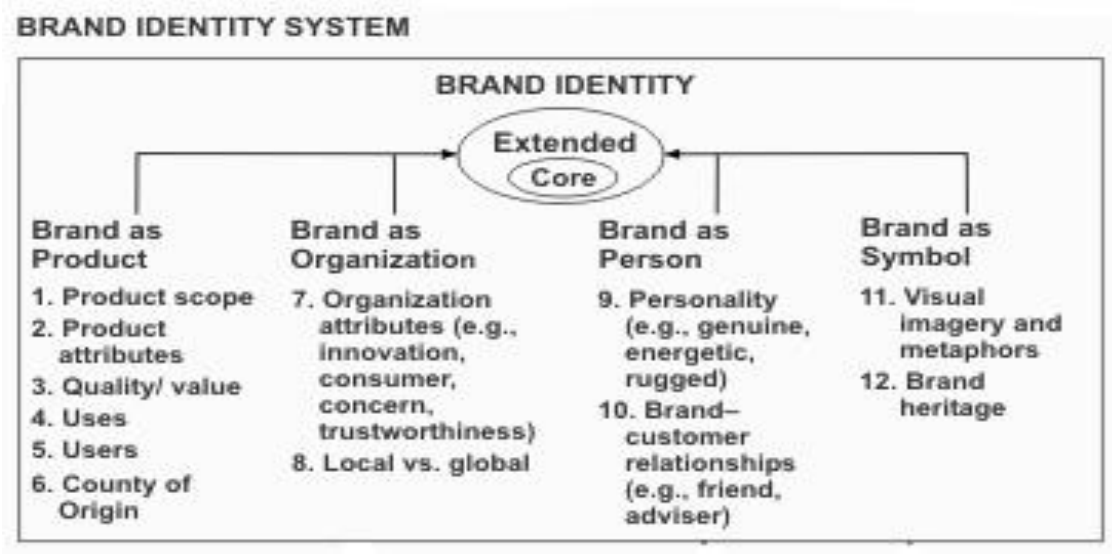
The core identity which is more resistant to change constrains the associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets and products even if brand position and thus communication strategies may change. The core identity should contribute to the value proposition and to the brand's basis for credibility. It can be an advanced technology, quality, value or innovation.

The extended identity includes elements that insure texture and completeness. The extended identity makes it easier to portray the brand since the core identity does not possess enough details to perform all of the functions of a brand identity. Examples of extended identity elements are personality, logotype, slogan, relationship and product scope (Aaker 1996).

### 2.5.3 Sources of Identity

Trying to define the specifics of a brand's substance and intrinsic values naturally requires an understanding of what a real brand is about, and the best way to do it is to discover its sources of identity. Kapferer (2004) states that one should start from typical products (or services) endorsed by the brand and go into the brand name, brand characters, visual symbols and logotypes, geographical and historical roots, brand's creator and advertising. As it was mentioned above, Aaker (1996) sees brand identity from four perspectives.

Figure 2.3 – Brand Identity Planning Model



(Source: Aaker 1996, 79)

#### 2.5.3.1 Product-related associations

According to Kapferer (2004) brand injects its values in the production and distribution. Aaker (1996) marks six elements of this perspective. The first is a product scope which creates associations with product class. Then goes product related attributes which directly

related to the purchase or use of product and can provide functional and sometimes emotional benefits. Quality and Value are interrelated, enrich the concept and provide either the price of admission or the linchpin of the competition (the brand with the highest quality wins). Next two elements stand for associations with use occasion and users themselves. The latter is to position a brand by a type of user and can imply a value proposition and a brand personality. Aaker (1996), same as Kapferer (2004), agrees that country or region of origin and historical roots can also affect the brand identity. Aaker (1996) warns strategists against following the product-attribute fixation trap but admits that product-related associations will always be an important part of brand identity.

#### **2.5.3.2 Organization associations**

These are built by the people, culture, values and programs of the company and the focus lies on the organization behind the offer rather than on the product itself. Organizational attributed are more enduring and more resistant to competitive claims than are product attributes (Aaker 1996). Kapferer (2004) says that since brand is a plan, a vision and a project developed and written down by the organization the latter plays an important role in its formation.

#### **2.5.3.3 Brand-as-Person**

The brand as a person perspective suggests a brand identity that is richer and more interesting since it can be perceived as being competent, fun, humorous, casual and formal. It helps to create self-expressive benefits; affect relationships between people, may help communicate a product attribute and thus contribute to functional benefits (Aaker 1996). Kapferer (2004) highlights the importance of the brand creator since it is the creator's ideas and are transferred to brand features. Brand personality can help to sustain brand uniqueness (De Cheratony 2006). However, one wrong move not only tarnishes a person's reputation but also that of the company's he is endorsing (Moeen 2006).

#### **2.5.3.4 Brand-as-Symbol**

A strong symbol can be the cornerstone of a brand identity and provide cohesion and structure to an identity and make it much easier to gain recognition and recall. There are three types of symbols: visual, metaphors and the brand heritage. Symbols involving visual imagery can be memorable and powerful. Metaphor makes brand more meaningful

representing a functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits. A vivid, meaningful heritage also can represent the essence of the brand (Aaker 1996). Kapferer (2004) considers the visual symbols to an expression of the identity that can help the consumer to understand brand's culture and personality. When companies change logos, it usually means that they are to be transformed.

Lepla and Parker (1999) suggest another brand model which is called integrated and includes organization drivers (mission, values, story) as the heart of the brand, brand drivers (principle, personality, associations) and brand conveyors (communications, strategy, products).

## **2.6 POSITIONING**

A brand's positioning is a key concept in its management and it is based on one fundamental principle: all choices are comparative. A product's position is the way the product is defined by consumers on important attributes. Consumers are overloaded with information and they cannot reevaluate products every time they make a buying decision. To simplify the process, consumers organize products or services into categories and "position" them in their mind (Kotler et al 2012). Positioning is a method for showing how your company or product relate to others in the marketplace and it can be developed differentiating by category and differentiating by product (Lepla and Parket 2012). De Chernatony (2006) says also a clearly understood organizational culture that also provides a basis for differentiating a brand in a way that is often welcomed by customers.

Positioning a vital to brand management because it takes the basic tangible aspects of the product and actually builds the intangible one in the form of an image in people's mind (Temporal 2002).

### **2.6.1 Brand identity and positioning**

The first step in the brand positioning framework, according to Kapferer (2004) is marked by brand identity; it specifies the angle used by the brand to attack market in order to grow its market share at the expense of competition. Identity and positioning are interrelated and cannot fully present a brand separately. Positioning focuses mostly on the product itself regardless other possible sources of identity. Positioning does not reveal brand's richness of meaning nor reflect all of its potential. It does not say a word about communication style, form or spirit. Positioning controls only words and allows communications to be entirely dictated by creativity which brand language should not only result from (Kapferer, 2004).

### **2.6.2 Positioning a brand**

As stated by Kapferer (2004), positioning is a common way to distinguish brands. Positioning a brand means emphasizing the distinctive characteristics that make it different from its competitors. Positioning reminds that all consumer choices are made on the basis of comparison. It results from analytical process of answering the four following questions:

1. A brand for what? This refers to the brand promise and consumer benefit aspect.
2. A brand for whom? This refers to the target aspect.
3. A brand for when? This refers to the time when the product will be used.
4. A brand against whom? This question defines the main competitors.

Kapferer (2004) mentions two stages of positioning process; firstly, the organization must indicate to what category the brand should be associated and compared; secondly, the organization must indicate what the brands essential differences are in comparison to the other products and brands of that category.

### **2.6.3 Positioning strategies**

Brand positioning is at the heart of marketing strategy. It involves finding the proper "location" in the minds of a group of consumers or market segment so that they think about a product or service in the "right" or desired way. Market segmentation involves dividing the market into distinct groups of homogeneous consumers who have similar needs and consumer behavior and thus require similar marketing mixes (Keller 2003, 120).



De Cheratony (2006) offers several characteristics of a powerful brand positioning strategy. Firstly, it should be centered ideally on one functional attribute or, if necessary, a couple. Secondly, it should be recognized that positioning is not what is done to a brand, but rather what results in the customer's mind. Thirdly, it should focus on functional benefits valued by customers, rather those valued by managers.

Although complex and multi-layered brand positioning models and frameworks can be useful, brand positioning, according to Thompson (2004), must always be capable of being explained and expressed in couple of words, a sharp sentence or a clear image – not an advertising end line or tag line but the core idea of the brand.

Kotler and Armsrtong (2012) refers the full positioning of a brand to the brand's value proposition – the full mix of benefits on which a brand is differentiated and positioned. Kapferer (2004) defined positioning as one of the tools needed to manage the brand being the brand's unique compelling competitive proposition.

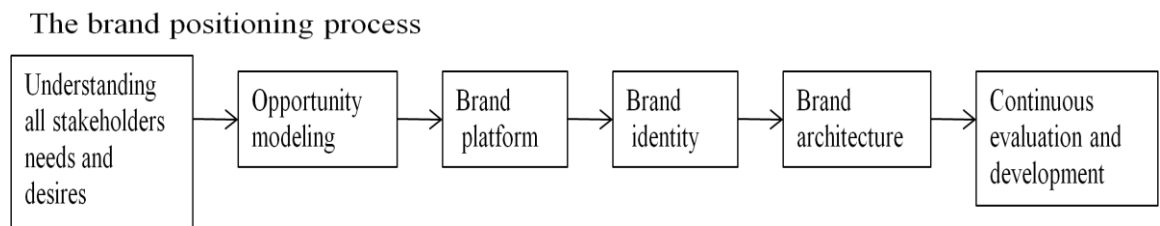
Positioning is competition oriented and the standard positioning formula is as follows (Kapferer, 2004):

- a. For... (definition of target market)
- b. Brand X is ... (definition of frame of reference and subjective category)
- c. Which gives the most ... (promise or consumer benefit)
- d. Because of ... (reason to believe)

The process of brand positioning is described by Kapferer (2004) in five phases. The understanding phase is about identifying all potential added values for the brand based on its identity, roots, heritage and prototypes, as well as its current image. The exploration phase is about suggesting scenarios for the brand and finding brand platform (standpoint, vision, mission, know-how, territory, typical products, reflection etc). The test phase is the time when scenarios are either refined or eliminated. The strategic evaluation takes the form of comparison of scenarios based on criteria, followed by the economic evaluation of potential sales and profits. The fifth phase is that of implementation and activation once the platform has been chosen and drawn up. After positioning is planed the communication channels and tools are to tackles (Kapferer 2004).

Temporal (2002) finds the following template to be the most practical: *Brand X* is better than *Competitive set* (within category, industry etc.) for *Target market* because it *Strategic Competitive* with result that *Key proposition* (emotional and rational benefits to be experiences by target audience).

Figure 2.6 – The Brand Positioning Process



(Source:Thompson 2004, p.81)

The are many methodologies for brand positioning (Thompson, 2004), developed also by big companies (Kapferer, 2004), but according to Thompson (2004), the basic process involves (Figure 5): understanding all stakeholders in the broadest sense, both internally and externally; opportunity modeling having relevance differentiation credibility and stretch in mind; forming brand platform with its clear core idea; building brand architecture which orchestrates the relationship between the corporate brand and its business; continuous development and evaluation. Brown et al (2006) refers positioning to “all possible organizational attributes and characteristics, which of these should the organization attempt to communicate to others”. The question is which attributes the organization wants stakeholders to hold as a strong associations. Balmer and Greyser (2006) call this phenomenon as corporate communication – “what we say we are”. Brown et al (2006) suggests that it is organizational leader who directs the stream and nature of external communication of mental associations about the company.

