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What is Swedishness?

- a qualitative research from the customer- and organisational perspective

Bachelor Thesis within Business Administration

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers and how a company could communicate and benefit from the country-of-origin cue in its marketing strategy to attract customers.

Background: Marketing must be understood in the new sense of satisfying the customer needs. Hence, Swedish organisations, when emphasising the country-of-origin attribute in their branding approach, need to recognise what aspects are associated with Swedishness from the customer perspective.

Several features could be associated with Swedishness and communicated through the usage of a brand. It could be where the item has been produced, how the product is presented or where it has been designed. Other characteristics might be that consumers want the owner of the company to be Swedish, that the organisation should have Swedish values or that the product must have a Swedish name.

Method: To fulfil the purpose, a qualitative data collection was chosen. Semi-structured interviews based on a pilot test were conducted with Swedish customers in Jönköping and asynchronous e-mail interviews were conducted with two Swedish companies.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that there are several features customers associate with Swedishness. The origin and history of a company, the quality and design of a product and Swedishness as a personal trait or behaviour. This research found that companies, depending on industry, can take advantage of the features associated with the country-of-origin cue.

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I Introduction

In the introduction chapter the background and the problem discussion of our subject are presented. The purpose of our thesis is introduced and we state our research questions. Finally, the delimitations of our research are presented, followed by a definitions section where keywords are explained.

I.1 Background

The aim of this thesis is to understand how customers evaluate Swedishness as an attribute of a product, brand or organisation and how the image of Sweden as the country of origin is perceived. This is of value since there are, according to Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993), tens of thousands of sellers, who understand and manage the power of a country's image when using it to enhance their products or when simply using it as a reference point.

Through marketing, sellers and marketers are conveying the message of country of origin to customers (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993). Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 5) define marketing as "the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return".

The process of trade among nations and continents has contributed to the globalised world that we are living in today. According to Feenstra (1998), this has led to that many firms have started to manufacture parts of their end products in cost-efficient countries since they find it profitable to combine domestic and foreign labour in their production process. Hence, emphasising country of origin may not be as easy as it seems, Chao (1998) argues that it has become more complex to justify solely one country of origin for the final item since firms are rarely a sole manufacturer.

Johansson, Douglas and Nonaka (1985, p. 389) define country of origin as "the country where corporate headquarters of the company marketing the product or brand is located". Al-Sulaiti and Baker (1998) mention that this brings a problem to what country you should put on the "made in ---" label.

According to Okechuku (1994), country of origin is generally more associated with the *brand* origin than with the country in which the item is produced, while King (1970) adds that brands are not appreciated just for their functional values, but also for their psychological and social values (cited in Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Further, consumers evaluating products by country of origin, may perceive the products or brands differently (Bilkey & Nes, 1982).

"German, Swedish and Japanese cars, Japanese home electronics and French wines, for example, are generally perceived and evaluated differently from, say, Russian cars, Brazilian electronics, or Israeli fashion."

(Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop & Murali, 2005, p. 96)

I.2 Problem Discussion

Kotler and Armstrong (2008) argue that marketing must be understood not in the old sense of making a sale - "telling and selling" - but in the new sense of satisfying the customer needs. Hence, Swedish organisations, when emphasising the country-of-origin attribute in their branding approach, need to recognise what features are associated with Swedishness from the customer perspective.

According to Lannon (1999), we need to distinguish between a product and the actual brand. To be able to make the distinction clear she says that we should think of products as items that are made in factories: "Composition of ingredients, materials, and workmanship, but no more than that. Products are what manufacturers make" (Lannon, 1999, p. 38). Clark (1999, p. 26) means that the purchase, conducted by a consumer, is actually the purchase of a brand: "A brand is more than an object; it is a relationship between the brand-as-object and the consuming public, a relationship that derives from a unique combination of associations attached to a product (name, package, history, advertising, promotion and so on) by which consumers differentiate one product from another".

Hence, the consumer is purchasing the actual brand and not a product. Over time the buyer evaluates the brand and the brand name will be associated with a form of meaning. There are several features that consumers might associate with a brand, in our case Sweden and Swedishness and as Scholderer (2010) claims, attributes need to be matched, otherwise they will simply be discarded.

Baker and Currie (1993) (cited in Al-Sulaiti & Baker, 1998) as well as Felzensztein, Hibbert and Vong (2004) argue that the country-of-origin concept should be seen as a fifth element in the marketing mix and Melin (1997) contends that one of the most crucial factors of a brand's identity is the origin and that both geographical and historical origin can be important to a brand's reputation.

As Kotler and Armstrong (2008) emphasised, understanding and satisfying the customers' needs, is the new way of marketing. Hence, recognising what consumers primarily associate with Swedishness could lead to more efficient marketing by satiating these needs, which in turn could be valuable for organisations emphasising the country-of-origin aspect.

There are many good examples of Swedish companies that have been able to expand while emphasising the Swedishness factor. One organisation that has managed to use this feature in its approach to consumers is IKEA and the company clearly states the Swedish heritage in its marketing and brand strategies (IKEA, 2011). The founder recently made a comment regarding this in a press statement:

"IKEA is today an international brand and also one of the main global advertising pillars for Sweden and Swedishness. Our roots are in Småland and we are extremely proud of that."

(I. Kamprad, 2011)

Another Swedish organisation is Volvo. In May 2011, the former CEO Leif Johansson stated in an interview, conducted by e24.se, that the roots of an organisation

are important and especially for Volvo, Sweden is important from a brand perspective. He says that one way of emphasising the roots is to locate the headquarter in Sweden and through that highlight the soul of the organisation (L. Johansson, 2011).

In conclusion, several features could be associated with Swedishness and communicated through the usage of a brand. It could be where the item has been produced, how the product is presented or where it has been designed. Other characteristics might be that consumers want the owner of the company to be Swedish, that the organisation should have Swedish values or that the product must have a Swedish name.

Being able to adjust to the needs of the consumers could be a success factor for many organisations. To be able to match the needs, the wants regarding Swedishness have to be understood by firms, therefore, we will in this thesis try to answer what Swedishness is for the Swedish consumer.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of our thesis is to investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers and how a company could communicate and benefit from the country-of-origin cue in its marketing strategy to attract customers.

1.4 Research Questions

- Q1:** *What do Swedish consumers perceive as Swedishness regarding a product, brand or firm?*
- Q2:** *What aspects should marketers emphasise in their country-of-origin approach on the Swedish market, to be perceived as Swedish?*

