Branding Sri Lanka
- A case study

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__________________________________________ ________________________________
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Abstract

The tourism industry have become a key factor for economic growth in several developing countries. This statement is confirmed by the WTO (world trade organization) who see the travel and tourism industry as the worlds biggest economic sector.

A section of branding which refers to branding of a whole country is place branding. Place branding is seen as a complex process which involves multiple parts of the country. In order to ease for brand managers and to develop the theory of place branding Hanna and Rowley (2011) have developed a new model of place branding. The model is named the Strategic place brand-management model (SPBM- model) and consists of components which are argued to be essential parts in the process of branding a place.

Developing countries have a need for place branding practices in order to create economic growth. The SPBM-model could therefore be a useful contribution to the research field of place branding in developing countries. The research questions of this research was therefore firstly to see how Sri Lanka work with the components in the SPBM-model, and second to see which components in the SPBM-model that can be seen important based on Sri Lankan conditions. This to answer the purpose of this thesis: explore how the SPBM-model can be applied on the process of branding Sri Lanka.

The study was made through a case study of the developing country of Sri Lanka. In order to gain data seven semi-structured interviews were conducted whit officials working with branding Sri Lanka as a tourism destination.

By putting the SPBM-model on the Sri Lankan place branding process it can be interpreted that all components are tightly connected to each other, and also that some parts seems to be more important for Sri Lanka then others. If Sri Lanka put more time and effort in the three components of infrastructure, stakeholders and evaluation, also the other six components of the SPBM-model (identity, brand experience, WOM, architecture, communication and articulation) indirect will be affected in a positive way

**Keywords of the study:** place branding, country branding, destination branding, tourism, economic growth, developing countries, branding, brand evaluation, infrastructure, stakeholders engagement, brand identity, brand architecture, brand communication, brand articulation, word-of-mouth, brand experience.
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1 Introduction

This introduction chapter will introduce the reader to the subject of this thesis. The background information aim to give more insight in the area of place branding while the following problem discussion problematize the area and lead to the purpose of the thesis.

1.1 Background

Branding is today often considered as a key priority for many companies in order to stay competitive on the market (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000; Kapferer, 2008). Branding can be defined as the way in which the organization managing their brand and requires a long-term participation of both skills and resources (Kapferer, 2008). An organization can use branding in order to identify and differentiate it selves from competitors’, it is a way to ensure quality and honesty, identify the ownership and to hold the producer responsible for their actions (Daye, 2006; Kapferer, 2008) Branding is also an essential component in the process of building a strong brand image and to create brand awareness, moreover it may increase marketing communication effectiveness, improve perceptions of product performance and create customer loyalty (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003; Keller, 2009). A strong brand is positive not only for companies and organizations but also for countries (Kotler, Haider and Rein, 1993; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009). A strong country brand can for example increase tourism and other businesses, encourage investments, create visibility and build positive perceptions of the country, which all are positive components in order to increase the economic turnover in a country. (Fetcherin, 2010; Aronczyk, 2008; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009)

A section of branding which refer to branding a country is defined as place branding (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009; Anholt 2003; Kavaritzis, 2004; Kotler, Haider and Reid, 1993). According to Kavaratzis (2005) there are several terms of place branding which all are similar to each other. A synonym for place branding is country- and nation branding and the concept is also closely related to destination branding and city branding, where destination branding touch branding of a destination towards the tourism sector, and city branding relates to branding of one single city (Kavaritzis, 2004). As place branding has the opportunity to enhance economic development, it has become a growing activity in governments around the world (Papadopoulos, 2004). The concept refers to different efforts taken by a country, regional or city government to marketing a country towards the rest of the world (Fetcherin,
2010; Aronczyk, 2008). In addition, it also tends to produce national solidarity and repair a bad reputation. Place branding could therefore be of great use, especially for less developed countries since it could lead to development and economic growth. (Anholt, 2003)

The tourism industry have become a key factor for economic growth in several developing countries (Sinclair, 1998). This statement is confirmed by the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2013.04.11) who see the travel and tourism industry as the worlds biggest economic sector which contribute with trillions of dollars to the global economy each year (WTO, 2013.04.11). According to World Trade Tourism Council About 260 million jobs around the world are created through the tourism sector (WTTC, 2013.02.25). These jobs are vital for people, in particular in developing countries, as they lead to wealth not only for the employee but also for the bigger community as they generates exports and stimulate capital investments (WTTC, 2013.02.25; Sinclair, 1998).

Sri Lanka is considered a developing country according to the Swedish Institute Of International Affairs (UI)( UI, 2013.08.12). The long lasting civil war ended in 2009, and a strategic plan named “Tourism Development Strategy 2011-2016” was developed by the Ministry of Economic Development under guidance of Basil Rajapaksa, the minister of Economic Development in Sri Lanka. (See appendix 2) The plan was implemented in 2010 with the aim to improve the economic growth. (Ministry of Economic Development, 2010)

In accordance with WTO (2013.04.11) and Sinclair (1998), the Sri Lankan ministry of economic development states that the tourism sector is one of the key factors to economic growth for the country. Furthermore, the government recognizes the industry of tourism to have a multiple effect in creating employment opportunities which could lead to a distribution of wealth through a variety of economic activities in the small and medium enterprise (SME) sectors, which affect the bigger part of the population. The government of Sri Lanka aims to positioning the country as a model tourist destination. The strategy includes for instance the goal of 2.5 million tourists in 2016 and strategies in order to reach this goal. (Ministry of Economic Development, 2010)

Sri Lanka is a country with a range of nature assets such as tea and herb plantages, rainforest, mountains and a rich sealife. The biodiversity, along with increased numbers in terms of tourism (Ministry of Economic Development, 2010) and the history, makes Sri Lanka an interesting country in a place branding perspective with focus on tourism.
1.2 Problem discussion

Every place is considered to have an image, whether they choose to manage it or not (Gilmore, 2002; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Fan, 2006; Anholt, 2003). A place which is not involved in the process of branding, tend to be positioned anyway, based on other parties opinions (Gilmore, 2002), and as images often are founded on individuals’ personal opinions and previous knowledge, it does not necessary have to be correct information (Anholt, 2007). Govers, Go and Kumar (2011) and Gilmore (2002) agree with this and argue that the current reality of a country widely can differ from a consumer’s image. It could therefore be considered as devastating for a country not to manage their image (Anholt, 2007; Govers, Go and Kumar, 2011; Gilmore, 2002).

The fact that Sri Lanka has been through a long lasting and violent civil war and nature disasters such as the tsunami 2004 (Sida, 2013), could according to Jansen (2008) and Aronzcyk (2008) have resulted in a negative country image. As a negative image most likely can last even after a crisis is over and impact a country over a long period of time (Gilmore, 2002), this could be seen as a potential obstacle in their plan of attract tourist to the country, especially since the image of the country is one of the key factors in the consumers’ decision making process of choosing one destination over another (MacKay and Fesenmajer, 1997). As place branding in theory could enhance a country’s reputation it could be seen as a solution for countries wanting to enhance their brand image and attract more tourists to the country (Anholt, 2003).

However, place branding is seen as a complex process which involves multiple parts of the country (Fetscherin, 2010; Anholt, 2003; Kotler et al., 1993; Jansen, 2008) and both time and effort has to be put in the activity (Kotler et al., 1993). The process could be hard for a developing country since they often, unlike developed countries, lacks fundamental prerequisites such as political stability, a long-standing tradition of professional public service, essential know-how knowledge and often financial resources. In addition people may have a negative perception about the country due to history events such as human or natural disasters. (Papadopoulos, 2004; Jansen, 2008; Aronzcyk, 2008) Even though developing countries can face great challenges and difficulties when implementing place branding, it is developing countries that have most to gain from, and is in most need of systematic place branding, in particular countries with a turbulent past (Anholt, 2003; Olins, 1999; Papadopoulos, 2004).
Extensive research in the area of branding has been done, but still, there is limited knowledge in the area of place branding (Fan, 2006; Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Hanna and Rowley (2011) argue that literature and researches of the area up to today do not offer a holistic view of the whole process, but rather individual parts, which can be seen as critical as Jansen (2008) argues that branding of a country includes multiple layers of the country. In order to ease for country brand managers and to develop the theory of place branding Hanna and Rowley (2011) have developed a new model of place branding. The model is named the Strategic place brand-management model (SPBM-model) and is developed based on a literature review of five previous models in how to brand a place.