## **2.7 SUMMARY**

Since the purpose of this study is to examine how companies connect the notion of sustainability to the brand's core competence while building its identity and thus differentiating and positioning, the theories mentioned above seem to be relevant and provide enough knowledge to run the research.

The models of examining a brand developed by Kapferer (2004) and Aaker (1996), strongly deliberated and discussing every feature of a brand identity makes it reasonable to use them in order to solve the research questions. Developed by Kapferer (2004) brand identity prism states that brand has a picture of sender and recipient reflected in its facets. One can also notice external and internal sides of brand. Aaker (1996) in its turn talks about two components of brand identity which are core and extended identities. Aaker (1996) and Kapferer (2004) in general agree upon about the composition of brand identity sources but offer different schemes to investigate it. Raised by Kapferer (2004) and Aaker's (1996) questions will be used in order to represent brand identity and its sources. The literature review showed that there is an evolution from product-driven brand to corporate-driven brand with corporate marketing mix introduced by Balmer and Greyser (2006). The importance of the organizational culture was highlighted by many authors (Hatch and Schultz (2003), De Chernatony (2006), Urde (2009), Gupta (2011) and believed to be one of the most important sources of brand's inspiration and identity. Organizational culture will be investigated in its relation to the sustainability and corporate brand. The concern raised by Stuart (2011) concerning the link between corporate brand and sustainability encourages further studies and will be tackled in this paper. While talking about positioning the major difference noticed between positioning process tactics is that Kapferer (2004) suggests to start positioning process with identifying the brand's roots and heritage while Thompson (2004) pays more attention to stakeholders' interest in the first place. Brown (2006), Balmer and Greyser (2006) refer positioning to the phenomenon of the corporate communication when the company says what it is, trying to create certain associations about itself. The theories and models are considered to be sufficient for solving the research questions and interpret the empirical findings.

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

The aim of this of study is to contribute to the understanding how companies connect the notion of sustainability to their brands and how they represent it. Since there will be not any theory developed in the beginning of the research, the logic of the research will be inductive. As long as there will be five different companies chosen for the analysis and their actions are driven by their own perception of the reality the philosophy of the research will stick the phenomenology.

#### **3.2 QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE APPROACH**

Results of the research may be affected by the method selected, that's why while selecting a method it is important to keep in mind the very questions and objectives of the study.

Qualitative research is commonly contrasted to quantitative research approaches. Quantitative research encompasses studies which emphasize precise numerical measurements - "how many", "how much". Quantitative researchers generally distinguish between 'descriptive' and 'analytical' statistics. Quantitative approach is used when the objectives demand strict enumeration of the phenomena or when probabilistic projections are demanded (Mariampolski 2001).

Qualitative research encompasses a family of approaches, methods and techniques for understanding and documenting attitudes and behavior. It seeks the meanings and motivations behind behavior. Its implementation depends on the kinds of questions addresses, the nature of population being studied and the overall objective of the research. Qualitative approaches are called for when the information needs of the research include such investigative objectives as positioning and branding studies, naming and packaging refinement etc (Mariampolski 2001).

Qualitative approach was considered to be more relevant for this study due to the following reasons: since the amount of the companies that are aimed to be analyzed is five it can be

concluded that sample size is small; small sample size makes it possible to go into a more detailed and profound research. The aim of the study is to interpret words and behavior with the main question “how” instead of interpreting numbers; thus using qualitative techniques enables to provide complex textual description of how companies build their brand identities, what are the identities derive from, how the notion of sustainability is integrated into brand and how the brand is positioned. This will help to analyze their behavior, opinions and relationship to the issue.

### **3.3 CASE STUDY**

A case study is based on qualitative data where one studies a few cases more deeply either at a specific occasion or over time. Analysis of selected cases sometimes is referred to as the analysis of insight-stimulating examples. Researchers may examine existing records, observe the phenomenon as it occurs, conduct unstructured interviews, or use any one of a variety of other approaches to analyze what is really happening in a given situation. Churchill and Gilbert (1988) suggests that the most productive attitude is one of alert receptivity, of seeking explanations rather than testing explanations. Five case studies seem to be sufficient in order to meet research’s objectives.

### **3.4 CASE CHOICE**

Since the aim of this study was to examine the Swedish companies in terms of their success of using sustainability as one of the main core competences it was decided to follow annually published Sustainability Brand Index (see Appendix 1). Five top companies were selected to analyze. These are: Coop, ICA, IKEA, Lantmännen and Volvo.

The index is the result of Sustainable Brands survey in which more than 8,000 consumers were asked about how they perceived issues like human rights, action against corruption and environmental responsibility in 151 Swedish companies. Overall, food retailer and carmakers were considered the most kind-hearted industries (Nylander, 2011). The research was done through web interviews. The target group was defined as the general Swedish public from age 16 till 79 and was intended to reflect the population. The

respondents were selected randomly from Ipsos panel within Swedish consumers (Heden, 2012).

Selection of the companies was based on the following parameters: operating in Sweden and level of awareness. The latter was assessed by studying results from other brand index's such as Superbrands and Reputation Institute. There were no specific criteria regarding the number of employees and market share. Instead the research team had to balance these criteria against the criteria of general brand awareness. For example, Godel is a very small company on the Swedish market (looking at their market share and number of employees), however their brand awareness is very high (Heden 2012). Industry classification is based on Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) developed by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) and Standard & Poor. GICS is an international standard for categorizing companies into different groups based on such similarities in the goods /services or manufacturing process. While conducting the research GICS standards were applied mostly but sometimes according to the companies' business description industries have been modified ([www.sustainablebrands.idg.se](http://www.sustainablebrands.idg.se)).

The base of the study is the UN Global Compact guidelines that specify how companies should work in terms of environmental responsibility, human rights, better working conditions and anti-corruption. The important thing in choosing the definition of environmental and social responsibility was that the majority of companies and respondents could relate to it. A total examined 38 definitions of sustainable development, but eventually was elected Global Compact, primarily because of the width (environmental and social responsibility) and the number of affiliated companies ([www.sustainablebrands.idg.se](http://www.sustainablebrands.idg.se)).

Since the official launch of The Global Compact's ten principles developed by the UN on 26 July 2000, has more than 6,000 companies in over 130 countries have accepted these principles:

Human rights (SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)

Principle 1: Support and respect international human rights within the sphere of influence;  
and

Principle 2: Ensure that their own corporations are not involved in human rights violations  
Working conditions (SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)

Principle 3: Uphold freedom of association and right to collective bargaining

Principle 4: Eliminate all forms of forced labor

Principle 5: The abolition of child labor

Principle 6: Eliminate discrimination in respect of employment and work  
Environment (ENVIRONMENTAL)

Principle 7: support a precautionary approach to counter environmental problems

Principle 8: Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental awareness

Principle 9: Encourage the development of environmentally friendly technologies  
Combating Corruption (SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)

Principle 10: Businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion  
and bribery ([www.sustainablebrands.idg.se](http://www.sustainablebrands.idg.se)).

The definition above followed the respondents through the whole survey. The ranking was based on the proportion of people who assess the company's work with environmental and social responsibility as fairly good (4) or excellent (5) on a scale of 1-5 + "do not know." Maximum score is 2.0 (or 200%). Respondents were asked to assess the necessity of the principles to be applied and to assess self-awareness of the ecological knowledge with the help of rating scales (Heden 2012).

### **3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Exploratory research is used when one is seeking insights into the general nature of a problem; the research methods are highly flexible, unstructured and qualitative. Exploratory research hypotheses are either vague, or they do not exist at all. The purpose of the descriptive research is to provide an accurate snapshot of some aspects of the marketing environment. The question may be simply to describe situation, environment, or image (Aaker et al, 2007).

Since the study of the branding experience will be conducted within context of Swedish reality and its being a qualitative one the nature of the research will be partly descriptive. Taking into attention that there are wide range of theories and case studies examining branding and positioning I concluded that the area of interest is relatively developed from the theoretical point of view. As long as the aim of my study is to explain the relationship between company's activities and strong brand identity with sustainability as core competence, thus the nature of research will include some explanatory elements.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

Secondary data will be collected from relative articles and companies' official websites and reports. Available videos will also be taken into attention. The information gathered will be used in order to present brand elements developed by the company according to the frame of reference which will be discussed below. The content of websites will be examined within text analysis while exploring company's activities regarding sustainable development.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

Data analysis approach will be based on the theoretical background. The models of brand identity and its sources developed noted experts within the field of branding by Kapferer (2004) and Aaker (1996) and discussed in the section of literature review will be used in the data analysis however with some limitations on the one hand and considerations on the another hand. Since the research question is to learn what companies do to build their brand and how they incorporate the noting of sustainability into it the sender's side only will be considered as relevant. The recipient side and user associations will be ignored on purpose. In order research to avoid being unsound the sources of brand identity will be examined taking into account questions raised by De Chernatony (2006), Urde (2009) and Stuart (2011). Companies' activities and the organization culture will be analyzed with a help of content analysis. Data representation will follow questions of the research (Appendix 2).



## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 COOP

#### 4.1.1 Coop's sustainability activities and company's culture

KF defines sustainable development as “the long-term financial, social and environmental substantive outcome of the mission and values are translated into business operations unit” (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.4). The group has development a set of principles that are used to guide the group's actions. KF says climate impact, product development, and employee and community relations to be the prioritized sustainability issues (KF in brief 2010, p.34)

Ecology and other environmental considerations are the main sustainability activities of Coop. It is also supported by the following statement:

*Priority areas include climate change and energy consumption in our stores (KF in brief 2010, 35).*

The company has adopted environmentally friendly fishing policy and strategy and it is fighting with overfishing. Coop supports ecological cultivation and tree plantations. Reducing environmental impact through recycling and new logistic system is vital. Besides that the company has been working on energy efficiency especially in its stores. The next important strategic concern can be characterized with food quality and ethical farming. These encompass sales of organic and ecolabelled products, raising the awareness of negative consequences of GMOs and pesticides. Committing to a society at wide is the last tackled issue. This includes fighting with poverty, promoting human rights and healthy lifestyle and creating economical benefits (Appendix 3).

Continuous dialogue with stakeholders is belived to help to develop sustainability initiatives (KF in brief 2010, 34), however the company does not specify who are the stakeholders. Apparently, these can be considered employees, customers and suppliers. Coop organizes “E-training” programme for all employees in such areas as code on conduct and sustainable deveopment (KF in brief 2010, 33). Customers, who are also members are offered various tips of how to consume sustinably. For example, they are encouraged to learn about the impact of the different foods on environment, choose organic in order to support biological diversity, minimize meat consumption and eat

more fruit and green, avoid throwing food etc (KF Verksamhetsberättelse 2010, p.15). Suppliers are mainly contacted through numerous inspections ([https://www.coop.se/Globala-sidor/om\\_coop/Coopsam/](https://www.coop.se/Globala-sidor/om_coop/Coopsam/)).