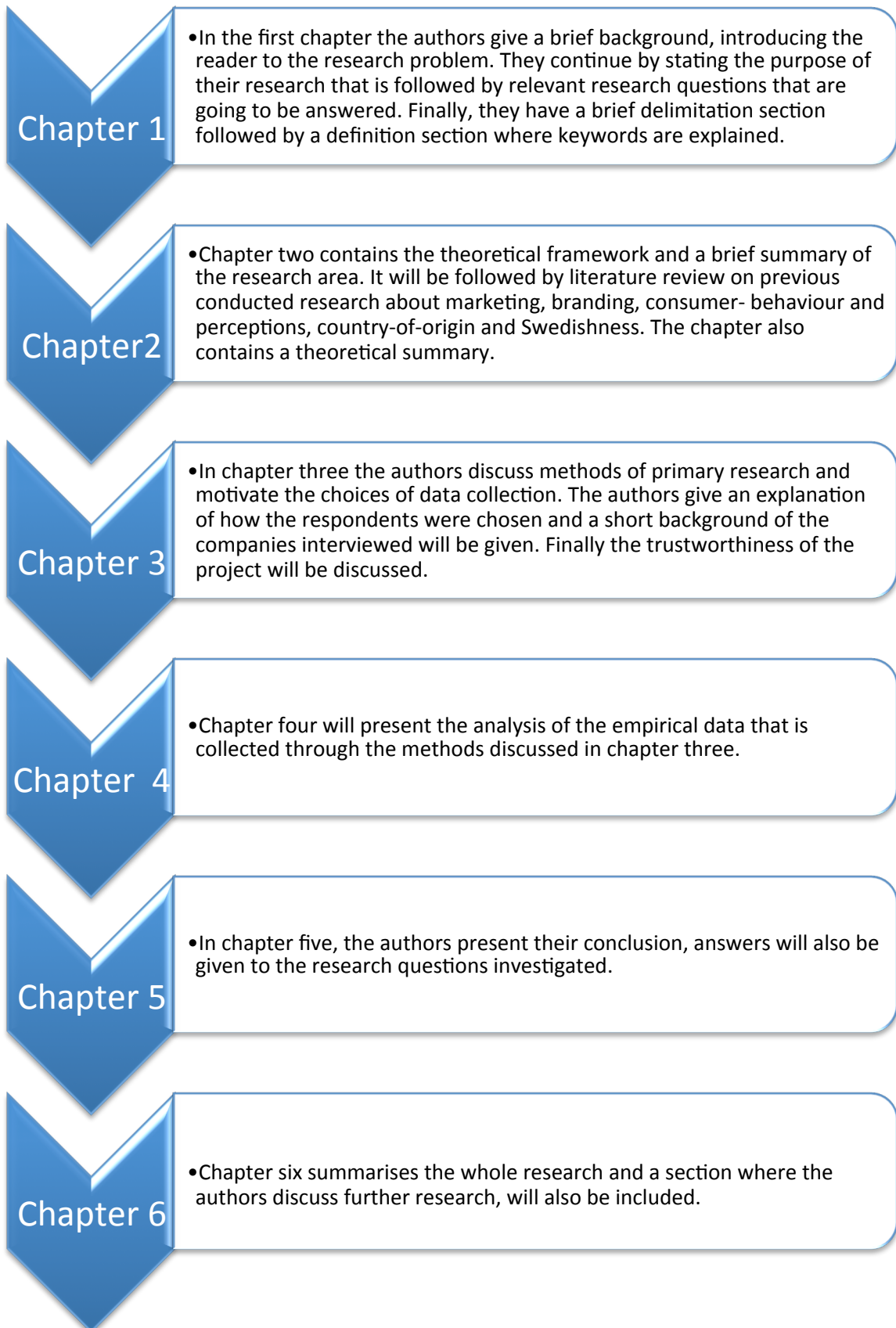
1.5 Delimitations

We will investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers by conducting interviews with people in Jönköping. The geographical limits and our qualitative research method will not enable us to generalise and draw valid conclusions for the Swedish population.

1.6 Definitions and Keywords

- **Swedishness** – A term we have used in order to describe what is regarded as Swedish behaviour and attributes.
- **COO** – Country Of Origin – A concept that describes where a brand has its heritage and starting point.
- **CSE** – Country-Stereotyping-Effects – The evaluation a consumer does when reflecting upon a certain product and its country of origin.

I.7 Disposition



2 Theoretical Framework

The chapter includes theories from the research fields of marketing, branding, consumer behaviour, consumer perceptions, Country Of Origin and Swedishness. It has been structured to follow a funnel approach, beginning with the broad theories to later becoming more in-depth and narrowed. A research gap is presented and is followed by a theoretical summary.

2.1 Marketing

In recent years, marketers have had a strong focus on understanding the influence that country of origin has on the attitudes and evaluations which customers tend to have towards the products and services offered (Hooley, Shipley & Krieger, 1988). Therefore, understanding the research area of marketing will be of contribution when analysing what Swedishness is and how it is conveyed to customers.

The concept of marketing emerged in the mid 1950s where business shifted from a product-centred, “make-and-sell” philosophy to a more customer-centred, “sense-and-response” philosophy that emphasised finding the right products for your customers instead of finding the right customers for you product (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

“The aim of marketing is to make selling unnecessary”

(Peter Drucker, 2006, cited in Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, p. 5)

Baker (2006) says that the word *marketing* today is universal and that it is encountered everywhere in most contexts. It is applied to people, places and causes and is not only associated with the selling and buying of goods and services.

According to Tadajewski and Brownlie (2008), marketing, as a practical exercise, is about meeting and satisfying customer needs that would be profitable to an organisation, which is also supported by Kotler & Keller (2009, p. 45) who gives a short but precise definition of marketing as “meeting needs profitably”. They also distinguish between a social and a managerial definition of marketing where the social definition emphasises that marketing is a societal process of creating, offering and exchanging products and services from which people obtain what they need and want (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Peter Drucker (1973) has a more managerial view of marketing and says that marketing should result in a customer who is ready to buy. Hence, all that should be needed is to make the product or service available (cited in Kotler & Keller, 2009).

Kotler and Keller (2009) argue that in order to understand the marketing function, we need to understand its core set of concepts, that *needs* are the basic human requirements which become *wants* when they are directed to specific objects that might satisfy the needs, and that *demands* are wants for specific products depending on the ability to pay. Important is that they claim that marketers do not create needs, but that needs pre-exist marketers:

“Marketers, along with other societal factors, influence wants. Marketers might promote the idea that a Mercedes would satisfy a person’s need for social status. They do not, however, create the need for social status.”

(Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 52)

Marketing activities come in many different forms which McCarthy (2002) classifies into *the four Ps of marketing*: product, price, place and promotion (cited in Kotler & Keller, 2009).



Figure 2.1 - The Four P Components of The Marketing Mix (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 61).

2.2 Branding

Often, at the time of the purchase, consumers associate the country of origin with the origin of the *brand* and do not actively seek for the information of where the product was manufactured (Okechuku, 1994). Since brands play an important role when evaluating offers, we need to look into the research field of branding to understand how Swedishness can be added as a value to a product.

De Chernatony and McDonald (1998) present a marketing mix consisting of product, packaging, promotion, price and distribution through which marketers are trying to develop a unique position in the mental map of the market in the customer’s mind. Added values are often emotional values that are difficult for customers to articulate, but they leave marks in the mind of the customer (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). Gad (2000) argues that a brand exists in peoples’ minds and that they leave mental footprints.

De Chernatony and McDonald (1998, p. 17) argue that “the purpose of branding is to facilitate the organizations task of getting and maintaining a loyal customer base in a cost-effective manner to achieve the highest possible return on investment.” They further contend that values added to the core product, which leads to an augmented product, contribute with 80% of the total impact on customers while the basic features of the core product only constitute the remaining 20% of the total impact. It is not only the actual component parts that are considered when purchasing the product but also additional attributes, even if they are intangible, the buyer finds them to be very real (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998).

The added values need to be relevant and communicated to the consumers and if organisations want to benefit with a price premium, it is crucial that the consumers perceive relevant added values they will appreciate and which are above the functional role of the product (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998). Baker (2006) argues that in order to deliver satisfaction, firms need to fully understand the desires of their customers, further develop attributes and features that match these requests and carefully position themselves to reach the target audience.

"The images surrounding brands enable consumers to form a mental vision of what and who brands stand for. Specific brands are selected when the images they convey match the needs, values and lifestyles of consumers."

(De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998, p. 114)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, branding is: "a name, a term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (cited in Baker, 2006, p. 404). Baker (2006) claims that there are two key objectives of branding within this definition, *identification* and *differentiation*. If organisations manage these two key aspects of branding, they can help consumers to reduce the risk with the purchases they are going to make since recognition of the brand makes consumers more confident.

De Chernatony and McDonald (1998, p. 20) denote a successful brand as "an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition."

According to Aaker (1996), brand identity consists of four key elements; first having a unique set of associations where the main aspect is to be able to represent what the brand stands for and wishes to convey to their customers. Secondly, having a value proposition where the organisations involve both functional and emotional benefits. Thirdly, having a complex bundle of dimensions that are organised around four perspectives, those four perspectives are brand as a product, organisation, person and as a symbol. The fourth, and the last key element, is to have a core and an extended structure. It is important to not emphasise any of these key elements over the others, Aaker (1996) argues that they are equally important.

"A brand name is, from the consumers perspective, a very important piece of information and is often the key piece. It is, therefore essential that an appropriate brand name is chosen which will reinforce the brands desired positioning by associating it with the relevant attributes that influence the buying behaviour"

(De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998, p. 94)

Some of the key aspects that should be considered when choosing a brand name, according to De Chernatony and McDonald (1998), are to make the brand name simple, distinctive, meaningful and the name should be compatible with the product.

To understand the importance of branding, a former CEO of McDonalds has stated:

“If every asset we own, every building, and every piece of equipment were destroyed in a terrible natural disaster, we would be able to borrow all the money to replace it very quickly because of the value of our brand.... The brand is more valuable than the totality of all these assets.”

(Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, p. 230)

2.3 Consumer Behaviour

Understanding the individual's needs, enables the marketer to reach out with a product that can fulfil the requirements in a successful way but as Kotler and Keller (2009) argued, marketers do not create the needs, they simply fulfil them. Hence, we need to understand how needs arise and how they affect the individual behaviour.

Consumer behaviour is “the study of *consumers* as they *exchange* something of value for a *product or service that satisfies their needs*.” (Wells & Prenskey, 1996, p. 5). It concerns the processes of selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing products and services that will satisfy a person's needs.

Wells & Prenskey (1996) argue that when analysing consumer behaviour one must identify three types of actors. *Consumers*, who are the individuals that buy and consume products or services to satisfy their need, *marketers* who are the individuals or organisations that satisfy the needs of consumer in exchange for money, and thirdly, the *public policy actors* who are involved in the public debate about the activities of consumers and marketers.

Some of the needs are more important or relevant than others and those who are more important and personally relevant are called *high involvement needs*, while less important needs are *low involvement needs*. (Wells & Prenskey, 1996).

Consumer behaviour is also about internal processes as of motivation, perceptions and learning. Motivation is the psychological process that allows consumers to recognise their needs, perceptions is used to gather information from the environment, and learning is the tool they use to organise and remember that information (Wells & Prenskey, 1996).

2.4 Consumer Perceptions

If we want to find out how Swedishness is perceived by consumers, we need to understand how the human senses react to stimuli, how the information is gathered and used to build an opinion.

“A perception is the process whereby stimuli are received and interpreted by the individual and translated into a response.”