Thus, the SPBM-model is relatively recent and has not yet been widely tested, and it could therefore be questioned how well it works in reality. The model is developed in a general way and does not take a country’s certain conditions into account. Developing countries such as Sri Lanka most likely have a need for place branding practices in order to create economic growth (Anholt 2003; Moilanen and Rainisto 2009) and since the process is seen as both hard and complex, a tool to ease the work for the brand manager would be welcomed (Fetscherin, 2010; Anholt, 2003; Kotler et al., 1993; Jansen, 2008). The SPBM-model could in theory be a great contribution for the country brand manager of a developing country since they often lacks fundamental prerequisites in the area (Papadopoulos, 2004). A holistic model of place branding could therefore be a useful contribution to the research field of place branding and economic growth in developing countries. For these reasons it could be argued that the SPBM-model is in need of more testing in the context of a developing country. This in order to see how the model can be applied on Sri Lankan conditions and which components can be seen as more vital than others in the contexts of Sri Lanka.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the SPBM-model can be applied on the process of branding Sri Lanka.
1.4 Research questions

1. How does Sri Lanka work with the components in the SPBM-model?

2. Which components in the SPBM-model can be seen important based on Sri Lankan conditions?

1.5 Outline of the study

1. Introduction

The first chapter provides an overall introduction to the thesis. The introduction begins with background information related to the area of place branding and tourism in developing countries, followed by a problem discussion where obstacles related to these areas are discussed further. The introduction will then be summed up by the purpose of the study, as well as research questions.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical chapter includes the theoretical framework used in this study. At first, the SPBM-model and the components within the model are presented. Thereafter, the different components of the model are described one by one more closely.

3. Methodology

This chapter includes descriptions on how the research has been conducted, as well as justifications where the choice of methods and design is motivated. In this study a qualitative research has been conducted, and the selected data collection method is in-depth interviews with seven people working with the brand of Sri Lanka.

4. Empirical investigation

The chapter of empirical framework provides the result gathered in the interviews with people working with marketing Sri Lanka. The chapter is divided and presented in different themes, in order to make it easier for the reader to follow the text.
5. Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis made in this study, by linking the theoretical framework and the empirical chapter together. The analysis is presented in the same way as the theoretical chapter, which is done in order to see new patterns in the empirical material and to make it easier for the reader to follow.

6. Conclusion

This chapter provides the conclusion of the analysis made in the thesis, as well as limitations made in this study.

7. Research implications

The chapter will provide the reader with information regarding aspects that may have impact the result of this study. It will also give recommendations on future research within the area of place branding.
2. Theoretical framework

This chapter aims to explain the SPBM-model and theories involved. The first part of the chapter explains the model and the components within, while the second part is a literature review of theories regarding the different components found in the model.

2.1 The strategic place brand-management model (SPBM-model)

Previous literature in the area offers a wide range of insights and aspects into the process of branding a place. This literature usually touches specific areas within the process such as image building, stakeholders, repositioning and communication and are usually conducted in the context of specific case studies. Although the literature offers a range of information on how to brand a place, there are up to today no acknowledged place branding process. In order to ease the work of marketing and managing a place, and the development of theories regarding the place branding process, Hanna and Rowley (2011) state that there is a need of a more holistic model within the area.

In order to contribute to previous research and to help develop the area of place branding, Hanna and Rowley (2011) have researched the literature and proposed a new more holistic model based on the previous six models of: The relational network brand (Hankinson, 2004a), City image communication (Kavaratzis, 2004), A model of destination branding (Cai, 2002), Destination branding process (Laws, 2002), The 7A destination branding model (Baker, 2007) and City brand management (Gaggiotti, Cheng, & Yunak, 2008). The objectives of these six models show similarities in some parts whilst differ in others (see figure 2), together these models create the foundation in Hanna and Rowley’s new, more holistic, model. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

The table below (figure 1) shows the different components of the six models, how they overlap and differ from each other.
The new model is named the Strategic Place-Brand Management Model (SPBM-model) and focusing on the eight key components (figure 1) of place branding: Brand evaluation, Stakeholder engagement (management), Infrastructure (regeneration), Brand identity, Brand architecture, Brand articulation, Brand communication, Word of mouth and Brand experience. Activities and processes within the different components may involve visitors, marketing managers, citizens and other stakeholders. Hanna and Rowley (2011) discuss the importance of knowing that the actions within the different components will occur, whether they are managed or not. Not trying to manage the different components may lead to a negative outcome such as negative WOM, disappointing brand experience and inefficient marketing communications. On the other hand, Hanna and Rowley (2011) argue that a clear view of the different parts of the model will help create a platform of one united brand identity, driving positive WOM and create a satisfying brand experience. The square of brand infrastructure, relationships and leadership is described as the central part of the model. This part is where the complex relationship between different stakeholder, their engagement, interests and infrastructure is discovered and worked through, which outcome lead to the creation of the brand identity. The SPBM model (figure 2) does not only show the different components of the model, but also how they are connected and affect each other (Hanna and Rowley, 2011).
2.2 The components in the SPBM- model – a literature review

Below, the different components of the SPBM-model is presented more closely.

2.2.1 Brand evaluation

Brand evaluation is a vital aspect in the development process of a brand, as it evaluates the brand experience (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). As different parts of brands are in constantly contact with customers there should be regular evaluations to detect potential problems (Kapferer, 2008). According to researchers in the area of place branding, it is essential to perform a SWOT analysis on the place by not only to look at the internal image of the country, but also the external image in order to find out weaknesses, strengths as well as threats and opportunities (Olins, 1999; De Mooij, 2010; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006). Ghodeswar (2008) argue that an organization continuously needs to track their brand against competitors. They should evaluate the progress in how the brand is doing on the market and also which effects different marketing initiatives have on the brand. The process can be monitored in terms of purchases, consumption, brand recognition, awareness, brand recall and advertising. In this way the brand marketers can see the effect of marketing campaigns and
how it influence their audience, which can help measure the strength of the brand. (Ghodeswar, 2008)

Since brand building consists of multiple units, De Chernatony (2001) argues that it is essential to evaluate more than just sales, this in order to get a better overview. Management could therefore use brand metrics to examine the internal work, but also to get a deeper understanding regards to the satisfaction and positive perceptions of the brand essence. This information could eventually help the management to adjust the brand in order to develop further. (De Chernatony, 2001)

Hanna and Rowley argue that since there is no owner of a place brand, there has to be recognition about how a brand is perceived before starting the work. Therefore, the first stage in the place branding process is often evaluation, including listening and assessment. The evaluation process is also an important factor in order to develop the place brand over time. It is a continuously process which support the whole process of continuing building and develop a place brand further. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

2.2.2 Stakeholder engagement (Management)

Stakeholders can be defined as groups of people with interests in improvements of the brand performance which can involve investors, employees, suppliers, shareholders and community groups (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995). One can divide the stakeholders into two groups; primary and secondary stakeholders. The primary stakeholders are essential for the survival of the organization. (Clarkson, 1995)

In order to get successful, research has shown that it is important not only to consider consumers and competitors but also the broader range of stakeholders (Achrol, 1996; Polonsky, 1999). In order to strength and sustain the organizations performance they should also start focusing on the diversity of their stakeholder rather than one specific group (Ferrell, Gonzalez-Padron, Hult, and Maignan, 2010). Moreover, (Ferrell et al., 2010) argue that marketers have to shift their perspective from a market oriented towards an understanding in their stakeholders’ wants and needs. In addition, it is essential to have knowledge about the influence of the different stakeholders, as well as matching the stakeholders’ expectations with their needs (Bourne, 2009). In order to develop a marketing strategy in terms of pricing, product, promotion and distribution the organization have to address their stakeholders need and perspectives (Greenley, Hooley, and Rudd, 2005).
Through exchange of expertise, knowledge, power, resources and finance between the stakeholder and the organization an interorganizational relationship is created (Polonsky, 1999). A relationship, which understanding is of importance for the development of marketing capabilities (Evers, Andersson and Hannibal, 2012). Hankinson (2009) states that by taking advantage of the stakeholder’s knowledge and thoughts a place can understand how they are perceived and what they have to offer in means of diversity, talent, mentality and attributes of people, in the eyes of the stakeholders. Gaggiotti et al (2008) goes on by saying that a connected community and effective partnership is vital for place branding.

Before proceeding with any branding initiatives brand managers must actively consider the stakeholder views (McAlexander, Schauten, & Koenig, 2002). If the brand manager collaborate with and consider the stakeholders to be partners in the brand creation it is more likely that they also will support the brand strategy and deliver the desirable brand experience. The challenge to coordinate different stakeholders is seen as one of the most important parts in the place building process. If this part does not succeed it might result in a fragmented, inconsistent and conflicting brand image. (Papadopoulos, 2004)

In the SPBM-model the stakeholder component is the process in which the stakeholders are identified, interests are discovered and interactions are managed. Engage stakeholders are an important process and could be seen as of the futures of place branding compared to product branding. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

2.2.3 Infrastructure (Regeneration)

Infrastructure has the potential to determinant the attractiveness of a destination (Gunn, 2002; Inskeep, 1991). Gunn (2002) defines a tourism product as a complex experience which is a result from a process where tourists use multiple services such as transportation, recreation, accommodation and information. Smith (1994) argues that service infrastructure could be one of the key components to work with when wanting to enhance a brand experience. Transport infrastructure such as airports, roads, harbors and electricity is another essential part in successful development and tourism planning which also includes creation of new attractions and development of existing ones (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999). The road infrastructure should facilitate peoples’ needs to get to different regions within the country and also make it easy to move around on the specific place (Prideaux, 2000), while the air infrastructure should transfer tourists to the country and back (Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2007). Since most tourists
come from developed countries and are used to modern and effective transport infrastructure they expect the destination country to possess similar comfort (Cohen 1979; Mo, Howard and Havitz, 1993). If the destination fails in deliver this the tourist may consider alternative destinations (Khadaroo and Seetanah, 2007).