Coop is working on reducing climate impact by transition to totally renewable electricity in stores and opening climate-smart pilot stores (Verksamhetsberättelse 2010, 1). Thus, the company is encouraging energy safe by its own example, however, the data do not specify whether the company does its own research and development of these stores or outsources it. Logistics and more efficient transportation, as the text analysis has shown, have attracted special attention of the company.

The company sees its goal in raising money for professional organizations who work on tackling different environmental and economic problems. Thus, Coop has been constantly encouraging its customer-members to donate, for example, by pressing the Donation Button of the cans recycling machine (<https://www.coop.se/Vart--ansvar/Samhallsengageman/Hjalp-till-sjalv-hjalp/>). The company evaluates the success as the following:

*In 2011, Coop's customers donated 7.8 million just by pressing the Donation Button (<https://www.coop.se/Vart--ansvar/Samhallsengageman/Hjalp-till-sjalv-hjalp/Panta-rattvist/>)*

The secondary data showed no evidence about employees' involvement in the issue; however, customers who are also members are constantly donating money. This can be seen as the attempt of the company to withdraw the responsibility for the real actions directed at third parties. On the other hand, it can be seen as the decision to let professionals (professional organizations) to do what they may be more competent at than Coop.

#### 4.1.2 Incorporation level of sustainability notion in Coop's brand identity

The color of Coop's logotype is green that is creates a nexus with nature and living things (Schiffman and Kanuk 2010, p.162), however, sometimes different Coop's brand use red or blue.

Coop's culture is customer-centered and means concentrating on the interest of its own members:

*Listening to them and acting on their needs is the very essence of existence for KF (KF in brief 2010, p.48).*

*...We are working also actively working to provide our members and customers with a range that facilitates sustainable consumption, says Frank Fiskers, President and CEO (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3).*

Figure 4.1 – Coop's logotype



(Source: [www.coop.se](http://www.coop.se))

One of the facets of the personality that seem to have derived from customer-centered culture is self-centrism. This conclusion was based on the rhetoric used by the company in which it restricts its interests and narrow down the focus:

*KF is only concerned about the interest of its own members (KF in brief 2010, p.48).*

*Everything we do in the Coop and KF Group, will be for the members and made with the members, says Frank Fiskers (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3).*

However, the company is raising money for fighting poverty on a regular basis (KF in brief 2010, 32). Thus, this personality feature seems to be contradictory. Besides that, personality can be seen as innovative and, despite the large number of members, adaptive:

*Member dialogue provides Coop with great opportunities to make local adaptations and to implement attractive changes (KF in brief 2010, p.14).*

Besides implementing changes Coop react to the various things influencing its operations:

*In connection with KF meeting in April motions were presented for boycott of products manufactured on occupied land in Israel. This led to that KF ordered an audit of that company's production in Israel to investigate which plant products manufactured (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3).*

Coop promotes the relationship based on cooperation and equality. It is supported by the form of ownership, where “over three million members who are also customers” (KF in brief 2010, p.48):

*The focus on business determined based on the democratic principle of one member - one vote, and members receive financial advantage in relation to how much they buy (KF Verksamhetsberättelse 2010, p.17).*

Every member of a consumer society can influence the business “in many ways” (KF in brief 2010, p.45) and Coop’s members and customers will be continuously encouraged to participate in the discussions of design of the stores and range (of products) (KF in brief 2010, p.14).

The features of Coop’s typical products have been defined in the very beginning of Coop’s story in 1899 and stood for “pure, genuine products at good prices” (KF in brief 2010, 32). The main features of the products which are mostly communicated externally – quality and price - are the beacons of Coop’s values (Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.2, p.16).

Coop’s brand should exist because it promises to “offer everyday products and services that provide financial benefit from and contribute to a better life” (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3).

Brand’s elements support in general sustainability strategy accepted by the company. Thus, green color of the logotype is to create a connection with nature and environment. Culture and relationship can be considered as having connotations with both environmental consideration and product quality work because, with having in mind customer-centered culture of the brand, it is the customers who are also members who are being encouraged to develop sustainability priorities. Brand personality with its self-centered feature is little bit in disagreement with the generous idea of promoting sustainable development in the different part of the world. Product attributes and values proposed by Coop supports the company’s commitment towards developing and sustaining food quality.

Thus, brand elements show integration with company’s sustainability approach. Coop contributes to the sustainability with efficient logistic scheme, store’s energy efficient

equipment and suppliers' control. Though employee training is organized and there are tips offered in the sustainability reports for the customers, the information does not reveal the outcome of training and its applications. Indeed, customers are being constantly involved into donations. However, secondary data did not indicate a considerable proof of the sustainability strategy being deeply incorporated into organizational culture on a daily basis, involving employees, rather than customers' donations, and taking actions instead of sponsoring.

### **4.1.3 Coop's positioning**

The company is trying to create strong associations as being active, involved and committed. Goals and challenges are the beacons in this continuous work. Another measurement of active work is completed and ongoing projects. The customer-centered culture is strongly highlighted by its CEO, Frank Fiskers:

*To succeed with this ambition, it is important to take advantage of what is our strength - our members and their opinions. Everything we do in the Coop and KF Group, will be for the members and made together with members. Together with our members develops and we offer everyday products and services that provide financial benefit from and contribute to a better life (KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3).*

Next, Coop in its rhetoric exaggerates its cooperational nature, pointing out projects and cooperation with customers and members. Thus, brand's identity is partially constructed by Coop's members. Finally, the company represents itself as being brave enough to face critics and, thus, being open to a dialogue (*KF Hållbarhetsredovising 2011, p.3*).

## **4.2 ICA**

### **4.2.1 ICA's sustainability activities and company's culture**

ICA's sustainability strategy means "commitment to the environment and strong social engagement" (<http://corporate.ica.se/en/Home/ICA-takes-responsibility1/ICAs-Good-Business/>). ICA has coined the term "ICA's Good Business" in order to describe its ethical standards and corporate responsibility.

According to the company's website there are no any unimportant issues, but they divided into matter of high and very high significance (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/About+the+ICA+Group%27s+corpor>

ate+responsibility+report/Materiality+analysis). The analysis showed that the most important issues are environmental consideration and combating climate impact which means promoting sustainable fishing, reducing the consumption of CO2 and, there fore, emissions. Special attention has been given to the optimization of logistic operation with effectively loaded, ethanol-powered trucks and biogas fueled trucks. Low-carbon transports are used widely even if it leads to higher logistics costs, Warehouses and stores management means constant monitoring of the energy consumption and lighting used in stores and warehouses in order to reduce it. This is a contribution to the combating with climate change (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Environment/ICA%E2%80%99s+energy+and+material+audit>). The task of minimizing food wastage is tackled there as well by cooperating with different charity foundations and animal shelters in order to donate soon-expiring or packaging damaged (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Environment/Important+events+in+2011>).

The next very important concern is food safety, which is related to establishing norms to suppliers with consequent audit and inspection. The inspections are done with regard to safety, quality, working conditions and human rights requirements (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Quality>). Food safety and safe products are directly connected to the public health. The importance of organic, environmentally certified s and sustainably produced products sales are very high.

The issues discussed above are found to be the most important ones, however the company also takes other steps through abiding with requirements of ethical trade and operation with municipalities, sponsoring sports events and promoting different educational and training campaigns for young people (Appendix 4).

Continuous reporting is considered to be inevitable in order to monitor the process and be open to the stakeholders:

*We aim to become more transparent by reporting more frequently and in a structured way. We hope that this will inspire more companies to follow our example,” says Per Strömberg, CEO of ICA AB(<http://corporate.ica.se/en/Home/ICA-takes-responsibility/ICA-launches-quarterly-sustainability-report/>).*

Dialogue with stakeholders is an important part of the company's CR work because it reveals "relevant issues" (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/About+the+ICA+Group's+corporate+responsibility+report/Dialogue+with+stakeholders>) and, as said by Per Strömberg, "transparency builds trust" (ICA AB Second quarter, 1 April – 30 June 2012, p.3) .

The most important stakeholder groups, as stated by the company, are customers, employees, owners, independent ICA retailers in Sweden, franchisees in Norway, suppliers, government authorities and a number of NGOs. ICA admits that these groups have different expectations and demands. Customers are contacted through customer surveys, descriptive information in stores or in person mainly in order to discuss climate change and food safety. The dialogue is maintained with employees to reveal opportunities for skills training and professional development and control good working environment. Owners, retailers and franchizers are commnicated to monitor energy efficiency, quality control, oversight ethical issues and food waste. Regular meetings are held with authorities, politicians and researchers to discuss food safety and society's health (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/About+the+ICA+Group's+corp+ate+responsibility+report/Dialogue+with+stakeholders>).

The sustainability activities seem to have penetrated into practically all departments and involve a large number of employees. Research and development and logistic specialists are mainly involved in the environmental work:

*ICA Sweden's logistics operations have begun using a new planning tool to improve efficiencies and clearly visualize transport planning in real time. With careful scheduling and optimized loads... This means less driving and directly benefits the environment... We continued to test solar panels on 300 m2 of store roofs in Sweden. In total, we have 1 million m2 of roof space on warehouses and stores that can be used to generate solar energy (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Environment/Important+events+in+2011>).*

*We develop climate-smart stores and warehouses (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Environment>).*

Shop assistants contribute to the waste management on a daily basis and encourage customers to reuse plastic bags. Besides that, community activities such as food

donations are meant to contribute to waste management. Annual and Corporate Responsibility Report 2011 shows a progress in these issues:

*A survey of about 600 ICA stores in 2011 showed that 9 out of 10 are working actively with the problem. Some prepare meals with food that will soon expire. Others cut the prices of these products or give them away (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/Sustainability/Environment/Important+events+in+2011>).*

*We work systematically and deliberately on an everyday basis to contribute to a sustainable society that will also benefit future generations (<http://corporate.ica.se/en/Home/ICA-takes-responsibility/ICAs-Good-Business/>).*

A considerable number of inspectors are engaged into food safety control. The company has a vision that only together aims can be achieved which highlights the teamwork spirit within the group:

*Nothing we have done or will do would have been possible without the people in our organization, says Kenneth Bengtsson, CEO of ICA (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>)*

#### **4.2.2 Incorporation level of sustainability notion in ICA's brand identity**

Red color is the physique element of ICA's brand. Red is used widely in food industry and believed to make food "smell" better (Shiffman and Kanuk, 2010).

Figure 4.2 – ICA's logotype



(Source: [www.ica.se](http://www.ica.se))

The personality can be characterized as courageous and active with its constant efforts to reach the goals and engage as much people as possible:

*There are no limits to what we can do. The only thing – but importantly so – is that any new idea must help us to achieve our vision: they should make our customers' lives a little easier. (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>).*

ICA is energetic and never indifferent; it has been involved in numerous projects and campaigns and cooperated with both local communities and authorities and various worldwide known organizations:

*We also cover the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact, which ICA has signed. We have also signed the Global Compact's Caring for Climate initiative. Through collaborations with the World Childhood Foundation, the Red Cross and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), among others, we are also trying to be a force for good in society. Three years ago we launched a project called We Can Do More, with the goal of finding meaningful employment for between 500 and 1,000 people with functional disabilities in ICA stores in Sweden (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>).*



It is also can be seen as honest and open, since, as it was mentioned above, the traceability of the company activities is one of the priorities.