(Engel et al., 1986, cited in Evans, Jamal & Foxall, 2009, p. 64)

Wells and Prenskey (1996) argue that perceptions are the process by which individuals select stimuli or objects in their environment that allows them to identify

the people and products around them. Information is gathered about these objects and anything that occurs in the environment passes through the individual's perceptual process in order to get a consistent picture.

Further, both individuals' perceptual tools and the visibility of the options affect the person's ability of perceiving different options (Wells & Prensky, 1996).

We would like to introduce the five senses as presented in the books. The usage of colours, packaging and design is perceived through the first sense, *vision*. The second sense is *sound* which could be illustrated through music in stores or sound in advertisements on the television. Touching fabrics illustrates the third sense *touch*. Trying a product that is supposed to be eaten, the consumer uses his or hers fourth sense, *taste*. Finally, the fifth sense of *smell* could be illustrated through the scent of freshly baked bread in the store. All of these senses will have an impact on consumers according to Evans et al. (2009).

Statt (1997) argues that we use our five senses to retrieve information about the environment through the use of our eyes, ears and other sense organs. He also claims that this is an oversimplified description of how the human senses work.

Scholderer (2010) says that specifications have to be matched towards the needs of the consumer, otherwise they will simply be discarded.

According to Blythe (2008), a person, a product, an event or situation, or anything that catches the attention of an individual, is considered as a stimulus object. For an organisation the stimulus is likely to be a retail shop, marketing communication or a brand.

"The retail environment provides marketers with many opportunities to play on consumers' senses in order to develop and maintain their relationships with brands."

(Evans et al., 2009, p. 64)

2.5 Country Of Origin

Country of origin is of great importance for our research and purpose of investigating what the perceptions of Swedishness is. This is because it touches upon the concepts of marketing and branding, but more importantly, it concerns products' heritages and what importance and effect that has on customers.

Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) argue that images of items in our surroundings often lead to stereotyping, and from the marketer's perspective, the aspect of images has been recognised for decades and it has been of importance for products and brands. Reiersen (1967) observed that marketing is able to influence the stereotypes that consumers might have towards the country-of-origin images, by the usage of promotion and distribution activities.

Samiee (1994) argues that country-stereotyping-effects (CSE) are fundamental in most country-of-origin reports and depend on factors as consumers' experiences with products from the country in question, knowledge regarding the country, political beliefs and fear and ethnocentric tendencies.

“CSE, is central in the majority of CO studies and reflects customers' attitudes and emotions and is a direct result of their knowledge of, or beliefs regarding, the true or perceived CO”

(Samiee, 1994, p. 583)

Brucks (1985) claims that customers who are familiar with a brand have a propensity to evaluate the purchase quicker since they are aware of the brand attributes, hence he draws the conclusion that these customers tend to not emphasise the country-of-origin aspect in their purchasing decision. Chao and Rajendran (1993) as well as Maronick (1995) further argue that consumers are using the brand of the product as a substitute for the country information, in spite of where the product is actually produced.

In a study conducted by Schaefer (1997), she comes to the conclusion that being familiar with the brand and having an objective knowledge about the product, diminishes the effect of country of origin in the product evaluation.

In another study, conducted in the United States, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands by Okechuku (1994), country of origin was one of the two or three most important features when consumers evaluated the products within the two product categories of television sets and car radio/cassette players and the conclusion of the research was that country of origin is as important as the brand name and the price.

A study conducted in Australia by Elliot and Cameron (1994) showed that country of origin was of less importance for the consumers than quality of manufacture and price but they argue that the country of origin is effective and of importance when other things are equal, especially price and quality of manufacture, otherwise it is a less dominant cue in the purchase decision made by consumers.

Peterson and Jolibert (1995) argue that the country-of-origin cue is comparable to price, brand name or warranty as long as none of these cues have a direct effect on the products performance. Schooler, Wildt and Jones (1987) and Torelli, Lim and Ye (1989) claim that product warranty has shown to have the effect of moderating the country-of-origin aspect through compensating for a poorly perceived country stereotype while evaluating consumer products. Chao (1989) and Davis, Kern and Sternquist (1990) say that another way of overcoming negative country-of-origin effects is to use retailers with good reputation, this has been shown to overcome poorly perceived country-of-origin aspects. But if the item has been manufactured in a newly industrialised country, the retailer's reputation is of inconsiderable effect (cited in Chao, 1998).

Bilkey and Nes (1982) argue that customers in developed countries assume that products manufactured in less developed countries, usually are of lower quality, which gives industrialised countries a competitive advantage

According to Chao (1998), it is difficult to justify that a product is exclusively linked to one country since firms are rarely the sole manufacturer of the final product.

Hugstad and Durr (1986) found that the sensitivity towards the country of origin is different depending on product category, but that consumers are mostly sensitive when it comes to durable goods (cited in Elliott & Cameron, 1994) and Han and Terpstra (1988) also found that generalisation of the country-of-origin effect should be treated with care, since consumers do not perceive all foreign products equally.

The country of origin of a product is taken into account when evaluating it in different ways depending on what culture you come from (Gürhan-Canli & Maheswaran, 2000).

According to Hofstede (1997), Triandis and Gelfand (1998), different cultures can be divided into two separate groups, the individualist group and the collectivist group. The individualist group consists predominately of western nations, such as the USA, United Kingdom as well as other European countries while eastern countries such as Japan and South Korea represent the collectivist group.

Gürhan-Canli & Maheswaran (2000) found that the individualist evaluates the home-country product as better, only when it was superior to the foreign product. In contrast, the collectivist culture favours the home-country product regardless if it is superior or not.

“The images of objects result from people’s perceptions of them and of the phenomena that surround them. Assuming a basic definition of perception as “the meaning we attribute things,” and given that perception occurs at the individual level, each object has a different image for each individual observer. And, since people act on what they believe is true, “intrinsic reality” – whatever it may mean and however it may be determined – plays a lesser role in human affairs than “perceived reality”.”

(Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993, p. 5)

Schaefer (1997) claims that there is usually not sufficient information available in many choice decisions and brands might be unfamiliar for the consumer. He or she will rely on extrinsic product information such as, country of origin, price, or warranty. Schaefer (1997) further argues that the country-of-origin cue is complex and that the actual meaning of it should be learnt for different product classes.

“It is widely accepted that “image” essentially represents a collection and judgement of both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes of objects and classes of objects. Intrinsic characteristics can range from the components of a product to the architectural design of a company’s headquarters building and the physical appearance of a person.”

(Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993, p. 7)

The country-of-origin effects on the consumer, in a real purchasing situation, may diminish when you take other issues into account such as the physical product, brand name and price among others. With this in regard, country of origin is not of major influence when firms are pricing their products (Agrawal & Kamakurat, 1999).

“Origin cues are available to consumers and other publics in a far broader set of circumstances than is usually realized or acknowledged. Some of the main manifestations of the origin cue can be categorized as follows”

(Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993, p. 14):

1. *Embedded directly into the brand name.*
2. *Indicated indirectly through the brand name.*
3. *Indicated directly or indirectly in the producer’s company name.*
4. *Promoted expressly as a significant part of, or as “the,” brand’s unique selling proposition*

There is a discussion about whether the importance of origin images will diminish in the buying behaviour of consumers since the markets are becoming more globalised and the evidence available on this topic implies that the greater the level of globalisation, the larger the significance of Product Country Image (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 1993).

2.6 Swedishness

The modern Swedish culture has been shaped since the end of the 19th century; the industrial revolution was slower in Sweden than in other parts of Europe, which gave a postponed development towards the industrial lifestyle (Herlitz, 2003). During this industrial expansion, the urbanisation was in full bloom and the middleclass was established. This middleclass became the trendsetter and shaper of the Swedish culture of diligence, persistency and hard work (Herlitz, 2003)

According to Herlitz (2003), the reputation of good quality, developed through the manufacturing industries and a great social system, from back in the 50s and 70s, are still caught in the minds of Swedes.

Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) claim that Swedish products are perceived to be high quality goods, exclusive and expensive. Especially this was perceived for Swedish cars and furniture made out of wood. They also state that Swedish entrepreneurs can take advantage of this positive image by producing Swedish luxury-home-furnishing or vehicles.

Arnstberg (1989) states that the Swedish culture is complex and that Swedish people are interchangeable depending on what group of people they are assorting with. Daun (1998) argues that Swedes are perceived to be honest, to always be on time and that this punctuality and forward planning is a proof of effectiveness where no time is wasted, which in turn is positively contributing to the Swedish community.

Further, Daun (1998) argues that there is a well established stereotype, that the Swede possesses a shy, stiff and introvert personality but in Sweden, this shyness and introvert attitude is not considered as a fault or problem. It is more likely that the shy person is viewed as a thinker, philosophical and willing to listen to others.

The Swede also has tendencies of avoiding conflicts, in a conversation, they may leave out the most difficult conversation topics as long as possible (Daun, 1998).

According to Arnstberg (1989), the typical Swede carries with him or her, specific values. He draws the conclusion that these values and ideas are typically Swedish.