In the SPBM- model Hanna and Rowley (2011) describe infrastructure as the component which represent existing, accessible and sufficient functional (tangible) and experiential (intangible) place attributes and their need of renovation and regeneration. Infrastructure which could be tangible attributes such as roads, hotels and different arenas but also intangible attributes like culture, art and education. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011) The figure below (figure 3) illustrates the infrastructure and it’s two different branches. Furthermore, in order to satisfy their customers, a place has to invest in different parts in the infrastructure that support the promised brand experience. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

Figure 3 – Infrastructure (Adapted from Hanna and Rowley, 2011, pp. 463)

2.2.4 Brand identity

Brand identity is important within the area of brand management (Kapferer, 2008) and should focus on differentiate the company among its competitors in a long-term perspective (Ghodeswar, 2008; Kapferer, 2008). De Chernatony (2010) and Harris and De Chernatony (2001) discuss the culture within the organization as being an important part of the brand identity process. Furthermore, a country’s identity has to be develop from the people living in the country and their assumptions, values and beliefs (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). According to Kapferer (2008) the identity displays the features, which is based on the roots and heritage of the brand.
The identity of a brand is the arrangement of components such as words, ideas, images and associations. These elements all together shape the customers’ perception of a brand. (Upshaw, 1995) The foundation in brand identity is an understanding of the organization’s customers and competitors as well as the market (Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000; Kapferer 2008). Brand identity needs to fit the business strategy, it also has to reflect the company’s willingness to deliver what the customers expects from the brand. (Ghodeswar, 2008) If a company lacks in communicating its core values to the target group it can turn out to be unsuccessful, even though the company might have a great offer and management. (Nandan, 2004)

In order to manage the brand identity, the organization should identify the core values of the brand and make sure that the values are in line with the values of the people working within the organization (Harris and De Chernatony, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2008). According to Hanna and Rowley (2011), the brand identity is the core of the brand building process. Important elements in this process are tangible and intangible attributes (see paragraph 3.2.3-Infrastructure) (Hanna and Rowley, 2011) It is the result of the evaluation of the brand experience and it affect the brand architecture relationships. This means that stakeholder’s interests are essential aspects when improving the brand identity further. Moreover, it is the differentiated features unique for one place and gives a structure on how to conduct one united brand. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

2.2.5 Brand architecture

A strong brand architecture provides a proper structure and control when managing the brand into new markets (Douglas, Craig and Nijsse, 2001; Sanchez, 2004). Brand architecture is the structure of the organization, which manage the brand’s portfolio and defines the different roles of the brands and the relationships between the different brands. Place brands often consist of one central brand supported by many sub-brands. These sub-brands can in a country be different companies and organizations, both private and public, such as tourist businesses, plants and community services (Hanna and Rowley, 2011).

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) there are different ways in how the many sub-brands of companies and organizations within a brand are connected to the central brand. If they are tight connected to each other the success of one sub-brand can enhance the other sub-brands, while a negative outcome on one sub-brand also affects the others. On the other hand,
if the sub-brands are not tight connected they do not affect each other in the same way, either positive or negative. (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000)

In the SPBM-model, brand architecture is a central part of the place branding process as it is influenced by the stakeholder relationships. Except manage the relation between the different interest group and mediates the architecture should also handle interest conflicts that may occur between the different parties. (Hanna & Rowley, 2011)

2.2.6 Brand articulation

Design and the visual communication surrounding the brand has become an important way to differentiate the brand against its competitors (Page and Herr, 2002). Visual symbols are in some cases more important than words (de Mozota, 2003). According to Montana, Guzman and Moll (2007) consumers may achieve a better understanding of a brand and what it stands for if the brand design is consistent and cohesive. The design is closely connected to the brand and therefore it should be produced in accordance to the brand (Beverland, 2005; Wheeler, 2006). Salzer-Morling and Strannegård, (2004) are discussing about brand being more than just a graphic sign to distinguish from its competitors. Research has found that the visual communication in advertising can affect the consumer’s attitude in two ways. Based on the visual presentation, people might form a presumption about the brand, which can lead to a change in how they perceive the brand. The visual communication can be viewed as either positive or negative and may influence the attitude individuals have about a brand. Similar to the visual communication connected to a brand, also the verbal communication may influence consumer’s attitudes in these ways. (Mitchell, 1986) Another study made by Montana et al.,(2007) shows that the design management process in companies are mainly focused on giving the customer a brand experience, as well as differentiate the brand among competitors (Montana et al., 2007). The quality of the design and consistency is important, and a strong brand is in need of a good design. According to Wheeler (2006) there are multiple key elements in the visual communication, such as the logotype, the colors used, typography and symbols. In today’s globalized society, it is of importance to consider that individuals with different culture and backgrounds may perceive symbols and signs dissimilar to each other (De Mooij, 2000; Woo Jun and Lee, 2007). Differences in culture is defined as a complication when managing international brands, it may especially be a problem in developing countries where there is more of a traditional view in the society. A first step for marketers is to find out how the communication looks like in the country on a local and individual level. It is also
important to find the right way in how to communicate the differences of native nature in the culture. (Woo Jun and Lee, 2007).

Campelo, Aitken and Gnoth (2010) highlights the visual expression of a place in terms of place- and destination marketing, by discussing the importance of protecting and maintaining the culture of a place. Brand articulation highlights the visual and verbal identity related to the brand. The choice and shape of place name, logo, photos and colors are all elements in the brand articulation part. Although brand articulation is not much discussed in the literature of place branding, Hanna and Rowley (2011) argue about the importance of brand articulation in the SPBM-model, since it presents the brand identity.

2.2.7 Brand communication

According to Lagergren (1998), marketing communication is how a company or organization communicates with the market, where the communication can be seen as an exchange of ideas and experiences. The communication of a brand is an important component for the brand management, especially because of the meaning-making and its structured functions (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). As the marketplace today can be complex, marketing communications can help brands to stand out from the crowd and enhance their competitive advantages. Marketing communications makes it possible for marketers to inform, influence and remind the customers. (Keller, 2001) Customers and other stakeholders are involved in and influence the brand message, brand communication is therefore a key aspect when it comes to building relationship with its stakeholders (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). Everything sends a brand message, and therefore, brand message needs to be consistent in order to create positive associations. It is also essential to have all the stakeholders in mind, and to strive for the brand communication being interactive. (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998)

Marketing communication is managed through the promotion mix, which is a mix of tools for the marketer to use in order to communicate value for the customers and to build relationships. The promotion mix is the organization’s primary communication activity and consists of five promotion tools; advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing. Each of these categories includes particular promotion implements. (Armstrong and Kotler, 2011; Duncan and Moriarty, 1998)

Brand communication is activities connected to the communication of the brand identity and is strongly related to brand articulation. According to Hanna and Rowley (2011), the brand
communication is an important element in the place branding process. The communication impacts the perception and the reliability of the brand experience. However, the integrated marketing communication may be an obstacle in the process, since it can be hard to consider all stakeholders’ interest in one message. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

2.2.8 Word of mouth

Word of mouth (WOM) is the process were consumers discuss with each other (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg, 2010; Buttle, 1998) and are among researchers within marketing known as a major influence when it comes to decision making among consumers (Buttle, 1998) and as a powerful tool for communication (Hogan, Lemon, & Libai, 2004).