The brand stands for customer-centered culture. “We are always there for the customers, whatever they need”, says Kenneth Bengtsson, CEO. He also says that no results would be possible without “fantastic employees” (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>), thus it is teamwork as a core of the relationship. The brand not only shows employees as a team (in numerous commercials where employees are living thought different anecdotes and accidents in the shops (Appendix 5)) but also though personal interactions encourages customers to be involved.

Despite the presence of the company in different sectors, the brand is mostly associated with food and meals as its typical products. ICA has developed ICA’s Good Business concept, where values are communicated. In short, the company is driven by profitability, quality, health, sound environmental practices and ethical standards (<http://corporate.ica.se/en/Home/About-the-ICA-Group/Vision--values/>).

ICA strands for Köpmännens Inköpscentralers AB (Purchasing Centers' Corporation), which in the beginning was supposed to be Sweden’s Purchasing Centers' Corporation, however, it was decided against bounding the brand’s name with geographical boundaries (<http://www.ica-historien.se/Organisation/Centrala-ICA/ICA-AB/>).

The brand should exist in order to enhance the feeling of safety and security among customers and other stakeholders. It is to ensure that there are safe products:

*ICA’s customers and other stakeholders should feel secure and confident in ICA and its businesses (<http://corporate.ica.se/en/Home/About-the-ICA-Group/Vision--values/>).*

There is strong organizational culture, and all levels of employees from shop assistants to top managements are to deliver and to communicate brand’s values.

Sustainability approach is present in the brand elements mainly in terms of environmental care and food safety. Food safety is more integrated into brand's identity and its sources than environmental issues, though the content analysis pointed out the opposite. However, the difference is marginal.

Brand's physique and culture have an explicit connection with food, where customers' and society's health should derive from healthy products. Personality seem to be more bounded to the environmental care having in mind a large number of different activities the brand is involved into. Relationship embraces both notions, where customers and employees are invited to join the fight against climate change and the suppliers are motivated to control food safety, too.

Among the sources of identity, values refer to both environmental considerations and food safety. The needs that the brand is supposed to fulfill are aimed at healthy food again. However, a very high involvement of the employees into nature's protection work could probably overweight the food safety here.

Overall, the analysis showed that sustainability aims seen by ICA as environmental protection and maintaining healthy society are incorporated into the brand to the same extent. Though food safety has more connection in quantity, environment can overweight in quality since it is deeply integrated in the corporate culture which makes it possible to conclude that sustainability activities are not an add-on strategy.

#### **4.2.3 ICA's positioning**

There are few associations to be built in the stakeholders' minds that ICA is working on. First, ICA brand is active and cooperative, which is also a vital part of the brand's personality. ICA's recently retired CEO, Kenneth Bengtsson, used to highlight the courageous feature of the brand, stating that there is nothing that ICA cannot do (We Can Do More Project) (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011/en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>); ICA's newly

assigned CEO, Per Strömberg, has taken up Bengtsson initiative and developed a new level of challenge where the company is to not only to challenge itself, but industry as a whole (Quarterly report on ICA's sustainability work, April – June 2012, p.3). The brand is positioning itself as innovative and constantly improving with searching for and implementing new ideas:

*We continued to improve our stores...We also worked with a concept to better meet demand for local foods...ICA's brand is our biggest asset, and the work we are doing to build and strengthen the brand in the long term will pave the way for profitable new innovations...We rolled out the ICA Grocery Bag concept and the innovative ICA Student service.The only thing – but importantly so – is that any new idea must help us to achieve our vision...(<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>)*

The final most externally communicated feature and transparency and honesty. Transparency, that is expressed not only in the number of reports but in their nature, is reflected in their accuracy with the certain figures for every issue (<http://reports.ica.se/ar2011en/Start/ICA%27s+activities/CEO+comment>).

ICA's positioning does not differ much from its main competitor, Coop, in terms of activity and openness to dialogue, however, while Coop highlights the good price of the products ICA says to be operative profitably.

## **4.3 IKEA**

### **4.3.1 IKEA's sustainability activities and company's culture**

IKEA claims to have been contributing to sustainability for a long period, but it has just been "warming". Steve Howard, Chief Sustainability Officer, says that there are three things to focus on. These are: (1) how to use renewable energy to protect natural resources, (2) how to treat people in and around the company and (3) how to help customers to live a more sustainable life at home ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/people\\_and\\_planet/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/people_and_planet/index.html)). From this statement it is obvious that IKEA's approach to sustainability consists of environmental care and contributing to sustainable life of stakeholders at wide.

Content analysis had provided an insight into IKEA's sustainability activities. Environmental consideration and protection has attracted most of the efforts. Forestry is the most tackled issue including fighting against illegal logging, forest management and wood sustainable consumption. Besides initiating different project this means the control of the material used by IKEA. Among social issues child labor is considered to be the most important problem followed by a need for sustainable life for everyone. IKEA's goal is that all home furnishing suppliers and transport service providers shall comply with the requirements in IWAY by the end of 2012. However, the company faces some difficulties in such countries like China and Vietnam where legal restrictions regarding freedom of association prevent suppliers from meeting some IWAY requirements (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.9). The company contributes to education promotion seeing it as vital part of children's upbringing. Through educating children and their parents can learn about their rights and abilities, which are supposed to have a positive impact on economically sustainable life (see Appendix 6).

IKEA recognizes four groups of stakeholders, which are customers, suppliers, co-workers and communities. The company has different ways and channels of communication, but in the end it results in the communicating and promoting sustainable life at everyone's home. IKEA wants to inspire its customers to adopt more sustainable behaviours in their everyday activities and thus reduce their environmental impact. The suggestions and solutions, created by IKEA, are supposed to raise customers' awareness of how they can help reduce climate impact. The focus is on reducing energy and water consumption, preventing food waste and minimising other household waste ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/people\\_and\\_planet/sustainable-life-at-home.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/people_and_planet/sustainable-life-at-home.html)). Through Family customer club, IKEA collects feedbacks from customers and engages them into "a variety of national and local activities related to social and environmental responsibility" (Sustainability report 2011, p.17).

The company cooperates with suppliers in order to build long-term relationships, make sure that they share the same values and to spread best practices in various areas to increase their ability to take on more social and environmental responsibility:

*IWAY is the IKEA supplier code of conduct, first introduced in 2000. It specifies the requirements that we place on suppliers of products and services... Offices are often on-site at suppliers' factories to support and motivate suppliers to implement and maintain IWAY requirements (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.13).*

Co-workers are believed to be the most important ones for the company, since they are the ones who can influence IKEA's performance:

*Our co-workers are our most valuable resource – when they grow, IKEA grows (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.17).*

Thus, the company has committed to become a good employer. IKEA uses "VOICE" – a company-wide survey – to monitor how coworkers view various aspects of their employment at IKEA, IKEA Intranet and "Read me" magazine to help them engage in their workplace with a sense of value and belonging (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.17-18). An on-going and active internal communication is seen as a vital part of co-worker's learning and development, and thus, of effective performance. The company encourages co-workers to question accepted solutions and test new ideas, and see mistakes as a way to grow and develop. The dialogue is believed to challenge the company itself, the co-workers and their associations to find innovative and sustainable solutions "based on the IKEA culture of simplicity and cost-consciousness" (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.18).

The communication with communities is built on the participation in a wide range of activities globally, nationally and locally. IKEA supports several projects aimed to meet the needs of the communities in which they take place. Regular dialogue with others is an important way to gain and share knowledge that helps to move forward (The IKEA Group approach to sustainability 2011, p.19).

Reaching sustainable product range is the main goal of IKEA, thus product development and innovation reflects the approach to sustainability. Further development and innovation are the main topics of introduction video supported by several examples and

led by Steve Howard, Chief Sustainability Officer ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/people\\_and\\_planet/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/people_and_planet/index.html)):

*Our co-workers, suppliers and partners have been working on these issues and more for a while. You can see evidence of this work through innovative IKEA products and solutions, and through the way we do business. If we all take small actions, we can all contribute to big results ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/people\\_and\\_planet/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/people_and_planet/index.html)).*

It applies to team working and searching the most suitable solutions – using resources wisely when designing products. The customer has also been involved into team working since 1950's when the self-assembly concept came into being (Sustainability report 2010, p.7). Thus, the company encourages the customers to participate in saving money and resources. According to Ingvar Kamprad, a strong culture should be maintained since it one of the most crucial factors behind the continued success of the IKEA Concept in the future (The Testament of a Furniture Dealer 2007, p.44):

*“The competitors can copy every part of your business, but not the company spirit”, says the creator (IKEA, 1976, p. cited in Urde 2009, p.626).*

Ingvar Kamprad sees one of his duties to promote the sustainable life. It also comes to the aim of inspiring co-workers to live a modest life by his example:

*He takes the subway to work, and when he drives, it's an old Volvo. Rumor is that when he stays in a hotel, if he feels the urge to drink one of those expensive sodas from the wetbar, he replaces it later with one picked up from a nearby convenience store. (<http://entrepreneurs.about.com/cs/famousentrepreneur/p/ingvarkamprad.htm>).*

#### 4.3.2 Incorporation level of sustainability notion in IKEA's brand identity

Blue and yellow are the physique elements of the brand. The colors are the same as these of the Swedish national flag and build an association with Swedish context. The company itself highlights the connection:

*It's no accident that the IKEA logo is blue and yellow. These are the colors of the Swedish flag ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/swedish\\_heritage/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/swedish_heritage/index.html)).*

Figure 4.3 – IKEA's logotype



(Source: [www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com))

However, they have not been these all the time. Before red and white colors represented IKEA brand. Contemporary brand's physique elements are bonded strongly with company's culture that originates from a little village surrounded by the nature of

Småland. Brand's personality has inherited its features from the founder of IKEA Ingvar Kamprad, who has written the whole testament listing IKEA's business idea and core values (The Testament of a Furniture Dealer, 2007). The company has established a relationship build on team work and even has involved the customer to it since 1950's (Sustainability report 2010, p.7). There is a visible desire to engage people in common work:

*At IKEA, we don't just want to fill jobs; we want to partner with people*  
([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/jobs/join\\_us/ikea\\_values/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/jobs/join_us/ikea_values/index.html)).

IKEA has a rich background reflecting in its sources of identity. Its typical products are furniture and home accessories and they are being developed with a premise that they should be well-designed, functional and affordable ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/index.html)).

The place of the origin is one of the strongest sources of identity since it has influenced the founder of IKEA and values establish by him. IKEA partially owes its name to 'Elmtaryd', a farm near the small village of Agunnaryd in Småland ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/history/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/history/index.html)). Småland has contributed to product design with its freshness of air and space: blond woods, natural textiles and untreated surfaces are used and reflect their closeness to the nature ([www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/swedish\\_heritage/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/swedish_heritage/index.html)).

The values that Ingvar Kamprad has declared in the Testament have derived from the lifestyle of Småland people, who know how "to make things do" (The Testament of a Furniture Dealer, 2007, p.29); years later IKEA designers have adopted the philosophy of making "more from less" ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/our\\_responsibility/the\\_never\\_ending\\_list/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/our_responsibility/the_never_ending_list/index.html)).