- Equality among genders – No discrimination because you are a man or a woman.
- Safety and regulations – There are rules and instructions to everything.
- Not stepping out of line – Be like everyone else.

2.6.1 Research Gap

From our theoretical framework we have found that prior research about Swedishness has predominantly been conducted with the purpose of identifying what Swedishness is as a *trait of character*, while our goal is to research the aspect of Swedishness as an attribute to a company, brand or a product. Since Swedishness apparently touches upon the individual trait aspect, we will consider it as an additional dimension in our empirical data collection.

2.7 Theoretical Summary

The theoretical framework is presented with the intention of illustrating the theories of country of origin, derived from theory of branding, consumer perceptions, and marketing in general. The essence from this framework is about understanding customers' needs and wants and how to meet and satisfy them. Business has shifted from a product-centred philosophy to a more customer-centred philosophy of finding the right products for your customers and in order to understand the marketing function we need to understand its core concepts of needs, wants and demands. In order to deliver satisfaction we need to develop and cherish attributes to the product to sustain the brand image from which customers form a vision of what and who the brand stands for.

Customers' perceptions are created when individuals select stimuli or objects in their environment through the human senses that enables identifying with surrounding products. This gives marketers the opportunity of playing on the customers' senses, developing and maintaining their relationship with brands. In most cases, the country-of-origin cue is claimed to be an important attribute when customers make product evaluations, which in turn can be of great advantage for companies emphasising their heritage and country image in their branding strategy.

3 Method

In this chapter the methods chosen for the research will be presented, we motivate our research approach and our choice of interviews. The chapter includes an explanation of the choice of participants and how the research will be carried out. We give short historical backgrounds of Nordik AB and Leksands Knäckebröd AB with a brief discussion on the choices of the organisations involved. Finally, we discuss the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Choice of Method

In order to fulfil our purpose of investigating what Swedishness is according to the Swedish customers, we chose to use a qualitative research method, conducting semi-structured interviews. Our intention was to have a “face-to-face” contact with the interviewees to be able to build up discussions about Swedishness so we could get a clear view of the participants’ opinions in this matter. Prior to the final interviews, we conducted a pilot test which, after have been analysed, made it possible to make changes of the final interview questions. To bring more depth into the research, we conducted asynchronous interviews with two Swedish companies. This enabled us to conduct parallel analyses on the customer- and organisational views of Swedishness.

3.2 Research Approach

3.2.1 Qualitative Data Collection

We chose to use a qualitative research method since this approach primarily investigates how people experience or perceive the world and how they make sense of it (Gomm, 2004).

A qualitative data collection fits our research of identifying Swedishness since it is associated with both participant observations as with interviewing and it also seeks to answers questions by examining various social settings that are inhabited by individuals (Berg, 2001). Our aim was to get closer to the actor’s perspective by detailed interviewing and observation in contrast to the quantitative approach that emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes (Denzin & Ryan, 2007).

The qualitative method is also more flexible than the quantitative method since with the latter, there are small possibilities of changing the structure during the data collection (Jacobsen, 2002). We wanted to obtain how consumers perceive Swedishness, and that is best done by observing them and letting the interviewees speak with own words (Jacobsen, 2002).

3.2.2 Deductive or Inductive Reasoning

We found our empirical data through qualitative studies, which are commonly recognised to be inductive according to Schwandt (2007), who also argue that even though a qualitative method is thought to be inductive, sometimes such a study also includes deductive elements. This is also supported by Jacobsen (2002), who

argues that instead of pure inductive or deductive approaches, it is today more common to talk about open approaches.

These claims apply for our research as it is deductive in the matter that we first collected theory and previous research to build up an image of how the world looks like and then collected empirical data to see if it matched our expectations (Jacobsen, 2002). However, our study could be seen as non-deductive since we have not defined any testable hypotheses (O’Leary, 2007), nor have we sought for information that is relevant, only because it supports or fits our research (Jacobsen, 2002).

Our research also has inductive elements because we are using a qualitative data collection and open-ended interview questions, which is commonly recognised as an inductive approach (Jacobsen, 2002). If our study was purely inductive, our research approach should be strictly unbiased and objective, but since no researcher enters the world with an open mind or without expectations (Jacobsen, 2002), this is nothing we could claim.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) argue that there are three different types of interviews that are all used for different purposes. These are structured, semi-structured and unstructured. We decided to use semi-structured interviews in our data collection, mainly because we had the intention of creating a more open and less structured interview to really get a picture of peoples’ opinions on our topic of Swedishness. The interview was conducted with predefined questions where we had the possibility of changing the order if needed, as well as the option of asking follow-up questions.

Other reasons to why we chose to use semi-structured interviews were that with structured interviews, the arrangement is fixed and it is not possible to modify the questions or to follow up with extra questions while unstructured interviews, usually are informal with no predefined questions and should only be used when the purpose is exploratory (Saunders et al., 2009).

When conducting the semi-structured interviews, we had to consider the approach of asking appropriate questions or more specifically, if we should use open-ended, closed or forced questions (Saunders et al., 2009). We chose to use open-ended questions with the intention of giving the respondents the chance to answer the interview questions with their own words (Fink, 2003) but also to reveal attitudes and obtain facts (Saunders et al., 2009). An open-ended question is likely to start with one of the following words: “what”, “how” or “why” (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3.2 Recording Interview Data

We decided, in accordance to Saunders et al. (2009), to audio record all conducted interviews so that we, in retrospect, could listen to what was said, which enabled us to produce fully reliable data for our analysis. We also followed the recommen-

dations of making brief notes of non-verbal cues and always asked for permission to audio record the interview.

3.3.3 Asynchronous Interviewing

Asynchronous interviewing is used as a data collection method and refers to online interviews, conducted in non-real time (O'Connor, Madge, Shaw & Wellens, 2008). In contrast, synchronous interviews refer to electronic interviews undertaken in real time (Saunders et al., 2009).

It is often conducted in the form of an e-mail interview where the researcher first obtains e-mail addresses and agreed participation from all respondents. An e-mail containing the interview questions is dispatched, either in the body of the e-mail or as an attached word document where the participants are asked to return the completed answers to the researcher (O'Connor et al., 2008).

We conducted online interviews with two companies through e-mailing, mainly because there were no strict time restrictions, the participants could answer the interview questions entirely at their own convenience and it also enabled both parts to spend time, considering their questions and answers (O'Connor et al., 2008).

3.4 Customer Interviews

At the first stage a contact was taken with several individuals to build a discussion around the subject. This gave us the possibility of noticing if there were any trends or common denominators, which in turn enabled us to get a clearer picture of what questions that were suitable for our pilot test of the interviews. The pilot test was conducted with thirty individuals and was done so that we could assess the relevance of the questions, if there were any inappropriate questions of no contribution for the final purpose of the research. Our definite interviews were conducted with thirty eight individuals in central of Jönköping, but also in Jönköping's largest shopping centre, called A6. The purpose of the interaction with customers was to create a picture of what is perceived as Swedishness according to them. All of our questions were asked in Swedish.

3.4.1 Sample Selection

We felt that our research topic concerns individuals of practically all ages but we chose to have an age limit of 15 years because of enough experiences within purchasing of Swedish goods. The decision of not including other nationalities' views of Swedishness, was due to that it would be practically difficult with our time frame.

3.5 Company Interviews

In addition to our interviews with the customers, we decided to add another dimension to our empirical data by conducting asynchronous e-mail interviews with two companies. This was done to fulfil our purpose with the intention of identifying the organisations' views of Swedishness and compare it with the opinion of our participants.

The companies were chosen by us through looking at their marketing and their brand profile to see what amount of Swedishness we could notice at a first glance. Our choices of which companies to ask also depended on how we perceived their emphasis of Swedish origin in their marketing, together with the possible diversity of answers that we could get from having different industries. We contacted eight companies, although only two were interested to participate in our research. The organisations operate in two different types of industries, food and furniture; Leksands Knäckebröd AB and Nordik AB. Furthermore, these firms were chosen since they are consumer oriented in contrast to other Swedish companies, such as ABB or Scania AB.

3.6 Company Backgrounds

3.6.1 Leksands Knäckebröd AB

One interesting market is the food industry and how they emphasise Swedishness in their marketing activities. We perceive them as Swedish due to the Dalahäst used on their products but also since the actual product is typically Swedish. Therefore we believe that interviewing Leksands Knäckebröd AB was a suitable choice.

Knäckebröd was at first a way of storing the bread to avoid it perishing quickly, now it is a common household product in Sweden. The family that runs Leksands Knäckebröd AB, founded the organisation in 1929 and they have been producing their bread in the same town and with the same ingredients since the beginning (Leksands Knäckebröd AB, 2011a). Today they have about 24% of the “knäckebröd” market in Sweden (Leksands Knäckebröd AB, 2011b).

Contact person: wishes to be anonymous.