WOM is not an activity managed by companies, and can therefore be seen as more trustworthy than other marketing activities, from the customers’ point of view (Swanson and Kelley, 2001; Arndt, 1967). The main advantage when it comes to WOM, beside trustworthiness, is that it helps consumers avoid uncertainty. Research has shown that negative WOM spreading faster than positive WOM (Solomon et al., 2010). Much of today’s WOM is being spread online, in social media and on different communities. The online environment has made it easier for customers to share their brand experiences and to interact with the organization behind the brand which also ease the companies’ attempts to know the customers wants and needs. (Li and Bernoff, 2011; Dellarocas, 2003; Bickart and Schindler, 2001)

In the SPBM-model made by Hanna and Rowley (2011) it is examined that WOM is a powerful and important tool which is highly connected to customer’s brand experience and also connected to the brand communication. The relation between WOM and brand communication could be used in order to monitor if the brand communication accords with the brand experience. Brand experience is the most important influence to WOM. However, the relationship between the two concepts of WOM and brand experience can be seen as complex. Moreover the relationship between brand communication and WOM is not controllable by marketers. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)

2.2.9 Brand experience

In today’s world, consumers strive for a distinctive and memorable experience. Brand experiences are therefore subject to discussions in the area of marketing and have become
more popular recently (Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2010; Schmitt 1999; Pine and Gilmore 1998) even though there is not much written about the concept (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009). The concept of brand experience is defined as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand’s design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 52). Nowadays, customers get in touch with brands in multiple ways, such as through web pages, advertising and word of mouth. It is therefore essential for the company to manage their brand in these different channels. (Armstrong and Kotler, 2011) A good relation to stakeholders, tend to enhance the ability of making the interest groups deliver the desirable brand experience (McAlexander et. al, 2002)

Brand experience take place in diverse ways; when consumers collect information prior to the purchase, when consumers get service while purchasing, as well as when consuming the product or service. Before buying and using a brand, the consumer builds up expectations about the performance in specific situations. Hence, after the consumer has bought the brand he or she will compare and evaluate the actual performance against the expected one. If the actual performance is higher than the expected one, the consumer will have a positive brand experience; a confirmation. Moreover, if the actual performance is lower than the expected performance, the consumer will have a negative perception of the brand instead, called disconfirmation. Brand experience has an impact on consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty as well as on brand association. (Brakus et al., 2009) In terms of place brand experiences, the primary contact between the customer and the travel agent or flight service may perhaps create a basis on how the experience are being perceived by the customer (Govers and Go, 2009).

Hanna and Rowley (2011) see brand experience as the part in the process where the consumers get’s involved in the brand. The consumer’s perception of the brand is based on the brand experience. Further on, by gaining more knowledge about how customers perceive the place brand, improvements can be done in the course of action. The brand experience considers customers’ image of the brand, which is highly influenced by the stakeholders the customers are in contact with. According to the SPBM-model, brand experience is influenced by brand identity, brand articulation, brand communication and a direct influence on infrastructure relationships. Moreover, Word of mouth is driven by brand experience. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)
3 Methodology

This chapter includes descriptions on how the research has been conducted, as well as justifications where the choice of methods and design is motivated.

3.1 Research approach

3.1.1 Inductive versus deductive research

There are two main approaches towards the relationship between theory and data in which researchers can choose to focus on; the inductive and the deductive method (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The deductive approach is the most common one and can be described as gathered facts and previous knowledge which is tested against current empirical data (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). The previous theories then can then be revised, depending on the outcome of the empirical research (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Contrary to this, the inductive research method is built on the collection of current empirical data. The researcher can based on observations, see patterns, draw generalizations and conclusions which are integrated into previous understandings in order to improve existing theories. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005) An inductive research often provides insightful generalizations but usually contains little theories (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

This study aims to explore how the SPBM-model can be applied in the context of Sri Lanka. Thus, the research was founded in the theoretical framework of the nine concepts of the SPBM-model which were examined in a Sri Lankan context. Depending of the outcome of the research, the model could be revised, theories removed or new added, in order to make the model match the conditions for Sri Lanka. This study was therefore conducted in a deductive way rather than through an inductive method.

3.1.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research

Research method can either be qualitative or quantitative. The background and the previous knowledge of the researcher is an essential aspect when choosing what research method to use. The largest difference between a qualitative and a quantitative method is the process in which it is conducted. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005)
The qualitative research method gives the researcher a deeper understanding in a specific subject and is suitable for studies facing more complicated issues (Bryman and Bell, 2010). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the aim of qualitative studies is not to draw generalizations but rather to get an understanding and interpretation in a certain case. Conclusion gained in these types of studies has its foundation in beliefs and attitudes rather than in measurements (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). On the other hand, results in a quantitative study are often presented in numbers and statistics which can be measured. Moreover, a quantitative research method is more structured than the qualitative method (Bryman and Bell, 2010) and the focus and central part is to testify and verify data (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

The focus of this study was to gain deeper understanding in the complex process of branding a country. As the area of branding a country lack a clear understanding and thus the researchers, in order to answer the aim of this study, were in need of a broader understanding and interpretation of the subject rather than of structured and measurable variables, the study was completed through a qualitative method.

3.2 Research design

There are several different options in how to design a research, the most common ones in the area of business research are exploratory-, descriptive- and causal design (Yin, 2009; Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2010; Bryman and Bell, 2011). The chosen research design gives a plan of directions to follow in order to answer the study’s purpose. It connects the study’s problem with concluding notions and gives the researcher structure and a framework for how the research could be carried out. (Bryman and Bell, 2010; Yin, 2009)

An exploratory research design is usually used in the early stage of a project, when research for facts is needed, to clarify research problems and to determine directions of the study (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Zikmund et al., 2010). The exploratory research design can help build a foundation within a research area that further researches can be built upon. The research method is also an option in order to clarify a situation and to uncover potential business opportunities. (Zikmund et al., 2010)
The causal research design explains the cause-and-effect relationship between variables, and is used in cases where researchers want to know what causes variables to change. In order to establish a causal relationship, the researcher is required to have great control over different variables within the research. To implement this design, and in order to be able to make predictions about the outcome, when changing variables, the researcher are in need of extensive knowledge within the area of the study. Like exploratory research design, also the causal research design takes much time and are in need of a lot of resources when implemented. (Zikmund et al., 2010)

To describe the object being studied, a descriptive research design could be used. The research design could answer; who, what, when, where and how questions, in order to clarify and to describe a certain situation (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Zikmund et al., 2010). In opposite to the exploratory design, the descriptive design has a well defined and structured problem (Ghauri and Grønhaug 2005). There are two types of descriptive research design; cross-section research and longitudinal research. The longitudinal research design is used when the study’s aim is to discover changes in variables over a, usually longer, period of time (Kumar, 2011; Zikmund et al., 2010; Chambliss and Schutt, 2010; Bryman and Bell, 2011). To do this the researcher is required to make at least two observations at different occasions in order to compare the variables and to see them change over time. Due to the long study period of this kind of research it is costly both regarding time and money. (Bryman and Bell, 2011) In opposite from the longitudinal design, the researcher in a cross-sectional design collect data from different cases at one single point of time (Bryman, 1989; Kumar, 2005; Zikmund et al. 2010; Bryman and Bell, 2011). The researcher can use the design in order to see relationship between different variables and to distinguish interesting patterns. One weakness of this research design is that it does not, like the causal design, give room for causal assumptions. (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

The area of branding a country is huge and it would be hard or even impossible to be in control over the different variables of the subject. Furthermore, since this study did not aim to gain knowledge in what cause variables to change, the causal research design was excluded. The SPBM-model is a new model which has not yet been tested in a wider context, this suggested that the design for this research could be exploratory. However, since the purpose of the study is defined and aims to explore how the SPBM-model can be applied in the context of Sri Lanka, the descriptive research design was used. Empirical data was collected at one shorter period of time and from more than one source which made the cross-section
3.3 Data sources

Primary and secondary data are two types of data sources to use when collecting data for a research. Primary data are data collected for the first time, while secondary data is already collected, by someone else, for a different purpose. (Kothari, 2004)

3.3.1 Primary data

Primary data is often used when there is not enough secondary data to be provided or when the secondary data does not give enough information in order to complete the study. When using primary data, the researcher can collect current-, in-depth and tailored information for the specific area of interest. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2011) Two negative aspects regarding primary data is that it can be time-consuming and costly. Furthermore, it might be a challenge to access the right information when collecting primary data since there can be unwillingness from companies or individuals to participate. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Bryman and Bell, 2011) With this in mind, Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) claims that the researchers may lose some control when choosing the source of primary data.

3.3.2 Secondary data

The other method of collecting data is secondary data. This method can be useful in the beginning of a project, when researchers need to find and clarify a problem (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This data source is also suitable when in need of historical material (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Secondary data is data that has already been collected and analyzed by someone else, for another purpose. Secondary data could contain both published (external) and unpublished (internal) data. (Kothari, 2004)

Using secondary data is not costly and saves time, which according to Ghauri and Grønhaug, (2005) are two of the main advantages when using this type of data source. Secondary data also tends to provide reliable data of high quality, since much of the information comes from governments and different types of organizations (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Drawbacks could be that it can be hard to find information relevant for the specific study (Greener, 2008; Bryman and Bell, 2011). Furthermore the researcher have to be careful when using secondary
data and be aware of that collected data might not be suitable and correct when information is taking out of its original context and put into another (Kothari, 2004; Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005).

In the start of this research the researchers searched for secondary data regarding how Sri Lanka is working with marketing of the country. Since this concept is quite broad and though it was hard to find deeper information in the area also primary data was collected. The secondary data gained an overview of Sri Lanka and their way of managing the country’s image, and worked as a prerequisites and a foundation for the collection of the primary data. Tailored primary data was then collected that could help the researcher get a deeper understanding in the area and help answer the aim of this study.