The values, such as simplicity, honesty, cost-consciousness have become a leading idea of the business concept (Sustainability report 2011, p.10). Another facet of brand's sources of identity is story. IKEA's story and the story of its founder are widely known and attracted both its admirers and critics. The brand's purpose comes from the idea to create "a better everyday life for the many people"

([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/our\\_business\\_idea/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/our_business_idea/index.html)), which can also be expressed in four dimensions IKEA Foundation is working in:

*A place to call home – Where a better life begins. Shelter and safety...*  
*A healthy start in life – Helping children get a good start...*  
*A quality education...*  
*A sustainable family income – When parents have a regular income...*  
(<http://www.ikeafoundation.org/Programmes>)

Company's sustainability approach is integrated into brand's elements mainly in terms of its environmental consideration. The personality of Ingvar Kamprad that is the strongest even after his retirement shows an example to other people trying to encourage them to live modest life. It was him who created the culture of the brand, which in its turn have appeared from the surroundings and local culture of Smaland, which has its principle of making more from less. Thus, common sense and simplicity have become one of the core values and elements of the brand's culture from the very beginning. Environmental care has evolved from the creator's love for nature. The physique elements create an association with Sweden and are bonded with the cultural component.

IKEA's core values lie also in the relationship, which is promoting team-working, togetherness and equal respect to everyone. Through this relationship the company is communicating its sustainability ideas and requirements to all four stakeholder groups. The principle of equity and treating all people well is connected to the company's sustainability approach regarding social issues. Thus, children and people involved into supply chain are the main focus of company's activities and regulation. The number of projects and campaigns, partnership and cooperation aimed to contribute either to environmental care or social wealth is meant to highlight company's team-working culture.

As one can conclude, all the investigated brand facets and the sources carry some part of the sustainability approach followed by the company. Brand's culture, personality, geographical roots, organizational culture in terms of innovation focus have the nexus



with environmental care, while relationship, physique and also Sweden, “a society founded on social equality” ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_US/about\\_ikea/the\\_ikea\\_way/swedish\\_heritage/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_US/about_ikea/the_ikea_way/swedish_heritage/index.html)), reflect the idea of social wealth and equity from the fair treatment of employees to fighting against work labor.

### **4.3.3 IKEA’s positioning**

IKEA positions itself as a company that is strongly impacted by the Swedish culture and in fact represents it, but it acts globally. It can be seen as a person who cares about its geographical and cultural rules. IKEA works on creating an association of working continuously on product design and new solutions, which supports the reason for brand existence expressed by Mikael Ohlsson, President and CEO, as “to create a better everyday life for the many people” (IKEA 2011, p.7), and IKEA’s value of teamwork.

There is another issue to be mentioned. With its approach to sustainability, IKEA has tackled a challenge of trying to change people’s idea about living sustainable life. Thus, Steve Howard, Chief Sustainability Officer, says that people don’t have to change their habits and “live like we did hundreds years ago” ([http://www.ikea.com/ms/en\\_GB/about\\_ikea/people\\_and\\_planet/index.html](http://www.ikea.com/ms/en_GB/about_ikea/people_and_planet/index.html)). IKEA is promoting sustainable life as simple and not restricting.

## **4.4 Lantmännen**

### **4.4.1 Lantmännen’s sustainability activities and company’s culture**

Lantmännen sees its biggest challenge on the way to the sustainable life as the transition to a sustainable energy supply, development of agriculture techniques and production of healthy foods. The way to achieve these is seen by control and being active in all parts of the value chain – “from farmland to table” (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/From-field-to-fork-/>). Returning plant nutrients without increasing the level of other unwanted substances is a major sustainability issue for the company (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/Focus-issues/Sludge/>). Since Lantmännen’s prime objective is to be a leading and driving force behind the development of sustainable food as well as energy and farming systems, company’s

activities can be classified as the followings. The major attention is being given to the climate change because it is believed to affect agriculture the most and vice versa:

*Around 25% of the global climate impact comes from food production (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/Focus-issues/A-clear-position-on-climate-issues/>).*

Thus, reducing climate impact through cutting carbon emission with a help of energy optimization, developing and implementing renewable and bioenergy are the major activities. Since 2008 Lantmännen has been promoting food with climate declarations that are based on the entire life cycle and are made according to an ISO standard with independent third-party review (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/Focus-issues/A-clear-position-on-climate-issues/>). Sustainable cultivation techniques, control over the pesticides, fertilizers are aimed to contribute to people's health. The company is promoting biological nutrients and treatments for the plants, rather than chemical. Lantmännen proclaims sustainable palm oil and soy cultivation and research about alternative protein sources. Society's health, both customers and employees, is in the centre of the company's focus, thus the measures of control both with the research and development are supposed to reduce adverse effects on health. Lantmännen holds back generic modified products and seeds as much as possible (Appendix 7).

The dialogue with customers and business customers is to indicate the requirements of the food and energy products and show the steps of further development:

*Through product development and dialogue with our customers, we are gradually moving our offerings forward in a sustainable direction, to drive demand for the added value we can offer (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/From-field-to-fork-/Sustainable-value-added/>).*

Communication with stakeholders has the objective of creating the equilibrium between theory and practice of sustainability. Thus, it is reached by passing on experience with advanced technology and knowledge with a profound understanding. Farmers can be considered as the most important stakeholder group. The basic premise is to offer a competitive range and enable farmers to meet growing demands and changing conditions for sustainable growth. The company is communicating its sustainability

aims to the farmers through sharing technology and practices. The results of research such as biologically treated seed grains, special equipment for optimizes nitrogen fertilization are shared with farmers. Furthermore, Lantmännen's offerings to farmers include both machinery and inputs such as seed grain, fertilizer, plant protection and feed, and services and advice concerning variety selection and crop rotation (<http://lantmannen.com/en/about-lantmannen/start/from-field-to-fork-/sustainable-value-added/>).

The company wants to contribute to more sustainable food consumption through the development of products and ranges, and by communicating knowledge that makes it easier for consumers to make informed choices:

*We are also working to spread knowledge and inspiration that promotes health and a more sustainable lifestyle, says the company (<http://lantmannen.com/en/about-lantmannen/start/from-field-to-fork-/sustainable-value-added/>).*

Contents and additives, origin and traceability of raw materials, production conditions and impact on health and the environment are aspects that are becoming increasingly important to consumers.

Sustainability is integrated into the company's culture having in mind three different features. Firstly, since it is owned by 36,000 farmers, they are the ones who receive the knowledge and technology and are expected to operate with certain considerations. However, the company highlights that even there are a large number of people involved into the production, distribution, sales and etc, the responsibility should not be deconcentrated:

*Our success depends on each individual employee being involved and performing at their best... Lantmännen has developed eight guiding principles that show the responsibility that our managers have (<http://lantmannen.com/en/Join-us/>).*

Thus, though it is teamwork, every member carries its own responsibility. The progress towards a more sustainable agriculture is expected to be reached by the commitment to research and development, which the company sees as one of its strong competitive advantages:

*We have know-how and operations throughout the entire chain.  
We invest in research and development.*

*Lantmännen has a long history of successful research projects... (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/Start/From-field-to-fork-/>).*

#### 4.4.2 Incorporation level of sustainability notion in Lantmännen's brand identity

Brand's physique, green color, as proposed by the company, stands for nature, sensitivity and harmony. It is also used to create a sense of sprouting and growing and to oppose it to lifelessness (<http://www.lantmannen.designmanual.se/en/identity/colours/>).

Figure 4.4 – Lantmännen's logotype



(Source: [www.lantmannen.com](http://www.lantmannen.com))

Lantmännen promotes customer-centered culture when the customer is treated in an informal tone (<http://www.lantmannen-unibake.com/en/United-Kingdom/Header-navigation/Career1/Working-at-Lantmannen-Unibake/>):

*It was decided to launch a new action program called ONE Lantmännen Lantbruk, aimed at creating more customer-centric and profitable operations (Lantmännen Annual Report and Sustainability Report 2010, p. 6).*

*In the program we prioritize three key goals – to achieve well functioning basic operations, to reduce costs in order to improve competitiveness and to increase our focus on customers' and suppliers' needs (Lantmännen Annual Report and Sustainability Report 2010, p. 10).*

*With the customer in focus, we develop and process farmland resources (Lantmännen Annual Report and Sustainability Report 2010, p. 7).*

Brand is standing for simple and natural actions and communications. The brand personality is involved, insightful and genuine (<http://www.lantmannen.designmanual.se/en/identity/tone-of-voice/>). At the same time it is energetic and hardworking, which can be concluded from the slogans, commercial videos and music used. The company describes the brand as the following:

*We are perceived as safe, popular and hard working (<http://www.lantmannen.designmanual.se/en/the-brand/where-are-we-going/>).*

Interdependency and mutual responsibility is the core of the strong relationship, which is supported by corporate organizational values:

*When we work together towards common goals and with shared values, we can actually develop Lantmännen in a sustainable way (Lantmännen Annual Report and Sustainability Report 2010, p.10)*

*Lantmännen's human resources policy is to provide advancement opportunities for people with drive and commitment, so that together we can achieve the Group's goals (Lantmännen Annual Report and Sustainability Report 2010, 56).*

*All employees must understand how their work contributes to the results of their own unit as well as to the company as a whole (<http://www.lantmannen-unibake.com/en/United-Kingdom/Header-navigation/CareerI/Working-at-Lantmannen-Unibake/>).*

The relationship built by a brand proposes trust to the products for the customers, but at the same time it involves all the stakeholders highlighting every single person's responsibility for the outcome:

*The food we eat accounts for a large part of the overall impact on climate change as each person creates in their everyday lives (<http://lantmannen.com/en/about-lantmannen/start/focus-issues/climate-declarations/>).*

Brand is also associated with Agriculture, Machinery and Energy; however, the company tries to raise the awareness and knowledge of it as a food company that produces healthy food.

The logotype depicts a sprout from seed that is to enhance the message carried by the physique facet (Från jord till bord - Trender kommer och går - Reklamfilm från Lantmännen, retrieved December 5, 2012 from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS\\_tzZzELOg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS_tzZzELOg)).

The key values offered by Lantmännen are openness, drive and holistic view which are believed to influence, permeate and characterize both activities and organization (<http://www.lantmannen.designmanual.se/en/the-brand/brand-platform/>). The company and the tradition of cooperative collaborations, established in the second half of the 1800s, have a long history and it highlights its heritage (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/History/>). Unlikely trends, its responsibility remains – says the advertisements (Från jord till bord - Trender kommer och går - Reklamfilm från Lantmännen, retrieved December 5, 2012 from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS\\_tzZzELOg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mS_tzZzELOg)). The brand promises to take responsibility “from field to fork” and stands for safety and care (<http://www.lantmannen.designmanual.se/en/the-brand/where-are-we-going/>)

Lantmännen's brand elements indicate the connection with all facets of sustainability approach, however, none of them can be considered as prevailing or main. The physique facet of the brand and its logotype indicate the relation with company's environmental considerations. Green color of the sprout is meant to symbolize being a part of nature, unity with it. Culture and personality have the connection with innovation focus. The brand is representing constant work on the development and improving agricultural techniques with a focus on the customer's needs and wants. Brand personality is also associated with active and productive work, which again supports research and development. Being insightful and engaging brand personality seems to connect the facets and communicate them externally. Besides innovation, the culture is associated with health promoting activities.