3.6.2 Nordik AB

Individuals around the globe usually associate Swedish furniture with IKEA, who unfortunately was not willing to participate in our research. But since many customers link furniture with a Swedish product, we chose to use a similar but a much smaller organisation in our research. Due to the large interest from the Swedish consumers in furniture and interior design, we believe that Nordik AB was a suitable organisation for our research.

Nordik AB is a new furniture retailer at the market. The company has opened five stores since 2006 in the larger cities of Sweden and mainly sell interior design items and furniture of various brand names as well as their own Nordik brand (Nordik, 2011).

Contact person: Richard Jakobsson, Press Contact.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Merriam (1995) states that the aspect of trustworthiness is linked with how good a particular study conducts what it is planned to do and in order to ensure the trustworthiness of our studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that we need to show that our findings are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable.

The concept of qualitative research assumes that reality is ever-changing and that there is no single, permanent reality expected to be observed and measured. There are in fact interpretations that are constructed by the researcher, which in the end are versions of someone else's reality (Merriam, 1995).

Credibility represents the internal validity of our research and we establish that by presenting our empirical findings of Swedishness as it was expressed by our interviewees in reality (Conrad & Serlin, 2006).

Transferability, or the external validity, deals with generalisation and concerns our responsibility as researchers, to provide the readers with sufficient information about our research on Swedishness so that they can apply our findings to similar situations or familiar environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability considers the reliability of our research and refers to our responsibility of ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable and documented (Schwandt, 2007). Therefore, all of our interviews will be available upon request.

The fourth and last ingredient of ensuring trustworthiness is the *confirmability*, which implies that we as researchers should minimise our influences of our own judgement and that the qualitative data can be traced to its original source (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, we will present our data and findings, making it possible to be confirmed by other researchers.

4 Empirical Analysis

In this chapter, we will analyse the findings from our qualitative interviews that we carried out with participants in the Jönköping area and with two organisations. Instead of having two separate sections for empirical findings and analyses, we have decided to analyse the empirical findings directly in order to minimise the risk of repetition. The section ends with some final thoughts on our findings.

To refresh the reader's mind, our purpose is to investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers and how a company could communicate and benefit from the country-of-origin cue in its marketing strategy to attract customers.

In order to fulfil our purpose and to answer our research questions, we needed to enhance our understanding of the subject of Swedishness. To be able to get Swedish customers' opinions on this topic, we chose to conduct "face-to-face" interviews and to get organisations' views, we conducted e-mail interviews. The empirical findings will be compared and analysed with our chosen theoretical framework and presented in different themes. All quotes are own translations to English since the interviews were conducted in Swedish. The original Swedish answers can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1 Swedishness Identified by Customers

Since customers' views of Swedishness constitute the bigger part of our purpose, they comprise the majority of the empirical findings. Therefore, we have chosen to divide this theme into sub-themes in which we analyse three dimensions of Swedishness.

4.1.1 Companies Associated with Swedishness

Overall we find that the Swedish customers had consistent views of what Swedishness is for them. When the participants were asked to mention any company or brand that is very Swedish in their opinion, same organisations were mentioned several times and the criteria was that the company should be founded in Sweden and have a Swedish historical background.

The general opinion is that IKEA, Volvo, Ericsson and Saab are perceived as Swedish organisations. Other organisations, such as Husqvarna and H&M were also mentioned, but not as frequently. When we relate this to theory, Wells and Prensky (1996) argue that these perceptions are a process by which individuals select stimuli or objects in their environment that allows them to identify the people and products around them. Information is gathered about these objects and anything that occurs in the environment passes through the individual's perceptual process in order to get a consistent picture.

The companies that were suggested are seen as Swedish mostly because of their heritage and that they are founded in Sweden by a Swede. A large amount of the participants responded that they have grown up with these organisations in their surroundings, and that it has been apart of their own history. The roots are the most important aspect when being associated to a region or country, and in turn,

these relate to the foundation of the organisation and the founder of the company. This is illustrated by one of our participants who said:

"I mentioned IKEA because it is an internationally successful company. Volvo is not Swedish owned, but it still feels Swedish, the roots are the most important."

Male, 60 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 1.

According to De Chernatony and McDonald (1998), the images surrounding brands enable consumers to form a mental vision of what and who brands stand for. Specific brands are selected when the images they convey match the needs, values and lifestyles of consumers. Further, the added value of Swedishness leave marks in the mind of customers (De Chernatony and McDonald, 1998) and since they have figured in the surroundings, they leave mental footprints (Gad, 2000).

According to our interviewees, their opinions of whether a company is perceived to be Swedish, are affected by their surroundings. When the companies are nationally and globally known to be Swedish, and often encountered across borders, this provides the participants with a perception of a Swedish firm.

Here is an example of a participant's view on why IKEA is Swedish:

"The yellow and blue colours, and that it is founded in Sweden. It is also associated by most people as Swedish and that has an effect on you."

Female, 20 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 2.



Figure 4.1 - IKEA Company Logo

The blue and yellow colours used in the logo, the actual brand name and the overall marketing strategy are reappearing factors, therefore, having a brand that is in line with these features of Swedishness, is of large importance for the company in order to reach out to customers (De Chernatony & McDonald, 1998).

4.1.2 Products and Brands Associated with Swedishness

We also investigated which products that are being associated with Sweden. The most frequent response was the Volvo car but the majority of the participants also mentioned products as the Arla milk, the Saab car, snus (i.e. snuff), Acne Jeans, Swedish furniture, ABBA the music band, Swedish meatballs, the Dalecarlia horse and Husqvarna products.

As mentioned previously, many of the participants related themselves to items due to the fact that the products have taken place in the individual's life. But also, Swe-

dish product- or brand names made them relate the items to Sweden, as one interviewee puts it:

“Snus is a typical Swedish product. The name is Swedish and no one else knows what it is in other countries.”

Male, 20 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 3.

According to some of the participants, as well as to Chao (1998), there are no Swedish products since it usually is a mix of several items from different parts of the world.

“For me there is nothing that is totally Swedish anymore, everything is international now days. We need to consider that a lot of items are being produced in other countries, therefore you cannot really classify anything as fully Swedish anymore.”

Male, 30 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 4.

Further, it was evident that the participants associated Swedish products with a high quality of standard, simple and functional design but to some of the interviewees, Swedish products are equivalent to foreign goods. A few stated that the quality of foreign products has caught up with the Swedish high standard, which is in line with what Herlitz (2003) mentions, that Swedes might perceive their quality to be higher than what it actually is.

“We have probably had a high level but I am not able to say if that is a myth or not. But it does not feel as if we are better than other countries any more.”

Male, 57 years old

“Unfortunately, we believe that we are a lot better than we really are”

Male, 42 years old

Own translations. Original quotes in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 5 & 6.

Hence, we believe that Swedish organisations should develop their products and increase the quality so that Swedes receive what they expect, referring it back to the “sense-and-response” marketing philosophy by Kotler and Keller (2009).

Some participants also experienced that the Swedish products are durable, have a clean design and are safely built.

“I have had different cars, and the Swedish car that I owned was a Volvo, it feels safer if you compare to other cars I have used.”

Male, 27 years old

“My Sony Ericsson phone is durable, robust and well designed. The quality on Swedish products is very high.”

Female, 25 years old

Own translations. Original quotes in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 7 & 8.

4.1.3 Swedishness as a Personal Trait

We also asked the interviewees what Swedishness is as a personal trait. According to the majority of the participants, Swedish people are shy, reserved and introverted but also friendly minded as individuals and a hard working people.

These traits accord to the ones defined in the theoretical framework by Daun (1998). It might be difficult to relate these traits to attributes of a brand or product, but they could be of contribution when approaching Swedish consumers. The ability of understanding how individuals behave could be of importance when selling items to them. Further, the interviewees respond that Swedes are generally satisfied with what they have and do not want to be noticed, but at the same time, they have tendencies of being jealous of others who have acquired some sort of success.

“A Swedish person is a jealous person that does not want others to succeed. We like to get the most possible out of our money. They are reserved. They are industrious and very technological. They are thorough and planners, but boring to some extent, I believe this might be because they are a little bit to organised.”

Male, 42 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 9.

These suggested attributes did not fully apply for the Swedish business manager. Although they are seen as ambitious and driven, they are seldom satisfied with what they have acquired. As Herlitz (2003) and Daun (1998) argue, the Swedish labour culture is about efficiency, hard work and diligence. One interviewee believed that Swedish managers have become greedier while other respondents argued that the managers are not completely driven by money, but are managing their assets carefully, in other words being economical. Consider the following statement:

“They are very industrious and have a strong focus on reaching their goals. They focus a lot on having a happy labour force and not only on the money like other business leaders do.”

Male, 42 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 10.

Concerning the expressed thoughts of hard work and diligence, there are mixed views when comparing Swedish and foreign business managers, which is elucidated by one respondent:

"They are probably more reserved and not as social in their way of working, compared to foreign business leaders."

Male, 27 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 11.

Since there are attributes that individuals relate to Swedish managers, they should in some way be transmitted further on to the customers, showing your potential customers that you are not wasting money and living a luxurious life, while at the same time being determined and driven. These aspects agree with what Arnstberg (1989) presents as typical Swedish values, that the typical Swede does not want to distinguish themselves from others but to be like everyone else.