3.4 Research strategy

According to Yin (2009) there are five main strategies available to consider when conducting a business research. The strategies differ from each other regarding the control the researcher has over different aspects of the process, such as actual behavioral, events and level of focus on current events. (Yin, 2009)

*Experiment*

The experiment research strategy is carried out in cases where researcher wants to see causal relationship between variables (Zikmund et al., 2010; Bryman and Bell, 2011). A hypothesis is set and tested, and by altering variables, the hypothesis can be verified, falsified or the validity of the hypothesis can be further established (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

*Survey*

The survey research strategy is a quantitative method of gathering data through interviews or observations (Zikmund et al. 2010; Bryman and Bell 2011). The strategy enable the researcher to regulate and to ask the same questions to multiple individuals, the answer can thereby be compared and used as a measuring instrument (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006).
Archival Analysis

Archival analysis is research build upon archival data, data that is already accumulated and stored in places such as libraries, electronic records or paper archives (Blaxter et al., 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2011). This data can be both qualitative and quantitative and can differ depending on the subject and the interest of the researcher who gathered the data (Blaxter et al., 2006).

Historical Research

The historical research strategy is when historical document, such as correspondence, record of meetings and financial reports, is searched in order to find data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). To keep in mind when doing this kind of research is the human factor, people will remember one situation or experience in different ways depending on who they are. When implementing the historical strategy it is therefore important to talk to different people and cross-checking sources, in order to get as true picture as possible. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005)

Case study

The fifth and last strategy is the case study, which is an appropriate method to use when the studied phenomena cannot be separated from its´ context (Blaxter et al., 2006). The strategy is good to implement when studying a complex or a specific problem (Bryman and Bell, 2011). A case study is a good strategic option for a small-scale research since it may fit the needs and resources in a good way (Blaxter et al., 2006). The case study usually includes many sources of data such as interviews, observations and verbal information. It is suitable to use a case study if the studied phenomenon is from a real-life context and if the researcher wants answers regarding “how” and “why”. There are two ways to approach a case study when doing a qualitative research; a single or a multiple. (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005)

The figure below (figure 4) gives an overview of the five research strategies and could also be to assistance in the decision of which strategy to use.
Figure 4 – Research strategies (Adopted from Yin, 2009, pp. 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research strategy</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioral events</th>
<th>Focus on contemporary events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>How/ Why</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Who/ what/ where, when/ how many/ how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival Analysis</td>
<td>Who/ what where/ when/ how many/ how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How/ why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>How/ why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The archival analysis and the history research study was not chosen for this study, since the research was focusing on a contemporary event where talking to people in Sri Lanka working with the branding of the country was essential. Also the experimental- and survey research strategy was excluded since the study did not include hypothesizes and hence the result of the study was not going to be measured.

This thesis was instead structured in the way of a case study. This since it focused on a contemporary event containing many variables, which made it complex to investigate. Moreover, this is a small-scale study where how and why questions were aimed to be answered. Furthermore, since the study’s purpose is to gain deeper knowledge in one specific area, and due to time limitation, a single case study was conducted within this research.

3.5 Data collecting method

There are several methods to use in order to collect relevant data for a research. As determined in paragraph 3.1.2 - Qualitative versus quantitative research, this research is a
qualitative study, which eliminates the quantitative data collecting methods of surveys from this research. Hence, the qualitative methods of interviews, focus groups and observations where more carefully considered as alternative for this study. (Bryman and Bell, 2011)

Since this study aimed to examine the process of branding Sri Lanka and more in depth information was needed the method of observation and focus group was deselected. This because observation observe behavior and leave out in depth information, while it also take long time to perform. (Kinnear & Taylor, 1991) Focus group on the other hand can show issues connected to the area of interest and also bring important findings to the researcher. However, disadvantageous with this method is that it is rather conclusive than exploratory and also that the respondents opinions may be affected by each other and that they do not express themselves in a way they should without the others around. The data collecting method for this research was therefore chosen to be interviews, since it uncovers great depth of insight. (Malhotra, 2010)

In-depth interviews are an essential data collection method for researchers striving to get rich depth information of people’s personal opinions and beliefs. The method is elastic and useful in situations where there might be hidden issues covered in the research study. In addition to this, the participants are not affected by group pressure as they might be in focus groups. The length of personal interviews is approximately about 30-90 minutes. In order to achieve the required information, the interviewers need to know how to conduct an appropriate interview schedule and ask questions in the right way. (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2010)

Three types of interviews are discussed in the literature; unstructured, structured and semi-structured interviews. Unstructured interviews have the features such as flexibility regarding how to ask the questions and the interviewer has more freedom when it comes to additional questions. (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Kothari, 2004) A structured interview includes prearranged questions and the interviewer follows a determined schedule through the interview (Kothari, 2004). Just like a structured interview also a semi-structured interview includes prearranged questions. During a semi- structured interview the respondents are encouraged to discuss further after answering the questions. Not only the answers given by the respondent are analyzed, but also in what way the respondent replies and if he or she highlights a specific subject. Semi-structured interviews are vital when the researcher wants to compare the respondent’s different answers. It is also a good choice when making an in-depth analysis. (Bryman and Bell, 2011)
This study was based on semi-structured interviews; this in order to gather data relevant for the study, but also in order to make sure that the respondents felt free to add more information. Structured interviews were excluded due to the fact that there might be hidden important information that the interviewers did not know about before conducting the interview schedule. Also the unstructured way of conducting interviews was excluded, since it could lead to, for this study, irrelevant information and therefore require more time.

3.6 Data collecting instrument (Case design)

Next step of this research was to collect secondary- and primary data that would help answer the aim of the study. In order to do this an interview guideline was to be developed with the foundation in the theoretical framework.

3.6.1 Operationalization and measurement of variables

In order to gain relevant information that could be derived to and analyzed together with the theoretical framework for this study, an operationalization was done. Operationalization is the process in which theoretical concepts is translated into understandable words. An operationalization help the researcher to simplify used theories, that otherwise can be hard to measure, into more narrow and concrete variables and terms. (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Cohen et al., 2007) It also helps the researcher to translate the aim of the study and its theoretical framework to concrete questions which increase the chance to collect relevant data from the, in this case, interview respondents (Cohen et al., 2007).

In this study the foundation of the operationalization was based on the theory regarding place branding and the sub theories of the nine components of the SPBM- model, which is illustrated in the figure below (figure 5). In order to make these components measurable they were narrowed to specific more understandable concepts, which the interview guide was based upon.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual Definition</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place Branding</td>
<td>Refers to different efforts taken by a country, regional or city government to marketing a country towards the rest of the world (Fetcherin, 2010; Aronczyk, 2008).</td>
<td>To give understanding about the process of branding places</td>
<td>SPBM-model</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Stakeholder engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(regeneration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand articulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Brand experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Word of Mouth (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Conceptual Definition</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand evaluation</td>
<td>Refers to the procedure done in order to collect feedback on brand image and experience. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about what is important regarding brand evaluation in a place branding process.</td>
<td>SWOT-analysis (Olins, 1999; De Mooij, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Ghodeswar, 2008; De Chernatony, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stakeholder engagement (management)</strong></td>
<td>Embraces the processes whereby stakeholders are identified, their interests surfaced, and interactions managed. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about the stakeholders role in the process of place branding.</td>
<td>Coordination (Papadopoulos, 2004) Relations (McAlexander et al., 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infrastructure (regeneration)</strong></td>
<td>Represents the existence, accessibility, and sufficiency of the functional (tangible) and experiential (intangible) place attributes, and the possible need for their renovation and regeneration. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about what role infrastructure plays in the process of place branding</td>
<td>Tangible and intangible attributes (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand identity</strong></td>
<td>Brand identity is the component associated with the construction of the essence of the brand. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about brand identity in the process of place branding</td>
<td>Core values (Harris and De Chernatony, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2008) People and culture (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Dzenovska, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand architecture</strong></td>
<td>The component which is concentrated on the process of designing and managing brand portfolios. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about brand architecture in the process of place branding</td>
<td>Brand Portfolio (Aaker and Joachimstahler, 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand articulation</strong></td>
<td>Focus on the processes associated with the expression of the brand through its verbal and visual identity. (Hanna</td>
<td>To give understanding about what role brand articulation plays in the process of place</td>
<td>Adaption to culture (Woo Jun and Lee, 2007). Consistency (Montana, Guzman and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Brand communication**  | Brand communications is the component that focuses on the activities associated with the communication of the brand identity. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011) | To give understanding about what role brand communication plays in the process of place branding | Relation with customers and other stakeholders (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998)  
Brand message (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998) |
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word of Mouth</strong></td>
<td>The component that encompasses the processes associated with the informal communication between consumers of the brand experience. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011)</td>
<td>To give understanding about what role WOM plays in the process of place branding</td>
<td>Listen to WOM (Li and Bernoff, 2011; Dellarocas, 2003; Bickart and Schindler, 2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Brand experience**     | The component in which the consumer engages with the brand. Through this engagement, consumers formulate perceptions of the brand experience and interpret the brand identity to create their own notion of brand image. (Hanna and Rowley, 2011) | To give understanding about what role brand experience plays in the process of place branding | Service Experience (Govers and Go, 2009)  
Evaluation (Hanna and Rowley, 2011) |

### 3.6.2 Interview Guideline

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) an interview guideline could be described as a brief questioner guide with the aim to support the respondents during the interview. The guide can, as in a semi-structured interview, consist questions and other reminders of what to bring to light during the interview, and could be written text as well as illustrations (Bryman and Bell, 2005) One has to consider the interview guideline to go in line with the operationalization,
this to increase the possibility to collect data covering intended areas. (Gauri and Grønhaug, 2005)

The interview guideline of this study was founded in the operationalization of the theoretical framework, presented in paragraph 3.6.1 - Operationalization and measurements of variables. Based on the concept of place branding, the SPBM-model and their variables and measurable terms interview questions were designed, this in order to increase the gathering of relevant data that could be linked to and analyzed together with the theoretical framework. The interview guideline is presented in appendix 1- Interview Guidelines.