Brand's values such as openness, holistic way and drive and the fact that the company stands for safety and care provide the basement for company's work aimed to improve and maintain society's health. Being involved brand builds communication with customers to pass its knowledge and experience and to promote a healthy lifestyle. Organization's impact is seen on the level of innovation.

Overall, it seems difficult to point out a clear relation between company's sustainability activities and its brand's elements. However, all of them are interrelated till some extent. While physique, logotype, personality are highlighting the environmental care; culture and values are associated with both innovation and organizational involvement. Brand personality seems to be the one that embraces all form of sustainability approach.

#### **4.4.3 Lantmännen's positioning**

Through its external communication Lantmännen expressed the following associations. Firstly, it is actively working which is obvious from its advertising content and derives from company's values. Secondly, Lantmännen represents itself as a company that passes on knowledge to both farmers and customers. The company also highlights its organizational features and values: it is a company of "talented employees and dedicated owners," says Per Olof Nyman, Lantmännen's CEO and Group President

(<http://lantmannen.com/en/press--media/news-and-press-releases/per-olof-nyman--lantmannens-new-ceo-and-group-president/>). Unlikely its competitors that mention pricing and cost-consciousness, Lantmännen mentions no profitability. Rather, it has more in common with Volvo that also exaggerates responsibility and reliability. Lantmännen also highlights its responsibility in every step of the value chain - “from field to fork” (<http://lantmannen.com/en/About-Lantmannen/>).

## **4.5 Volvo**

### **4.5.1 Volvo’s sustainability activities and company’s culture**

Volvo Cars’ view of sustainable development is based on Brundtland’s definition of future generations’ requirements which is used as epigraph before sustainability reports and on the website :

*“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to their own needs. Brundtland, Our common future, 1978”* (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/a-sustainable-approach-to-business/pages/default.aspx>).

Sustainable development in Volvo encompasses three elements – Economy, Environment and Social Responsibility in following priorities: Profitability, Environmental care and Safety (Corporate report 2011, Our view of sustainability, p.4; <http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/a-sustainable-approach-to-business/pages/default.aspx>). Based on the context analysis, it can be concluded that Volvo’s sustainability activities derive from its approach. The goal of Volvo Cars is to sell cars profitably in the luxury segment and the company does significant work in this direction. Sustainable profitability is inferior to the environmental considerations. The company pays certain attention to recycling, fuel efficiency. Efforts are taken in order to develop efficient and powerful engines and considerable steps are taken towards electrification strategy. One of the main tasks in order to reduce climate impact is carbon dioxide reduction. In terms of its contribution to the environmental issues Volvo is one of the companies that is participating in EU Sartre project in which seven companies in four countries are developing systems for road trains, or platooning. The project is aimed to contribute to efficient fuel

consumption and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The main issue of the company's activities is its continuing work on providing safety. Crash-safety tests are taken on an on-going basis. The company has been tackling the problem of accident frequency and doing constant research and development, implementing advanced safety systems having in mind the goal to reduce serious injuries and fatalities by 2020. Social responsibility means the control of supply chain in terms of human rights, bribery and environmental care (Appendix 8).

Volvo defines stakeholders as employees, suppliers and dealers and maintains dialogue with them because the latter are believed "to contribute new perspectives and expectations that the company strives to consider and balance to the greatest possible extent" (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/stakeholders/Pages/stakeholder-dialogue.aspx>). However, customers are not mentioned as being stakeholder group, instead, they seem to possess a special place.

Sustainable development is integrated in the company's culture by its focus on sustainable innovation, research and development related to environmental and social issues (safety):

*And we aim to be a leader in developing innovative human-centric technology. To make this happen, we need more talented people on-board. People with passion, energy, business sense and the drive to innovate.*  
(<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/career/working-at-volvo-car/Pages/default.aspx>)

*Care for the Environment continues to be a core value for Volvo Cars and we are determined to persistently keep on working with developing our cars and improving our operations with regards to environmental care.*  
(<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/environment/pages/default.aspx>)

*Today, Volvo Cars is on the forefront of prevention and active safety through the development of systems that keep the driver alert and well-informed.*  
(<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/safety/pages/default.aspx>)

The company needs more employees skilled in sustainable development. By creating an open and inclusive work environment with potential for individual development Volvo Cars believes to result in individual development with a considerable commitment. As



“diversity creates innovative ideas”, cross discipline collaboration that is organized between the natural sciences, technology and design is supposed to enhance employees’ commitment (Volvo corporate report 2010-11, p.24). Cecilia Nesser, head of leadership and organisational development, suggests that “cross-discipline collaboration between the natural sciences, technology and design based on the premise and experience that non-homogeneous groups are more creative and make better-based decisions” (Volvo corporate report 2010-11, p.24). Thus, it can be concluded that different specialists are taking part in the activities aimed to contribute to sustainable development. However, it is not mentioned how often different projects are being undertaken, so the question on whether this collaboration is occasional or constant remains open.

#### 4.5.2 Incorporation level of sustainability notion in Volvo’s brand identity

The physique elements of Volvo brand are blue, silver and, according to De Chenratony (2006, p. 213), rugged and square. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2010, p.162), these colors associate with commands respect, authority and wealthy.

Volvo’s culture is expressed as “Scandinavian luxury”. Scandinavia is known for its minimalism and modesty, so at the first glance the combination of ‘Scandinavia’ and ‘luxury’ may seem contradictory, but this would mean “beautiful functionality” (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/values/pages/design.aspx>) without excess. The company’s constant and coherent communication with its stakeholder supports another facet of the cultural component. Communication is aimed to reach the goal of making each stakeholder group feels that it is heard and favourably treated:

*Scandinavian Luxury involves understanding people and offering products that centre on their requirements. (Volvo corporate report 2010-11, p.11)*

*The Company’s new corporate and brand strategy “Designed Around You” puts people at the centre of all operations in the company. The strategy is a foundation and a guide for the*

Figure 4.5 – Volvo’s logotype



(Source: [www.volvocars.com](http://www.volvocars.com))

*business, the products and the corporate culture. (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/pages/this-is-volvo-car-corporation.aspx>)*

*Volvo Cars puts people in the centre – and offers Scandinavian design, advanced engineering and intuitive cars. (Volvo corporate report 2010-11, p.10).*

The brand is promoting the relationship based on trust, offering a customer to feel quality as you drive. “We provide the best training available for 1,200 professionals and motorists every year”, says the company. Volvo cars brand experience centre is open for visitors; Volvo Cars Driving Academy organizes Economical Driving Training, Traffic Safety Training, Emergency Vehicle Driver Training etc. (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/visit-volvo/pages/default.aspx>). Thus, the company encourages the drivers to participate in the common issue (reaching a higher safety and less environmental impact) through various interactions. Another element of relationship that rises from here is teamwork, not only between employees but with customers, too.

The following personality traits are the consequences of the relationship: the brand is functional, responsible and reliable which derives from constant work on safety. The brand describes itself as being “global brand with a high level of credibility” (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/a-sustainable-approach-to-business/Pages/our-responsibility.aspx>).

Talking about sources of brand identity, brand’s typical products are premium car segments designed for active people with leisure interests “who are willing to move into right environmental direction,” says Malin Persson, Manager Safety & Environment Communication (Volvo corporate report 2010-11, p.10). The product attributes are based on the values of quality, safety and environmental care (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/values/pages/default.aspx>).

There is the ancient chemical symbol for iron behind the logotype which symbolizes strength and steel. It also was supposed to take up this symbolism and create

associations with the honored traditions of the Swedish iron industry ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volvo\\_Cars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volvo_Cars)).

The brand expresses itself as fulfilling the need of security and safety in a long term. The story of Volvo's safety has started long ago, but there are still aims and goals for be achieved ahead:

*The vision of Volvo Cars is to design cars that do not crash. In the shorter perspective, the aim is that by 2020 no one should be killed or injured in a new Volvo...With more than 80 years' experience of car safety, Volvo Cars has a methodical approach for constant improvements and development (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/safety/pages/default.aspx>).*

Brand's elements are showing its integrity with the company's sustainability approach, mainly in terms of safety. The idea of relying on a strong brand, supported by its logotype's meaning, is coming from the relationship, established by the brand. Driving strong and solid car will increase the feeling of security. To entrust one's life to the car's quality and safety systems may reflect the trust towards Swedish social system with its guarantees. The culture of the brand is in harmony with nature – it is luxury but it will not take more than it is needed to meet customer's needs – and supports company's environmental consideration. Moreover, the customer itself is believed to be environmental friendly.

The three brand's values of Volvo – quality, safety, and environment – have become the beacons for company's sustainability approach. Taking a look at Volvo's innovation history will let us conclude that safety has been always a priority regardless the feedback. “Volvo introduces daytime running lights (people once laughed at seat belts too)”, says Urde (2009) on Volvo's opposing critics and skepticism. The innovation focused on safety and quality has integrated into company's corporate culture and reflects in the relationship, personality and physique brand's elements. Quality has been as a theme for communication from the very beginning (Urde, 2009). The value of quality has the connection both to the safety and profitability issues. As the time passed, Volvo has established a relationship based on promise and trust.

Claes Beyer (2008, Volvo Environment Prize, 20 years of Exploring the Way to a Sustainable World, video, retrieved October 15, 2012 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7yi96a-7IU>) remembers that in 70's and 80's and before the car manufacturers had usual idea that car can do anything but good and it was Pehr G. Gyllenhammar who would represent another idea. He suggested starting by admitting that cars produce environmental problems and asking ourselves "what do we do about it?" Thus environment has become visible and externally communicated more than 30 years. The environmental care is considered to have developed from the brand's cultural component.

It can be concluded that the sustainable development is not an add-on market strategy, but it has developed from the company's values reflected in brand. The sustainability strategy is coherent and consistent with the corporate brand's identity.

#### **4.5.3 Volvo's positioning**

The main feature that is to be associated with Volvo is its human-centric culture and its implementation in technology. This is supported by the values that guide the company – safety and quality – and dictates further development and dedication to the innovation, both environmental and safety-focused. The latter contributes to the attribute of reliability. Secondly, Volvo brand is externally communicated as active and cooperative, the latter is highlighted in terms of partnerships (support of the Global Compact's principles on Human Rights, Labour Standards, Environment and Anti-Corruption) and Volvo's desire to improve as employee's and customers' demands grow. The appreciation of employees has contributed significantly to company's desire to be associated as "the Employer of Choice". The company seems to be both realistic (with her admitting both technological and political challenges) and optimistic (with her positive envision of the future of the electronic cars industry) (<http://www.volvocars.com/intl/top/corporate/volvo-sustainability/a-sustainable-approach-to-business/Pages/ceo-comments.aspx>).

## 5. FINDINGS DISCUSSION

The results of the study make it possible to come into several conclusions on how the sustainability notion is integrated into company's culture and whether it is in agreement with company's corporate brand's identity and positioning.