Arnstberg (1989) states that the Swedish culture is complex and that Swedish people are interchangeable depending on what group of people assorting with. This was also apparent in our findings where one interviewee said that it is difficult to integrate with Swedish people:

"It is difficult to join a group of Swedes if you are not Swedish. They are not very good at socialising with new people."

Male, 23 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 12.

4.2 Swedishness – An Essential Factor when Purchasing?

Peterson and Jolibert (1995) argue that as long as it does not have a negative effect on the product performance, the country-of-origin cue is equally important for the customer as price, brand name or warranty. The majority of our interviewees had a different opinion and argued that the influence of price is of larger contribution and having any type of security and warranty will diminish the importance of the origin of the product. Reflect upon the following statements:

"If I choose between products, it is the price and quality that are the most important thing, the origin of the product is of less importance."

Male, 20 years old

"...because as long as you have bought it in Sweden you can always make a complaint if there are any problems."

Female, 27 years old

"Price and quality is the only thing I care about, it does not matter if the product is Swedish if it is crap."

Male, 30 years old

Own translations. Original quotes in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 13, 14 & 15.

Studies, previously conducted by Elliot and Cameron (1994) and Okechuku (1994), have found that the price and quality are of larger importance when assessing products which supports our findings. Although, there is a dissimilarity with our

results. If products have a Swedish origin, the interviewees respond that it will affect the purchasing habits to a larger extent, in particular when it comes to meat and dairy products, otherwise, price and quality are of higher importance.

“When purchasing food it can be decisive, because I do not want food that has been transported for long distances, however, with other products it is the quality and price that guides my purchases and not the Swedishness factor...”

Female, 27 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 16.

Chao and Rajendran (1993), as well as Maronick (1995), argue that individuals rather emphasise a brand’s country of origin than the origin of a product. This contradicts the views of our interviewees, since they claim that it is not the brand or the brand origin that are of importance, they will emphasise the origin of the actual product when purchasing meat and dairy products. Brucks (1985) argues that when being familiar with the *brand name*, customers tend to not emphasise the country of origin but this is not in line what our participants think; even though they are familiar with the brand, it is more important where the product actually originates from.

When assessing if the Swedes are individualists or collectivists, referring to the criteria given of Gürhan-Canli & Maheswaran (2000), it seems like the Swede, based on our findings, is more of an individualist when purchasing items. Our findings indicate that they evaluate the home product as superior, *only* when it is greater than the foreign item, except from meat and dairy purchases where they have a trend of becoming more collectivistic. This is in accordance with what Schaefer (1997) argues, that the complexity of country of origin must be assessed and analysed differently for different product classes. We elucidate this by quoting one interviewee:

“Price and quality are usually of most importance for me, but it varies from product to product with the accessibility of service in mind, that often goes hand in hand with Swedish products. Despite this, the focus is to get the most for your money.”

Male, 42 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 17.

Agrawal and Kamakurat (1999) claim that aspects within the purchasing situation such as price and brand name will diminish the effect of the country of origin on products purchased. But based on what Baker (2006) claims about carefully positioning itself, reaching the target audience and satisfying their needs, we believe that there is a possibility for the food industry to emphasise the Swedishness factor into their products, especially when it comes to dairy- and meat products.

This is since the customers find it valuable and have larger incentives for paying a price premium and as Kotler and Keller (2009) argue, companies should meet needs profitably.

An important factor to bear in mind is the view given by Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993). They claim that the importance of origin images might be of smaller contribution in the future due to the increasing globalisation. This was also recognised in our findings, as one of the participants nicely summarise it:

"I found it difficult to find something fully Swedish now a days. If you want to purchase an electronic device that is manufactured here, there is probably something Japanese or Korean within it. The general idea is that the quality is better, but I would not agree with that, we are probably not better than anyone else."

Male, 57 years

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 18.

4.3 Using Swedishness in the Marketing Strategy

One organisation that the majority of our interviewees perceived as Swedish, was IKEA. Much because of the emphasis put on the Swedish heritage and history of the organisation and the colours used in the logo that associates the company with the Swedish flag. But also because of the Swedish founder, Ingvar Kamprad, the Swedish names on the products and the company's overall marketing approach. One participant describes why IKEA is associated with Swedishness:

"IKEA is Swedish because it was founded in Sweden, but also because it has become global and is still associated with Sweden in other countries."

Female, 25 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 19.

One interesting aspect that we found is that since IKEA puts a lot of emphasis on Swedishness, one might fail to notice other non-Swedish factors. According to our interviewees, media might affect how individuals assess and perceive organisations. The latest documentary sent on Swedish national television, regarding the organisational structure of IKEA, has obviously negatively affected some individuals. Consider the following statement:

"IKEA is in my opinion not very Swedish anymore because most of it is based abroad and a documentary I saw on TV affected me a lot. It is basically only the product that is Swedish and nothing else now days."

Male, 57 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 20.

From our findings we could claim that in general, IKEA has managed to use its marketing activities of influencing the stereotypes that consumers have towards the country-of-origin images (Reierson, 1967). The company has also succeeded to affect consumers' senses by developing and maintaining its relationship with the brand (Evans et al., 2009). In other words, one could say that IKEA is making use of the Country Stereotyping Effects, presented by Samiee (1994). Another organisation that often was mentioned as Swedish, but not perceived equally Swedish as IKEA, was Saab. The recent changes within the organisation, are seen as problem-

atic when assessing the Swedishness factor. But due to the company's background and heritage, many participants still perceived it as Swedish and evidently this overshadowed the latest reforms. Therefore, if building up an organisation in Sweden, in a structural and Swedish manner, it might still be perceived as Swedish even though changes will be made during the lifecycle of the company.

"SAAB is an old, traditionally Swedish company, both cars and the airplane production. It is homogenously Swedish because it is created here, I believe this even today since the Swedish government are helping the organisation financially."

Male, 57 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 21

Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) claim that Swedish products are perceived to be high quality goods, exclusive and expensive. Our findings confirm what they claim, in particular about the high quality standards associated with Swedish products.

"... Swedishness is to me high quality and the quality is of greater importance."

Male, 18 years old

"I am not a brand geek but if it comes from Sweden it is good quality, so then you have bought it even though it was expensive."

Female, 19 years old

Own translations. Original quotes in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 22 & 23.

Therefore, these aspects are important to emphasise from an organisational perspective in order to catch consumers' attention.

Based on our findings, a company is noticed as Swedish if it benefits the Swedish trade, industry and labour market by creating job opportunities. Another factor that contributes to the Swedishness is the location of the head quarter and that it contributes to the region in several aspects as paying taxes to the Swedish government and the municipality.

"I would rather choose a Swedish product to support the Swedish industries so that people have the possibility to keep their jobs in Sweden."

Female, 25 years old

"Either you believe that companies are Swedish because they originate from Sweden, or that the company is here today and pays Swedish taxes."

Female, 20 years old

Own translations. Original quotes in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 24 & 25.

What should not be forgotten, is the connection and usage of Swedish words and colours in the brand. As De Chernatony and McDonald (1998) argue, having a brand name which is applicable to the attributes, might have an effect on the potential customer base and their buying behaviour. Our interviewees' associations

with Swedishness was affected by the colours and words used in the organisations' brands. The following quote is a statement about why a specific organisation is perceived as Swedish:

"Because of the blue and yellow letters, and that they personify Sweden to the world."

Male, 24 years old

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 26.

All these attributes given by our interviewees, could in some way be integrated with the marketing strategies. As Kotler and Keller (2009) claim, the actual needs and wants pre-exist the marketers and their job is simply to fulfil the customer demands. Further they claim that the shift towards a more "sense-and-response" marketing philosophy has become more evident in today's society. This, in turn, adds upon the importance of realising and fulfilling the wants that customers send out to marketers. As Scholderer (2010) argues, the wants must be fulfilled otherwise the potential customer will simply disregard the information and product aimed towards him or her.

4.3.1 An Organisational View of Swedishness

As part of our research, we analysed the Swedishness factor from an organisational perspective, by conducting e-mail interviews with two companies, Leksands Knäckebröd AB and Nordik AB. The intention was to identify the organisations' views of Swedishness and compare it with our findings, if there is a fit between the message sent and how it is received.

From our findings, the opinion is that the usage of the Dalecarlia horse in the logo of Leksands Knäckebröd, shapes the company image of being Swedish. Other contributing factors are the connections between the company name and the Swedish province Dalarna and the Swedish city Leksand, but also that the brand name is written in Swedish. Leksands Knäckebröd has, if referring to De Chernatony and McDonald (1998), built a successful brand since it is augmented so it transmits relevant and necessary information to the consumer.

The interviewees also mention the historical aspect, that Leksands Knäckebröd is connected with Swedish traditions and that for many, is something that have been a part of their lives.

When comparing the findings with the answers received from Leksands Knäckebröd, it is apparent that the organisation is emphasising the history of the product Knäckebröd, but also the linkages to the Swedish eating habits since the majority of the Swedish population both consume and are familiar with the product.