3.6.3 Pretesting

An effective way to prepare the data collecting is to perform a pre-testing. In order to do this the researcher may ask potential respondents, supervisors or other individuals with great knowledge within the area for recommendations regarding the questions and their design (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Zikmund et al., 2010). In this way potential problems and weaknesses of the interview guideline can be identified and misinterpretations by respondents can be avoided (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005). Also, this can be an early indicator of the outcome of the upcoming interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2005). Prior to the empirical research process the developed interview guideline was pretested. Two professors at Linnaeus University were consulted in order to review the questions. The interview guideline was then revised. Due to language and cultural differences and the many obstacles that it may bring, the authors saw the importance of consult and pre-test the interview guideline on an individual of the Sri Lankan culture. The researcher familiarized themselves with the Sri Lankan culture, how to behave and act in general and in the situation of a formal meeting, also language differences was taken in to consideration. As contact with officials working in the area if interest were limited, the first interview conducted served as a pre-test in which the researcher could probe and find the best way to phrase.

3.7 Sampling

A researcher need to decide whether to use a whole population, which is referred to as a census, or to use sampling in order to conduct the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). A population can be described as a unit where a sample is chosen from (Bryman and Bell, 2005) whilst a sample is a smaller group which is selected to participate in the study
In some cases it is possible to include the whole population in a study, which can be seen as favorable since it would give the most correct outcome. However, due to multiple aspects such as time, population size and budget it is common to sample the population. (Saunders et. al, 2009; Malhotra, 2010)

The sampling procedure can be divided into the two categories of probability and non-probability samples (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007). Where “in a probability sample the chances of members of the wider population being selected for the sample are known, whereas in a non-probability sample the chances of members of the wider population being selected for the sample are unknown” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 153).

A probability sampling fits well for a quantitative study whilst a non-probability sample fits better for a qualitative small-scale research where generalizations are not required. For this qualitative, small-scaled study, a non-probability sample was used. Furthermore, a sub part of this sample choice, the purposive sample, gave the researcher the advantageous of being able to select and target specific individuals or units that were appropriate for the study. (Cohen et al., 2007) A purposive sample was suitable for this study since it suggest targeting respondents that have great knowledge in the area studied.

This research was aiming to study the process of branding Sri Lanka, which suggests that the sample for this study was going to be individuals or units working with Branding Sri Lanka. The sampling criteria were therefore that the respondents are all part of branding Sri Lanka, and that they all working in the management with at least one year experience of the position. There were also respondents with multiple years of experience in branding Sri Lanka, even though they at the moment were working on other positions within the government. The design of the sample was determined before the interviews were conducted, as it served as a plan on how to sample from a specific population. (Bryman and Bell, 2005).

### 3.7.1 Sampling frame

According to Malhotra (2010) a sampling frame is the representation of the sampled population which will participate in the research. It is vital that the sampling frame is as complete and precise as possible. If there is no existing sampling frame, the researchers need to design their own; having the importance of reliability and validity in mind. (Saunders et. al, 2009) In this research, the researchers have used the sample method called snowball sampling. This method is accurate when finding members of a specific population is
complicated. Snowball sampling starts with finding one or two contacts in the desired population, then these contacts assists to find other respondents. This way of sampling makes it significantly easier to find relevant respondents in the chosen population. It is also preferable since the outcome will be reasonably low expenses and sampling variances. (Malhotra, 2010) The method of snowball sampling may be subject to bias, as the contact person may choose people that have similar opinions as the person itself. However, snowball sampling is in some studies the only possible way of get in touch with relevant respondents. (Saunders et. al, 2009)

At Sri Lanka Tourism’s website, there are some key contact persons who were contacted by the researchers on e-mail, some turned out to be easier to get in touch with then others. These persons forwarded the researchers to appropriate official which they tough could be to most assistance. Moreover, a contact person with great insight in the area and many contacts in the government of Sri Lanka, helped the researchers get in contact with some high positioned officials with great knowledge in the area. The selected respondents were contacted by e-mail and in some cases by telephone prior to the interviews.

3.7.2 Sample selection

The study includes seven interviews with people working with the brand Sri Lanka. The interviews were conducted with persons at different positions and with various experiences of the process of place branding. The respondents were all working in the Sri Lanka Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), Sri Lanka Tourism Department Authority (SLTDA) or at the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) (see appendix 2). Both genders were represented, as well as different ages and different positions, where some are managing directors and others assistants and junior managers. The figure below (figure 6) illustrate the respondents position, their experience and were and for how long the interview lasted.
In order to get a broad insight in the process the aim was to gain six to ten interview respondents. However after conducting the seven interviews it could be found that the respondents answered was enough to get an insight in the branding process of Sri Lanka. The interviews with the higher positioned officials gave the most extensive and relevant information while conversations with the lower officials gave a broader understanding in the area which strengthen the sincerely of the research. The interviews were made in order to gain a broader insight in the branding process of Sri Lanka which made it irrelevant to reveal the certain official thoughts. Instead the empirical chapter assembles the seven interviews while focusing on both similarities and differences.
3.8 Data analysis method

Bryman and Bell (2005) argue that one of the difficulties with a qualitative research approach is that it quickly gathers a large amount of data, data that can be hard to present in a good and understandable way without losing essential information. Unlike analysis in a quantitative research there is no clear method of analyzing qualitative data. (Bryman and Bell, 2005) Creswell (2007) argue that the data analysis in a qualitative research should be developed in different steps which break the data into smaller parts which show common structure and characteristic element. Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2005) argue that it is of importance for the researcher to bring structure to the information by find patterns and themes to organize the collected data around.

Miles and Huberman (1994) have divided the process of analyze qualitative data in to the three steps of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification. Where the first step aims to screen and organize the gathered data in order to reduce irrelevant information (Yin, 2009). It is also the step in which data is simplified, coded and transformed, in a way that ease the process of analyzing and drawing final conclusions from the data. Next step is data display which refer to the process of visualize the data in terms of text, metrics, charts and graphics, or a combination of these, in order to present the data in a more compact and organized way. The last step, Conclusion drawing and verification, is where to decide what the collected data actually mean. This includes identifying patterns, regularities and irregularities, to find explanations and possible configurations and propositions. (Miles and Huberman, 1994) As discussed in paragraph 3.5 - Data collecting method, the data in this research were gathered trough the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. In order to preserve important information and to not get overwhelmed by too much data the completed interviews were, in accordance to Cohen et al. (2007), transcribed after each interview occasion. Since this study aim to explore how the SPBM-model can be applied in the context of Sri Lanka, the purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper information of the components in the SPBM-model and how Sri Lanka is working with them. The collected data was screened and organized in themes founded in the operationalization of the theoretical framework, an organization which also helped reduce irrelevant data (Yin, 2009). This data was then presented in the empirical chapter and analyzed together with relevant theories in the analyze chapter.
3.9 Quality criteria

Bryman and Bell (2005) and Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005) argue that the two most important criteria’s in establishing and assessing the quality of a qualitative study is validity and reliability. In order to reduce the risk of obtaining wrong answers in the study, the researchers have to put effort into the reliability and validity (Saunders et. al, 2009).

Validity is what ensure that the measure instrument measures what they intending to and can be seen as the most vital measure that describes how a test measures what we intended it to do and how well we can apply it on the reality (Kothari, 2004). While reliability is how the collected data together with the analysis will gain reliable findings (Saunders et. al, 2009).