In all the cases companies have similar approaches to sustainability focused on environmental considerations and social engagement; however Coop and Volvo also mention profitability and financial outcome as a part of their sustainability strategy. Each company clearly articulates the nexus between sustainability and the brand which Stuart (2011) considers essential. The text analysis proved out that each company's activities are in agreement with the approach and no company focuses on the peripheral issues (such as paper waste). Rather, each company contributes to sustainability considerably in terms of research, development and logistics. Thus, the five companies have adopted sustainability as a core strategy, not an "add on", that Stuart (2011) warns companies to avoid.

The essence of the corporate communication is highlighted by Balmer and Greyser (2006), who say that various outbound communication channels are vital in achieving the success of an organization. Thus, stakeholder groups should be treated carefully.

Most of the companies analyzed communicate explicitly the essence of stakeholders and maintain dialogue with them, however, Coop is the only company that does not classify stakeholder obviously, and Volvo does not count customers as stakeholder. Apparently, they are treated specially.

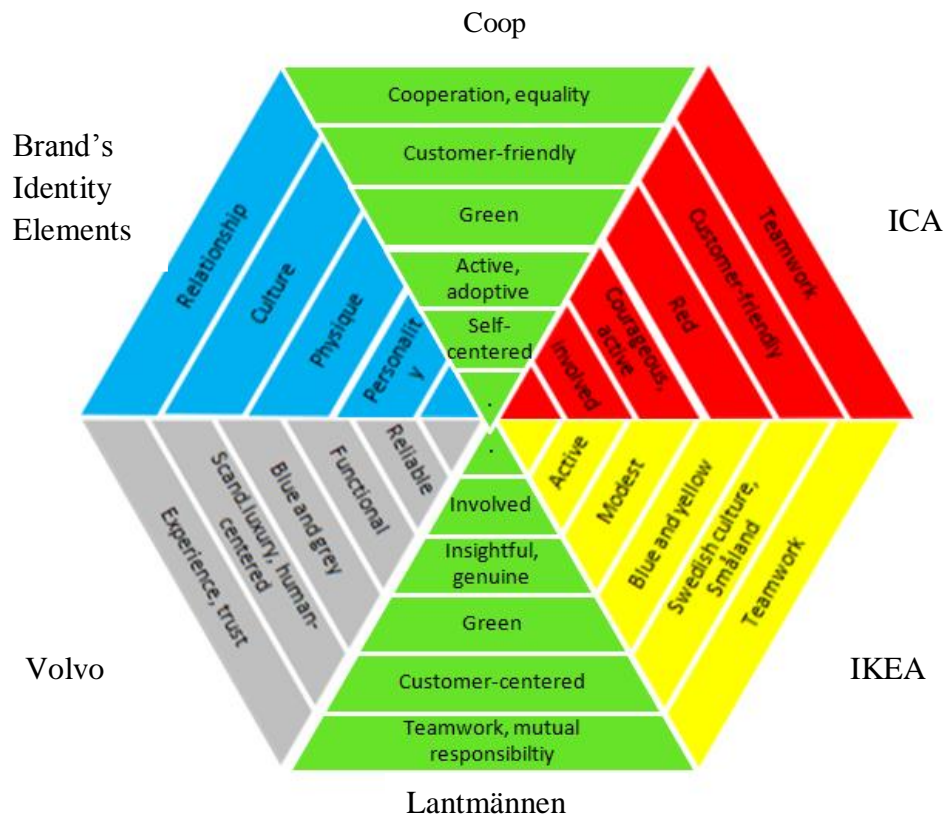
Regardless the consistency of the sustainable development approach the analysis showed that its notion is differently integrated into companies' corporate culture. The essence of the organizational culture has received particular emphasis in recent research (Hatch and Stultz 2003) and been discussed by a number of authors such as De Chernatony (2006), Urde (2009), Gupta (2011). Each author's position enhances the opinion that strong culture has a primary effect on the organization performance. While considering the

findings of the analysis, it should be taken into attention, though, that companies operate into different markets, thus, facing and tackling different challenges. Nevertheless, all the companies are contributing in terms of innovation, be it fuel efficiency research in case of Volvo, spreading the knowledge of Lantmännen, developing efficient logistics of ICA and Coop or looking for new solutions by IKEA. ICA, food retailer, proves out that it is the company that integrated sustainability in the very core of its culture. This is obvious from the reports, stating that it is not only “company” that contributes to sustainability, but there are a large number of people that are involved, which De Chernatony (2006) define as managing challenged by teams rather than undividuals, and what is the most important, on the daily basis. Lantännen’s focus on personal responsibility can be explained by Gupta’s (2011) emphasizing the fact the strong organizational culture may influence individual commitment, which seems to be aimed by Lantännen. Volvo also says to be conducting different programmes, involving specialists from a wide range of departments, however, it is not specified how often these projects take place. Coop, in contrast, does not reveal at all, how its employees at wide are actively participating in the sustainable development process. Thus, it can be seen, according to secondary data, as the least corporatively involved.

Kapferer (2004) speaks out the importance of carefully chosed brand identity elements while building it, because they are the ones that send the information about the brand to the recipients and to differentiate the brand (Keller, 2003). The investigation of brand’s identity elements and its sources showed that all five companies have the reflection of the sustainability considerations in their brands regardless the nature of the industry. The diagram below (Firgure 5.1) represents brand’s elements of each company. While some brands’ identity highlights the unity with nature directly through the colors and images, such as Coop and Lantmännen, some of them convey a deeper insight. For example, IKEA adds the cultural component and geographical roots that connecting the brand and sustainability approach. IKEA explicitly says to be conveying Swedish culture, which is known for its strong traditions of social equality and environmental care. Volvo’s brands elements are strongly connected with its values that have become the beacons for sustinability approach. Values are seen as a part of organization’s culture by De

Chernatony (2006). Urde (2009) and Lepla and Parker (1999), though, highlight the importance of perceiving the values by customers and its impact on customer relationship. Same as values (Hatch and Stultz 2003) culture plays a significant role in differentiaion of brands. Each company states to have a customer-oriented culture and rely on the relationship that are build on the cooperation and teamwork. Different personality traits have been noticed among brands. While each company exaggerates its active position and hard working, Volvo supports its with responibility and reliability which derives from constant work on safety. A contradictive to generous idea of common wealth feature was noticed in Coop’s personality revealing self-centrism.

Figure 5.1 - Brand Identity Elements:



Identifying the sources of brand identity make is possible to understand what the nature of the brand and what it is about. Aaker (1996) and Kapferer (2004) have created similar frameworks, starting from typical products and their attributes, aimed to help to investigate the sources of brand identity. While analyzing the given brands the framework was enlarged by De Chernatony (2006) question brand's value and brands purpose and Lepla and Parker (1999) pointing out the essence of the brand's story.

From the table below (Figure 5.2) it is obvious that the companies use and communicate externally different range of sources of their brand identities. Values expressed by the companies have different backgrounds and have connections with the reasons for brand existence. While Volvo, ICA and Lantmännen communicates safety, the latter and IKEA also express holistic way and teamwork as one of the values. Thus, safety and security have become the most externally communicated reasons for the brand's existence, except from Coop and IKEA that offer a general promise of providing a better life. IKEA has the most comprehensive range of sources, while Coop seems to be the least externally communicating.

Figure 5.2 – Sources of Brand Identity:

Brand's name \ Sources	Coop	ICA	IKEA	Lantmännen	Volvo
Products' attributes	"Pure, genuine products at good prices"	Food and meals	Furniture and accessories (well-designed, functional and affordable)	Healthy food	Premium segment cars
Quality-Value	Quality and price	Quality, health and ethics	Simplicity, honesty and cost-consciousness	Openness, drive and holistic view	Safety, quality and environmental care
Power of brand's name	No	Purchasing Centers' Corporation	Stands for geographical roots	no	"Volvera" verb
Visual symbol and logotypes	No	no	Swedish flag	Sprout from seed	Symbol for Mars



Personality behind the brand	No	no	Ingvar Kamprad	no	no
Brand purpose	"Contribute to a better life"	Safety and security	"A better everyday life"	Healthier life	Safety and security
Story behind brand	No	no	Story of Ingvar Kamprad	Long tradition of cooperative collaboration	no
Geographical roots	No	no	Sweden, Småland	Owned by Swedish farmers	Sweden

Since positioning is a key concept of brand management and is aimed to differentiate one brand from another, it was analyzed separately. In this paper product positioning was not tackled, rather the focus was mainly on corporate brand positioning. Thus, corporate communication, managed by the organization leader (Balmer 2001, Brown et al 2006), was investigated. All five companies are working on creating the associations of active and cooperative brands engaged in teamwork. It can be noticed that values carried by the brands and the reasons for brands' existence have become beacons for their positioning. Each brand conveys customer-centered culture but highlights various elements of it, when Lantmännen and Volvo are reliable, ICA is secure, Coop and IKEA are more sophisticated, but all of them are open and happy to share the knowledge. It is worth noticing that first three companies work on creating associations also reflecting price of their products, be it cost-consciousness or profitability, while Lantmännen and Volvo focus on reliability and functionality.

Overall, the study aimed to explain and discuss the nexus between company's corporate brand and sustainability approach. One can conclude that the sustainability activities are not an "add on strategy" in any case, instead it has connections with the brands themselves. However, the study revealed different levels of staff commitment to the sustainable development concept. Associations aimed to be created in the stakeholders' minds mainly derived from brand's values.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

Although the research has provided a valuable insight on till what extent the sustainability notion has integrated into brand's identity and whether it has derived from the sources of brand's identity, it would be unrealistic to think that the paper has no limitations. Firstly, the conclusions were reached based on the secondary official data only. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct interviews. The personal communication with representatives of the companies would most probably have contributed to a deeper and profound analysis. Secondly, since I was doing analysis by myself, the results may have been biased by my personal opinion. Thirdly, the study was focused on the brand's side created by the company (the sender) ignoring the recipient side. However, the latter is vital, too. Moreover, the research has shown certain contradictory results, which may raise a question proposed by Brown and Dacin (1997 cited in Dacin and Brown 2006) of how does what a consumer knows about a company affect what consumer believes about the company's offering. In this case, this would be the question of what consumer believes about the company and brand itself. Next, the rating is based on the survey results spread via Ipsos panel which makes it difficult to control the integrity of answers. Thus, in-depth interviews with consumers would contribute considerably to the obtaining of the full picture of the brand's identity and the way information, possessed by the customers, influences their choices and believes.

## 7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Brand has been considered to be a very important strategic asset of the company by a number of authors (Kapferer 2004, Keller 2003, De Chernatony 2006) and require a special knowledge in order to manage and sustain its value (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). The research has shed the light on how the information communicated externally by the company may influence the perception of the brand. From the theoretical point of view, the research has provided an insightful background for the further studies in the brand management area, which may involve consumer's side and be helpful in order to explain how the information offered by the company influence customer's opinion.

Managerially, the results of the research may be used as reference points for the companies willing to follow up their brand management activities and evaluate how their external communication and rhetoric fit with their brand strategy and sustainability approach. This is vital because a contemporary consumer wants to give a meaning to its consumption (Kapferer, 2004), thus coherent and consistent brand communication should not be underestimated. There are several certain considerations that should not be neglected.