"Crisp bread is such a traditionally Swedish product, that is consumed by 94% of the nation's population"

"It is a genuinely Swedish product that has heritage from hundreds of years back in history as a storage bread."

Contact person, Leksands Knäckebröd AB

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 27.

In the company's opinion it was of importance to emphasise the ownership of the business, that it have been family owned from the beginning, but also to stress the origin of the raw material as with using the Dalecarlia horse, traditional typography and art.

Leksands Knäckebröd further states that the customers search for traditions since they feel safe when the brand is familiar.

"Many consumers seek tradition and in that safety. Habits provide safety, also when you know that it is from the local area."

Contact person, Leksands Knäckebröd AB

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 28.

Nordik AB believed that even though a product is produced or manufactured in a foreign country, it might still be perceived as Swedish if it has a strong relation to the actual brand. Chao and Rajendran (1993) are of the same opinion, as well as Maronick (1995), who claims that customers use a brand as a substitute for the country information.

"... a product could feel Swedish even when constructed abroad, for example if it is connected to a strong Swedish trademark..."

Richard Jakobsson, Press Contact, Nordik AB

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 29.

Nordik AB is not emphasising Swedishness in the marketing strategy but the company believes that it is of importance when Swedishness is used as a word of value in products or brands. Further, our contact person at Nordik AB, believes that the key ingredient to be associated with Sweden, is to design and manufacture the product within the country.

"As a consumer I think you often associate the product with being designed and produced in Sweden!"

Richard Jakobsson, Press Contact, Nordik AB

Own translation. Original quote in Swedish found in Appendix 1, Quote 30.

Further, our contact person at Nordik AB is of the same opinion as Elliot and Cameron (1994), arguing that the price and quality have a larger effect on the purchase decision than the country of origin.

4.4 Final Thoughts

Our findings indicate that our interviewed customers' views of Swedishness as an attribute to a company, brand or product, accord with the ones found from our company interviews. Swedishness is noticed when factors as heritage, Swedish colours and words are used in companies' marketing strategies. The data from the customer interviews also indicate that Swedishness as a personal trait, is in line with previous research. The typical Swede is introverted, shy and hard working.

Based on our empirical findings, we believe that being able to combine several of these factors, increases the chances of being perceived as a Swedish organisation.

We also believe that this information is of value for an entrepreneur that might have located a window of opportunity or who is in need to niche the firm, in order to stand out from competitors. From our empirical findings, we can conclude that the Swedishness factor is of higher importance depending on industry.

In one way or another, we believe that the Swedishness factor is out there and is affecting Swedish customers.

5 Conclusion

This chapter provides the conclusions drawn from our empirical analysis and it will fulfil our purpose by answering to the research questions.

The purpose of our thesis is to investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers and how a company could communicate and benefit from the country-of-origin cue in its marketing strategy to attract customers. The purpose was narrowed down to research questions, which we will answer when concluding our empirical analysis.

From our findings, we have found that the way companies are being associated with Swedishness by customers, largely depends upon the emphasis put on heritage and history as well as the overall marketing approach. It is important that a Swede founds the organisation in Sweden and that the company in some way makes use of the country-of-origin cue, such as Swedish words or blue and yellow colours in the logotype. Our interview conducted with Leksands Knäckebröd AB confirms this statement and all these aspects are emphasised in the company's marketing strategy.

We noticed from our interviews, that our participants associate Swedish products with high quality and clean design and the item should also be durable and solid. The reason for why products were perceived as Swedish was that they had taken place in the users' life and due to past experiences, they were connected with Swedish traditions.

The respondents' views of Swedishness as a personal trait are in line with our collected theory and we believe that the image of the Swede as introverted, shy and subtle is a common view among the Swedes when describing themselves. Further in our findings, the Swede is described as economical and wishes to maximise the benefit, getting as much as possible for the amount they are going to pay. This is an aspect that might conflict with the question of whether the Swedishness cue is important when pondering about buying a product.

According to our interviewees, the most important factors when evaluating a product are the price and the quality standard. This is however, not valid when buying food, especially when it comes to meat- and dairy products since if it is locally produced it might ensure high quality, but just the fact that it is cultivated in Sweden, increases the demand.

When interpreting individuals' perceptions, one should also be aware of the influences from people in the customer's surroundings and also how media affects people's opinions. We found that this has had an effect on our interviewees' views on what is and what is not Swedish.

In conclusion, our findings indicate that the country-of-origin cue could be of higher importance for a company within the food industry since our interviewees said that otherwise, there are no incentives of paying a price premium.

Any company who wants to reach out to the consumers will benefit if making the individuals relate to items in their surroundings, but for that you need to understand how they are and behave. If wanting to emphasise Swedishness in the marketing strategy, the most important factors to stress are the company heritage and history, the usage of the Swedish language and colours in the communications with customers.

6 Final Discussion

This chapter summarises the thesis and discusses the methods chosen. It ends with a section with thoughts of future research.

As stated previously, we have a research gap in our theoretical framework on Swedishness. Previous research has been conducted with the approach of identifying Swedishness as an individual trait. Even though this was not our main focus, the majority of our findings reflect what prior large studies have found. This is an indication that our research are in line with prior well known and approved research findings. But due to the fact that we conducted qualitative interviews, with a small scale of participants in one location, we can not generalise by drawing conclusions that are valid for the Swedish population.

From our findings, we distinguish the importance of Swedishness for different industries. Even though our research sample is not large in numbers, we still are confident that the tendency, of emphasising Swedish origin for food items, would be noticeable in a larger study.

From a marketing perspective, the organisation's view of Swedishness has to be matched with the ones of consumers, hence we conducted interviews with two Swedish companies to see if their views are consistent. Unfortunately, the participation rate of companies was low, our goal was to interview four to five firms. Therefore, the conclusions we have made, do not represent general views of Swedish organisations.

Finally, we believe that we could have increased the participant rate if we had chosen a quantitative data collection. But on the other hand, we think that this would have prevented us from having discussions, which now have provided us with more deep information around the topic of Swedishness.

6.1 Further Research

There is a great opportunity to further discover and research the topic of Swedishness. By conducting studies on what Swedishness is as an attribute to a company, brand or product, and not only as an individual characteristics or behaviour, one could fill the research gap. Further research may still be done with a qualitative approach, but if wishing to have larger samples and in multiple cities, a quantitative method would be more appropriate. This would also enable the researcher to draw more general conclusions.

Our main findings are mostly from the customer's point of view. Therefore, future research can analyse different strategic marketing actions made by organisations towards the Swedish customer to be perceived as Swedish.

Another potential research area could be customers' views of the importance and impact Swedishness has as an attribute on Internet based ventures.

An interesting topic to research is the possibility of applying the country-of-origin cue on a larger scale than just one country.

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Appendix I – Interview Quotes in Swedish

Quote 1:

“Jag nämnde IKEA för att det är ett framgångsrikt företag internationellt. Volvo är ju inte svenskägt men känns fortfarande svenskt, rötterna är viktigast.”

Man, 60 år

Quote 2:

“De gula och blåa färgerna, samt att det grundades i Sverige. Det är även associerat av de flesta som svenskt och därför påverkas man även själv”

Kvinna, 20 år

Quote 3:

“Snus är en typisk svensk vara. Namnet är svenskt och ingen annan vet vad det är i andra länder.”

Man, 20 år

Quote 4:

“För mig så finns det inget som är helt svenskt längre, allting är internationellt nuförtiden. Med tanke på att mycket tillverkas utomlands så kan man inte klassificera något som helt svenskt längre.”

Man, 30 år

Quote 5:

“Vi har nog haft en hög nivå men om det är en myt eller inte kan jag inte säga, men det känns inte som att vi slår andra länder på fingrarna längre.”

Man, 57 år

Quote 6:

“Tyvärr så tror vi allt för ofta att vi är bättre än vad vi egentligen är.”

Man, 42 år

Quote 7:

"Jag har haft olika bilar, och den svenska bilen som jag hade var en Volvo, den känns helt klart mer säker om man jämför med andra bilar."

Man, 27 år

Quote 8:

"Min Sony Ericsson-telefon är hållbar robust och lätt utformad. Kvalitén är väldigt hög på svenska varor."

Kvinna, 25 år

Quote 9:

"En svensk person är en avundsjuk person som inte vill att andra ska lyckas. Vi vill gärna få ut så mycket som möjligt för våra pengar. Dem är tillbakadragna. Dem är driftiga och väldigt tekniska. Dom är noggranna och planerare men lite väl tråkiga, detta tycker jag kan bero på att dem är lite väl organiserade."

Man, 42 år

Quote 10:

"Dom är otroligt driftiga och har en stark fokus på att nå sina mål. Dom fokuserar oftast på att få en glad personalstyrka och inte är enbart ute efter pengarna som andra företagsledare fokuserar på."

Man, 42 år

Quote 11:

"De är nog mer tillbakadragna och inte lika framåt i sitt sätt att arbeta om man jämför med utländska företagsledare."