Validity is what ensure that the measurement instrument measures what is intended to do and how well it can be applied on reality (Kothari, 2004). Reliability is a quality criterion that concerns the stability of the measurement instrument (Bryman and Bell, 2011). It is also a criterion in how the collected data together with the analysis will gain reliable findings (Saunders et. al, 2009). Further, in order to establish the reliability of a qualitative study the researcher needs to document the procedure and the many steps of it (Creswell, 2007). This is especially important while conducting a case study since, even its many advantages, the validity and reliability could be questioned (Riege, 2003).

3.9.1 Content validity

Content validity refers to which degree the measure reflects the concept that is examined. The content validity can be determined by letting a person with knowledge in the area monitor the questions. (Kothari, 2004) The content validity in this study was set up by letting two lecturers which specific knowledge in the area of branding examine the questions. Furthermore, the first conducted interview were seen as a pretesting and some of the questions were modified after being tested the first time, this was done in order make sure that the measures reflected the area of place branding.

3.9.2 Construct validity

According to Saunders et al. (2009) construct validity is to which level the researchers questions measure what they are expected to measure and how well it is possible to generalize from the questions of measurements. Construct validity regards to if the concepts under investigation can be identified and to what degree. The construct validity can be based on
logical judgments, as well as external criterion. Content validity and construct validity are similar to each other, thus construct validity require measure on different constructs. The measurement must be able to measure what it is supposed to measure and to differentiate between diverse constructs. (Powell and Connaway, 2004)

The construct validity in this research has its foundation in the operationalization of the concepts within the area of place branding. By interviewing seven people which have insights in the process of branding Sri Lanka, the construct validity has been secured by multiple respondents. The respondents were also given the opportunity to ask questions if there were anything they did not understand, which contributes to the construct validity. Another arrangement that was done in order to contribute to the construct validity was to read strategy documents and information about the branding process of Sri Lanka prior to the interviews. By doing so, the researchers gained a deeper knowledge in how the concepts were applied on the country Sri Lanka. Hence, this action made it easier for the researchers to ask follow up questions and to compare the respondents’ answers to the information achieved in the documents and on the website, which can be seen as a form of triangulation.

3.9.3 External validity

External validity is whether the result in the research can be generalized and to what degree it can be generalized into broader population and other situations. This may especially be important in case studies when the researchers are focusing on one organization. (Saunders et al., 2009) According to Cohen et al. (2007), the aim of a qualitative study (see 3.1.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research) is not to draw generalizations. Thus, it is essential to give a detailed and distinct explanation on how the research has been conducted; giving the opportunity to other researchers to decide if the study can be generalized into other contexts or not.

As this research has its foundation in the SPBM-model, the model has been applied on Sri Lanka as a single case study. Hence, by applying the SPBM-model on Sri Lanka, the research cannot be generalized to other countries, but it can provide a framework on how to manage a place brand similar to Sri Lanka. The external validity in this study has been maximized by conducting multiple interviews with people managing the brand of the country Sri Lanka.
3.9.4 Reliability

Reliability is the possibility that other researcher may achieve the same result if they conducted a similar study. Hence, it is discussed that the circumstances surrounding qualitative studies are dynamic and might therefore change. (Saunders et al., 2009) In order to maximize the reliability, the researchers should take notes regards to the research design, and also discuss about the reasons why choosing the particular methods and strategies. It is seen as important that the researchers are familiar with bias and errors that might occur during the data collection process. (Marshall and Rossman, 1999)

In this research, reliability was established in several ways. Since this research is a case study focusing on branding of the country Sri Lanka, the researchers gathered the empirical material in Sri Lanka. By talking to the respondents in person, the researchers were able to distinguish patterns that may have been hidden in case of conducting interviews by telephone.

Prior to the interviews, an interview guideline was conducted in order to maximize the reliability. Moreover, the respondents who participated in the study were all working within the area of managing the brand Sri Lanka on different levels and within different areas. This is by the researchers seen as a way to achieve different perspectives on the process of branding Sri Lanka.
4 Empirical investigation

Following chapter present the collected empirical primary data, which are based on seven interviews conducted with officials working with branding Sri Lanka. In order to ease the legibility of this data, it has been divided and organized in the same way as the theory chapter by the nine themes of the SPBM-model.

4.1 Brand evaluation

Several respondents discuss about a SWOT analysis prior to the marketing of Sri Lanka. The research was done in order to find out what would be best for the country to promote. To know how to diverse from competitive countries, a comparison was done between Sri Lanka and countries such as Malaysia, India and the Maldives. In this way, particular things to promote were discovered.

The majority of the respondents tell that an airport survey is conducted once a year, were visitors have the ability to give feedback about their experience and how they perceived the service within the country. Two respondents highlights that the airport survey addresses questions like where the tourist comes from, what they have done while staying in the country and what they most liked during their visit. According to some of the officials, this information can be hard to evaluate since the answers can be broad and unspecified. Furthermore, the survey measure numbers of arrivals, incomes of tourism, the effect of promotion campaigns and hotel occupancy rate.

Some respondents talks about other researches like a survey conducted every three to four year on people that previous been visiting the country. According to one respondent, both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the working process are done. The respondent continues by saying that the country listens to WOM and monitor comments made by customers at Sri Lanka’s official website. Feedback useful for evaluation is also gained from hotel organizations. Except of the airport survey the organization also monitors online campaigns in order to find out how widely they have been noticed.

Multiple officials say that they see the evaluation process as very important and also that there is a specific group within SLTDB who works with evaluation. Depending on the information
gained by the evaluation the organization choose how to continue their marketing strategy, and if something have to be revised and enhanced. For example, one official inform that the next year plan has been develop from things discovered in the airport survey.

4.2 Stakeholders engagement (Management)

According to the respondents, there is collaboration between the Sri Lankan tourism and the stakeholders, especially the ones within the country. Multiple respondents states that the strategic tourism development document with information on how to work with the brand of Sri Lanka, is developed in cooperation with different associations and other stakeholders within the country. One respondent brings up that there is an action plan for each market, which is discussed and determined together with interests in the private sector. The identity and positioning of Sri Lanka has been established together with stakeholders. As being explained by several respondents, the private sector represents about 99 % of the tourism sector and they have therefore much to contribute to the discussion. There are guidelines describing on how the stakeholders should follow the country positioning.

One respondent describes that if a company in the private sector seeks assistance, the company can achieve support from the Promotion Bureau in terms of marketing and promotion, otherwise it is up to the agencies to produce the promotion material. Another respondent highlights that the Promotion Bureau is just making the promotion strategy on how to work with the branding of the country, and then the private sector are invited to join and discuss. According to several officials, the tourism sector has annual meetings where the stakeholders attend. There are also associations which connect the Sri Lankan Tourism with the stakeholders; some respondents explains that Sri Lanka Tourism visits travel fairs in different countries, where stakeholders from the country are participating in order to attract visitors and business to get interested in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the travel fairs are a joint promotion including other areas within the Sri Lankan government, such as investors and trade. One respondent thinks that the joint marketing with stakeholders is the essential part when managing the brand. Two respondents contributes to the discussion by saying that different interest groups in Sri Lanka are all carrying the same message; they all want people to come visit Sri Lanka. By collaborate with each other Sri Lanka can promote the whole country, both to consumers and to the business-to-business sector. Also an awareness program among citizens is brought up to discussion, where Sri Lanka educates inhabitants about
tourism and what positive consequences it creates. One respondent describes that the
stakeholders are in constant contact with different associations, which gives them updates and
educates sales people in how to treat the tourists’ appropriate and to avoid intimidating and
scaring the tourists, in order to give them a good experience in the country. However, one
respondent discuss that the coordination of stakeholders sometimes is an obstacle, as it may
be hard to get all stakeholders with different interest together.

Respondents explain that there are restrictions and guidelines from the government on how to
work with the brand Sri Lanka. Depending on what decision it regards, it is handled in
different ways. Some of the decisions are decided together with the board of members or the
chairman, while some goes through the ministry of economic development. There are also
some decisions made in collaboration with the directors.

4.3 Infrastructure (Regeneration)

All respondents highlight the importance of an improved infrastructure in order to manage
and receive more tourists. The most important parts in the infrastructure to be developed
appear to be roads, accommodation and human resources. In addition, attractions and
experiences as well as convention centers need to attract more visitors. As the situation is
today, bad roads and the lack of highways create long travel times from one place to another.
Also the public transport could be developed further. There is a newly opened highway from
Colombo to Galle in the south, and according to the respondents, more roads are under
construction, or planned to be built in the near future.

In the discussion some respondents also talks about the air traffic. There is a new international
airport opened in the south, which according to multiple respondents will be important for Sri
Lanka’s infrastructure in the future, as it makes it easier for people to access to the tourist
areas in the south. However, respondents argue that there are still much to develop in the
south in terms of infrastructure before the area could accommodate many more tourists. One
respondent mention the transport systems and bad roads as the most difficult part when
branding Sri Lanka.