Firstly, the investigation of communication of personality traits of the brand showed both bad and good example. Despite the fact that Coop is the first in the rating, its brand's personality carries such feature as self-centrism. This can be considered undesirable in no matter which industry the company is operating in. Firstly, it is in contrast with the generous idea of spreading a sustainable environment. Secondly, while self-centrism may look attractive when it is used by some luxury and sophisticated brands, but never when a company wants to reach as many people as possible. The cultural component expressed by IKEA is a good example of how well one can integrate the notion of sustainability. There is not a direct connection between the IKEA brand and sustainability, rather both of them are derived and influenced by Swedish culture. The Volvo brand is also carrying Scandinavian heritage as an inspiring cultural component. Customer-centered culture is expressed sufficiently by all companies with Coop and Lantmännen

highlighting the mutual responsibility, however, we can see that IKEA and Volvo express their cultures richer. Each company's attempts at promoting relationship based on teamwork can be considered sufficient. Volvo, however, offers the experience. Regardless the industry, feeling experience is very important. If a company wants to prove that it is doing something well, the best way is to let customer try it. ICA and IKEA reaches customers through various activities. For Coop and Lantmännen it can be useful to let customer be engaged and see the proof of, let's say, those new technologies that are shared with farmers.

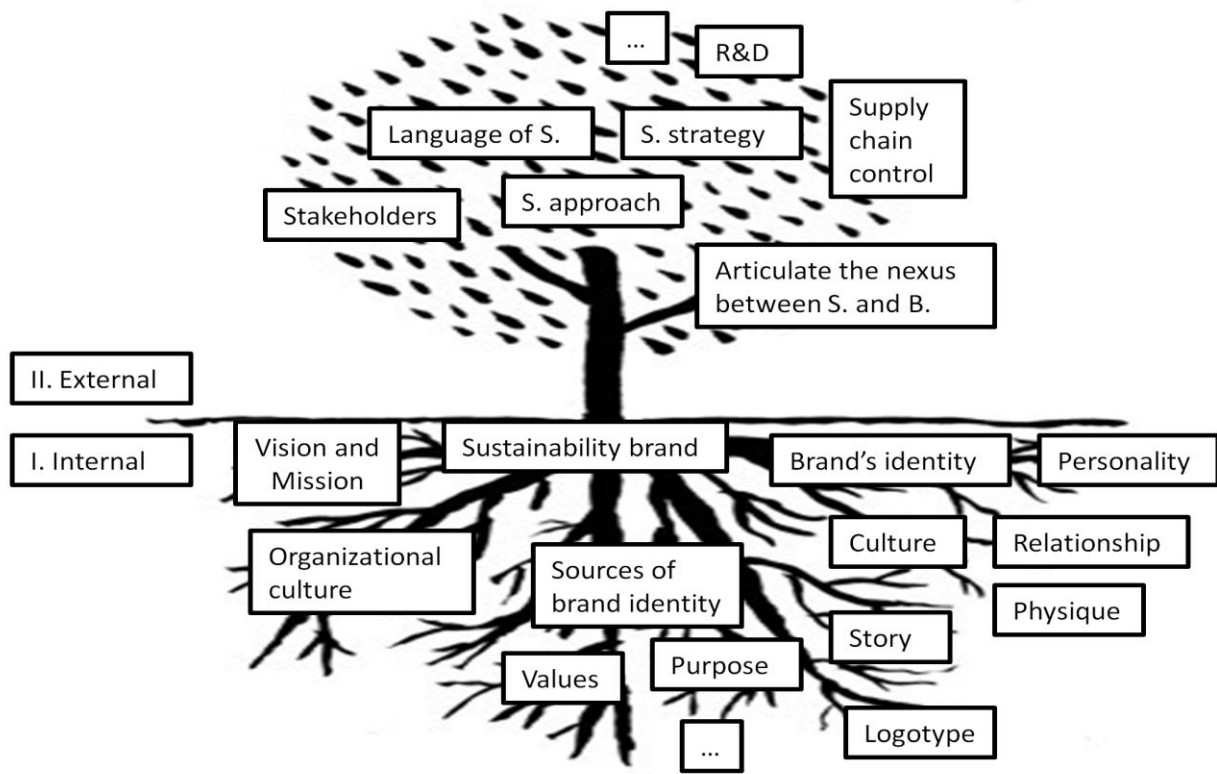
Logotype and its message are very important. Lantännen, IKEA and Volvo are good examples of how company may think of its visual components. To develop is a long and time-consuming issue, let alone changing the logotype, but in the end the message conveying can contribute a lot to the whole brand identity. Using a story of brand and highlight its personality can be found very effective, such as in the case of IKEA, when lots of people know the details of Ingvar Kamprad and the attitude towards him may influence the attitude towards the brand itself.

The research also showed that the stakeholders are treated differently and not always consistent. Coop says that it is important to have a dialogue with stakeholders but it does not define stakeholders, which make it difficult to understand who the company works for. Lantmännen also is very laconic about stakeholders. IKEA and ICA give a wide definition of the stakeholders, and the latter also describes the issues discussed with them, which make the company more transparent. Volvo in its turn, does not define customers as stakeholders, and does not explicitly and clearly explain customers' place in the company's mind. One can conclude that Volvo treats its customers as someone special, but guessing does not necessary take different people into the same conclusion, thus it is better to clearly explain this.

The last issue to be mentioned here is the organizational culture. The study revealed that all companies contribute to sustainable development by their involvement into research and development; some of them also engage logistics. These are very important and, as

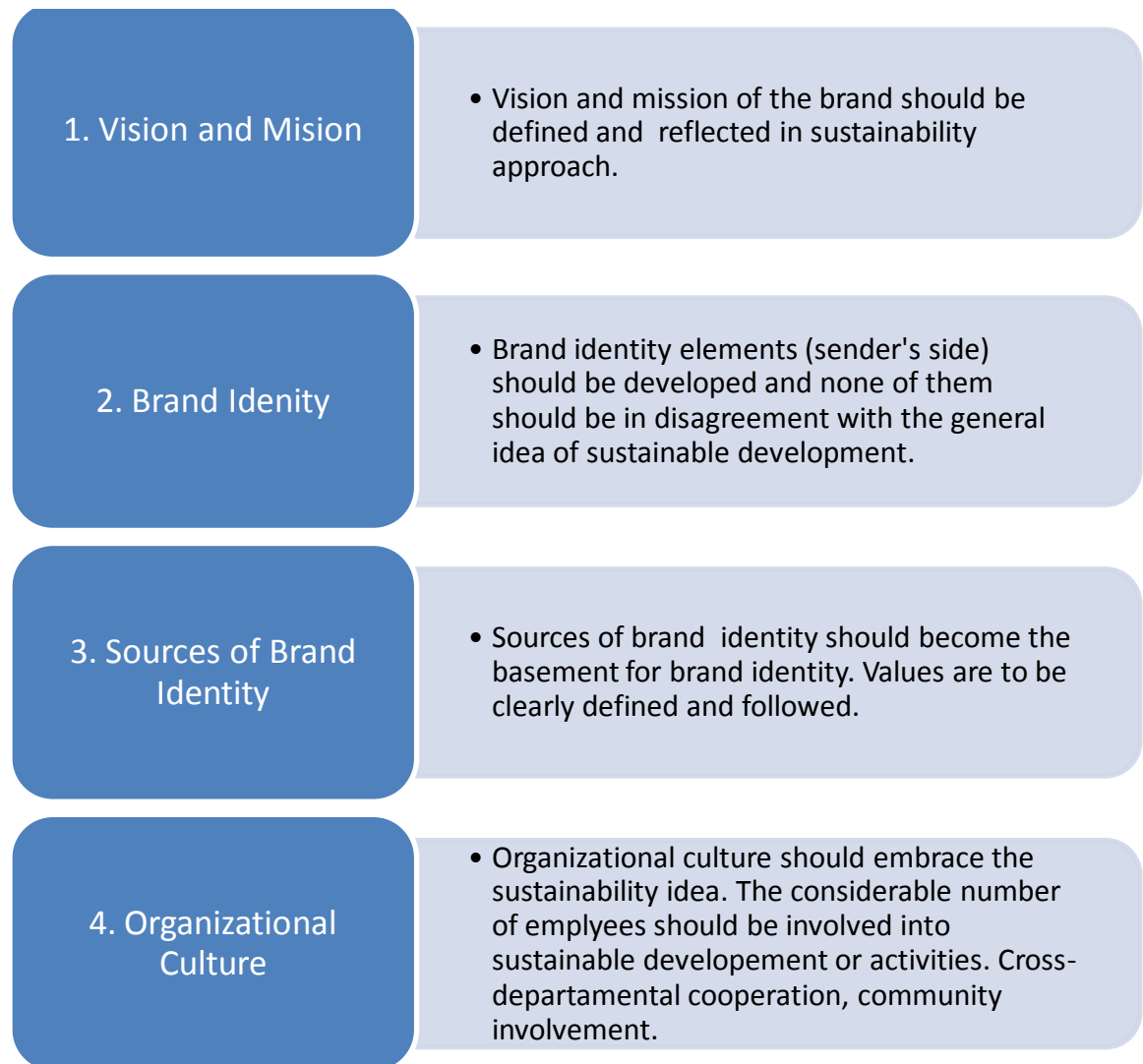
mentioned by Stuart (2011), essential. However, these activities do not fully reveal the organizational contribution. There should not be one or two departments involved, but the company as a scope. Coop should pay more attention to engaging employees in daily activities promoting sustainable development. ICA can be a good example for Coop of what could be done and what could be communicated, especially because they both operate in the same industry; or, had this already taken place – to communicate it externally to all stakeholders. Volvo does mention the cross-departmental cooperation, however mentioning the frequency would have a positive effect. More detailed information of how Lantmännen’s farmers use and apply the technologies would definitely have a positive effect.

Urde (2009) says that brand cannot be stronger externally than it is internally. Based on this premise the tree below (Figure 7.1) is to illustrate the roots and branches of the sustainability brand. There are a number of studies offering brand management tips,



this one, however, focuses on sustainability brand and has derived from the observations of five top-ranked sustainability brands. The steps offered below (Figure 7.2) are aimed to become beacons for managing sustainability brand. Internal part of the brand (1-4) stands for what the brand is and since the first thing is to understand the nature of the brand, will be discussed initially. Next, external side (5-9) (what the brand does and how it communicates) will be considered.

Figure 7.2 – Sustainability Brand Management



5. Where is the nexus?

- The organization should clearly communicate where is the nexus between the given brand and the sustainability. How the idea of sustainable development is reflected in brand.

6. What is the approach?

- The sustainability approach is to be defined, communicated and followed.

7. What is the strategy?

- The strategy should derive from the approach and be with agreement with it. The should not be an "add on" strategy. Rather, it should be within the core of company activities, involving R&D, supply chain management and other means of control and regulation (specific to different industry).

8. Who are the stakeholders?

- The groups of stakeholders and their interests should be clearly defined. The interests are to be taken into attention while planning sustainability activities.

9. Language of sustainability

- The advantages and benefits of sustainable development are not always obvious for all groups of stakeholders. The language skills are to be used in communication and in order to convince the customers that they can benefit from sustainable products/services.

In terms of conclusion, each element of sustainability brand management should be in agreement and coherence with other elements and issues. This is the only condition fulfilling which the comprehensive sustainability brand can be achieved.

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