Man, 27 år

Quote 12:

"Det är dock svårt att komma in i en svensk grupp om man inte är svensk. De har lite svårt att umgås med nya personer."

Man, 23 år

Quote 13:

“Om jag väljer emellan varor så är det pris och kvalitet som är viktigast, vart varan härstammar ifrån är mindre viktigt.”

Man, 20 år

Quote 14:

“... eftersom du har köpt den i Sverige så kan man alltid reklamera den om något händer”

Kvinna, 27 år

Quote 15:

“Pris och kvalitet är det som jag bryr mig om, är det skit så spelar det ingen roll om produkten är svensk.”

Man, 30 år

Quote 16:

“Vid köp av matvaror kan detta vara avgörande med tanke på att jag inte vill ha mat som har transporterats längre sträckor, men med andra varor så är det kvalitet och pris som styr mitt köp och inte svenskheten...”

Kvinna, 27 år

Quote 17:

“Pris och kvalitet går oftast i första hand för mig, men det varierar från produkt till produkt med tanke på att man vill ha lättillgänglig service som oftast går hand i hand med svenska produkter. Men fokusen är att få så mycket som möjligt för pengarna.”

Man, 42 år

Quote 18:

“Jag finner det svårt att hitta något som är helt svenskt nuförtiden. Om man vill handla en elektronikpryl som är tillverkad här så sitter det säkerligen något japanskt eller koreanskt i den. Den allmänna bilden är att kvaliteten är bättre, men det håller jag inte med om, vi är nog inte bättre än andra.”

Man, 57 år

Quote 19:

"Ikea är svenskt på grund av att det startades i Sverige, men även att det har blivit globalt och fortfarande förknippas med Sverige i andra länder."

Kvinna, 25 år

Quote 20:

"IKEA är inte så svenskt längre tycker jag eftersom det är baserat utomlands och en dokumentär jag såg på TV, påverkade mig väldigt mycket. Det är ju i princip bara produkten som är svensk och inget annat längre."

Man, 57 år

Quote 21:

"SAAB är ett gammalt och traditionellt svenskt företag, både bil och flygplans produktionen. Det är homogent svenskt eftersom det är skapat här, men detta tycker jag även idag men tanke på att Riksgälden hjälper till ekonomiskt."

Man, 57 år

Quote 22:

"... svenskhet är för mig hög kvalitet och kvaliteten har större betydelse."

Man, 18 år

Quote 23:

"Jag är ingen märkestönt men kommer det från Sverige så är det bra kvalitet, så då har man köpt det även fast det varit dyrt."

Kvinna, 19 år

Quote 24:

"Jag skulle hellre välja en svensk produkt för att stödja det svenska näringslivet så att folk har möjlighet att jobba kvar i Sverige."

Kvinna, 25 år

Quote 25:

“Antingen så tycker man att bolag är svenska för att dem härstammar från Sverige eller att bolagen finns här idag och betalar skatt i Sverige.”

Kvinna, 20 år

Quote 26:

“För de har blågula bokstäver och personifierar Sverige för hela världen.”

Man, 24 år

Quote 27:

“Knäckebröd är en så väl grundad svensk produkt som 94% av alla här i landet äter.”

“Det är en ursvensk produkt med anor flera hundra år tillbaka i tiden som förrådsbröd.”

Kontaktperson, Leksands Knäckebröd AB

Quote 28:

“Många konsumenter söker tradition och i det ofta trygghet. Vanor ger trygghet också att man vet att det kommer ifrån närområdet.”

Kontaktperson, Leksands Knäckebröd AB

Quote 29:

“...tycker dock att en produkt kan kännas svensk även om den är tillverkad utomlands t.ex. om den är kopplad till ett starkt svenskt varumärke...”

Richard Jakobsson, Presskontakt, Nordik AB

Quote 30:

“Som konsument tror jag man oftast associerar till att produkten är formgiven och producerad i Sverige!”

Richard Jakobsson, Presskontakt, Nordik AB

Appendix II – Customer Interview Questions in Swedish

Fråga 1. Nämn företag/märken som är väldigt svenska för dig.

- *Varför nämnde du just det/de här företagen/märkena?*

Fråga 2. Generellt, vad är svenskhet för dig?

- *Hur är en typisk svensk person?*
- *Hur är en typisk svensk företagsledare?*

Fråga 3. Kan du nämna någon svensk produkt?

Fråga 4. Vad har du för uppfattning om svenska produkter i allmänhet?

- *Skulle det vara avgörande vid ett köp att en produkt är svensk?*
- *Skulle den generella kvalitén eller priset ha en större påverkan på dig vid ett köptillfälle?*

Fråga 5. Skulle du kunna dela med dig av dina erfarenheter av att ha använt svenska produkter?

Fråga 6. Hur skulle du associera dessa företag/produkter med svenskhet?



Fråga 7. Sammanfattningsvis, vilka attribut skulle du sätta på ett företag för att du ska kunna kalla det svenskt och vad har du för övriga tankar kring detta med svenska produkter och företag?

Appendix III – Customer Interview Questions in English

Question 1. Mention some companies/brands that are typically Swedish for you.

- *Why did you mention this/these companies/brands?*

Question 2. Generally speaking, what is Swedishness for you?

- *What is a typical Swedish person like?*
- *What is a typical Swedish business leader like?*

Question 3. Can you mention a typical Swedish product?

Question 4. What is your perception of Swedish products in general?

- *Could it be decisive in a purchasing situation if a product is Swedish or not?*
- *Could the general quality and price have a bigger effect on you in a purchasing situation?*

Question 5. Can you please share your experiences of using Swedish products?

Question 6. How would you associate these companies/products with Swedishness?



Question 7. In conclusion, what attributes would you put on an organisation to be able to call it Swedish and what other thoughts do you have around the topics of Swedish products and companies?

Appendix IV – Company Interviews in Swedish

Företagsintervjuer till kandidatuppsats

Uppsattstitel:	What is Swedishness? – A qualitative study from the customer- and organisational perspective
Författare:	Emil Azar, Robin Hedvall och Markus Larsson vid Internationella Handelshögskolan i Jönköping.
Kontaktperson:	Markus Larsson, im08lama@student.hj.se

Syfte: Uppsatsens syfte är att i stora drag undersöka vad den svenska konsumenten kvalificerar som en svensk produkt, vilka attribut de prioriterar för att en produkt ska kunna kallas svensk, samt hur svenska företag kan förmedla detta i sin marknadsföring. Samt till viss del hur detta är en process redan nu.

Instruktioner: Vi ber Er vänligen att svara på varje fråga så utförligt som möjligt. Skulle uppskatta att få tillbaka Era svar så fort som möjligt, men helst senast den 26:e april. Då vi mottagit svaren kommer vi att sammanställa dem i en text som vi återsänder till Er för att säkerställa att det är en godkänd återgivning av Era svar. Tack för att Ni tar er tid att svara på våra frågor.

Företag:
Namn:
Position på företaget:
Kontaktuppgifter:

Kommentar till användande av namn och logotyper i uppsatsen:

Får vi återkomma med följdfrågor vid behov?

Övriga kommentarer eller frågor till författarna:

Fråga 1. Vad är för er svenskheten i en produkt? (speciella attribut och egenskaper)

Fråga 2. Tror ni att kvaliteten eller priset på en produkt har en större påverkan på konsumenten vid köptillfället än svenskhet? (förklara gärna i så fall varför)

Fråga 3. På vilket sätt betonar ni svenskhet i er marknadsföringsstrategi?

Fråga 4. *Varför* är det viktigt för er att betona svenskheten i ert varumärke/företag?

Fråga 5. Vad tror ni att era kunder associerar med svenskhet och svenska produkter?

Appendix V – Company Interviews in English

Company interviews for bachelor thesis

Title: What is Swedishness? – A qualitative study from the customer- and organisational perspective

Authors: Emil Azar, Robin Hedvall and Markus Larsson at Jönköping International Business school.

Contact person: Markus Larsson, im08lama@student.hj.se

Purpose: The purpose of our thesis is to investigate what Swedishness is according to Swedish customers and how a company could communicate and benefit from the country-of-origin cue in its marketing strategy to attract customers.

Instructions: We kindly ask you to answer each question as thorough as possible. It would be appreciated if your answers could be sent back as soon as possible, however at the latest April 26. When we have received your answers we will combine them in a text that we will send to you to see if it is an authorised and correct rendering of your information. Thank you for taking your time to answer our questions.

Company:
Name:
Position at the company:
Contact information:

Comment to usage of names and logotypes in the thesis:

May we come back to you with more questions if needed?

Other comments to the authors:

Question 1. What is, in your opinion, Swedishness in a product? (special attributes and qualities)

Question 2. Do you think the quality or price has a bigger effect on the consumer than Swedishness within a product in a purchasing situation? (if that is the case, please explain why)

Question 3. In what way do you emphasise Swedishness in your marketing strategy?

Question 4. Why is it important to emphasise Swedishness in your trade mark/company?

Question 5. What do you think your customers associate with Swedishness and Swedish products?