The respondents talk about the tourism development strategy plan, they say that in order to
accommodate the goal of 2.5 million tourists the country has to build about 50,000 more hotel
rooms. Sri Lanka has therefore created a one-stop unit that works to ease the process for hotel investors. These hotels are in need of qualified employees, which according to one respondent could be a problem since Sri Lanka lacks human resources. In order to increase qualified employees and to improve standard and service of already existing employees, Sri Lanka has created hotel management training school. Also some of the bigger hotel chains offer training for the employees in order to improve the delivery of service. Respondents continue to argue that the country is in need of cookery and housekeeping schools. Furthermore, since” the government wants the tourism to benefit the smaller people”, one official converse about the supply chain having a need that could ease the cooperation between the farmer and the hotels.

4.4 Brand identity

Multiple of the respondents mentioned diversity, compactness and authenticity as core values in the identity of Sri Lanka. One respondent highlights that these three characteristics in collaboration with each other are what distinguish Sri Lanka from other countries with similar culture and nature, such as India and Maldives. The respondents further mentioned friendly and hospitality people as important parts of the country. Culture, nature, wild life and beaches were also discussed as being essential characteristics. The importance of projecting the heritage and nature when marketing the country was brought up to discussion by a respondent. Three respondents discussed the country’s different brand strategies throughout the years, where some of them have been more successful than others. However, brand strategy used now is according to the respondents appropriate to the identity of Sri Lanka currently communicated.

Several of the respondents mentioned that due to the civil war, people in other countries may have an unfair picture of the country as a tourist destination. One responded that people may think it is not safe to go to Sri Lanka on vacation, which can be seen as untrue since no tourist ever have been hurt due to conflicts in the past. The bad publicity in the past may be a barrier for Sri Lanka in the branding process, as people around the world may see the country in a negative context.
4.5 Brand architecture

All respondents talks about joint promotions between some different sectors within the country, both private and public. One campaign marketing business and trade, investments, tourism, wildlife, gemstones, tea, the heritage and religion, and Sri Lanka as a whole, with the aim to target both business and individuals and also to communicate one united message and identity of Sri Lanka. The campaign is a shopping mall activity which have three main target groups; media, trade and industry, and individual consumers. The trade and industry part is mainly implemented to present different industries, in order to establish relations between businesses to business and to increase the Sri Lankan trade and export. In the events celebrities such as cricket pros and Sri Lankan film actresses attend, all to make people curious and interested in the country. Also, the tourism department is in close collaboration with the sport department, since sport event creates tourism through popular event such as cricket. The tourism development strategy offers a framework for how different sectors should work in order to achieve the goals that are set in the plan.

One respondent tells that Sri Lanka in a way also cooperate with adjacent countries like the Maldives and India. The countries want to complement each other’s strengths and weaknesses in order to attract customers to the region. Since the three countries are close, the visitor can easily travel from one country to another and experience and see more than just one culture and country on their vacation.

4.6 Brand articulation

Several respondents explain the visual expression as being important when communicating the brand. After the war in 2009, Sri Lanka wanted to refresh their country image and an advertising agency was hired to design a new profile for the country. The agency came up with the tagline of “A Small Miracle”. It turned out that this tagline did not go well with the Buddhist way of thinking. As a greater part of the Sri Lankan citizens are Buddhists this tagline failed, probably since the word “miracle” is more connected to the Catholic Church. Moreover, the tagline also gained negative criticism from the government in Sri Lanka. The government did not like the country being associated with the word “small”. In their opinion, Sri Lanka had the possibility to do big things. The tagline was later removed and a new profile was developed, this time the tagline was name “Refreshingly Sri Lanka, Wonder of
Asia”. The new tagline was a success which is still used in the promotion material of the country. Today the word “Refreshingly” is removed from the tagline. The action is explained by one official as “the war is something of the past that people do not want to be reminded of”.

One respondent tells that the year of 2011 was a tourism year in the country. Sri Lanka worked hard to promote the tourism industry for citizens within the country, and to promote Sri Lanka to other countries. The identity of Sri Lanka was divided into eight elements to work with. As Sri Lanka is diverse and have much to offer, several respondents argued that the dividing into themes made it easier to communicate the diversity of the country. The eight themes were; bliss, festive, adventure, serene, heritage, culture, coolness and, smiling and hospitality people.

The eight themes of Sri Lanka have also been captured and reflected in their logo. The logos consisting of eight letters where remade and each letter where given a unique color, representing one of the eight themes. The logo where introduced during the tourist year of 2011, and are still used on the website - srilanka.travel, in brochures and on all other material handed out by the country.

**Picture 1 - The logo of Sri Lanka** (Sri Lanka Tourism, 2013-05-19)

4.7 Brand communication

Advertising is expensive and according to the majority of the respondents, Sri Lanka has a limited budget when it comes to promotion. This is the reason why not much advertising is done at the moment. The biggest communication channel for Sri Lanka is there official website, www.srilanka.travel. Other channels of communication are printed materials handed out by Sri Lankan embassies around the world, e-brochures, and lately also online marketing and social networks such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter.
One respondent tells that there is no media communication plan around Sri Lanka at the moment. However, in 2009 Sri Lanka had a big campaign where commercials about the country where broadcasted around the world in TV channels such as CNN and BBC. This campaign started after the war was over with the objective to show the world that it is now safe to travel to Sri Lanka, and also to present the diversity of what the country has to offer.

Today the country tries to promote and sell Sri Lanka through different campaigns such as travel fares and PR. The messages in these campaigns are gathered around the Sri Lankan identity of authenticity, diversity and compactness. One respondent tells that the country gained different awards in magazines as a good travel destination, which also is used in the marketing. Furthermore, the eight themes of the country are promoted in the campaigns. Moreover, officials argue that it might be difficult to promote the diversity of Sri Lanka without confusing the customer. When discussing the most important part in terms of branding Sri Lanka, one respondent mentions the increased importance of online marketing and the fact that people today are using internet when deciding on where to go on vacation.

Many respondents’ talks about the diversity of Sri Lanka and that the country has much to offer their tourists. Some respondents mean that different attributes are marketed towards different segment and markets. For example is the beach life promoted to the Russian market since they like beaches, and surfing is promoted in Australia where surfing is popular. One respondent enlighten that it is hard to know what the customer want and that it can be difficult to segmenting customers in a geographic way. The respondent goes on and mentions that a russian majority not necessarily mean that certain individuals like beaches. This is why the respondent thinks that Sri Lanka should communicate their diversity, in where many different wants and needs can be satisfied. Other respondents say that Sri Lanka promotes the country as a whole and do not segmenting their marketing towards a certain country or group of people.

Some respondents talks about a current shopping mall activity, which is a promotion event lasting for three days in different cities mainly in countries where Sri Lanka has an emerging market, such as India, Kina, Japan, Russia and South Korea. Two respondents also mention the visit journalist program, where Sri Lanka invites journalists from all over the world in order to display the country. In this way the journalist are encourage to write about the country, and in exchange Sri Lanka offer to pay the flight ticket, accommodations and transports for the journalists. One respondent mean that in this way the journalists will give
their personal view of the country in a magazine, which will promote Sri Lanka and hopefully increase the tourism. Also some advertising is done in different magazines around the world.

One respondent with years of experience of working with the tourism in Sri Lanka claims that there is no quick fix for a bad brand image and that action speaks louder than words when it comes to country image and therefore action is what Sri Lanka should focus on, rather than communication. The respondent further means that it will take time, around 10-15 years to change the image of Sri Lanka, if looking at countries with similar situations as Sri Lanka such as Spain and Germany. However, by deliver good experiences to the visitors, Sri Lanka can encourage positive word of mouth, in what the respondent call buzz marketing. The officials insist that more promotion needs to be done, in order to change the image that people in other parts of the world might have.

4.8 Word of mouth

Many of the respondents say that WOM is very important for Sri Lanka. One respondent mentions a WOM recommendation to be the most important promotional tool since WOM has a stronger impact than advertising. The respondents tells that WOM is the main publicity of Sri Lanka and that recommendation from families and friends is the major source of why tourists choose to travel to the country, if people are happy about their stay they talk about it and share their experiences with others. One respondent argue that WOM is something that cannot be controlled by the country. However, he goes on, performed actions can become the new word of mouth, which can be seen as buzz marketing. This is where the respondent see opportunity to do something and affect WOM, but the actions needs to be credible and relevant to Sri Lanka in order to not gain negative WOM.

Moreover, three respondents mentioned that the Sri Lankan have a blogging team which task is to write about the country online, in order to gain positive word of mouth.

4.9 Brand experience

Visitors’ satisfaction and their experience of the country are being monitored by airport surveys. In order to increase the brand experience, some of the respondents mention that
infrastructure and citizens plays an important role, as these are the people tourists will be in contact with during their stay in the country. With the goal to increase the awareness of tourism and their positive consequences, Sri Lanka educates citizens in order to create an understanding about the tourism industry and to motivate the citizens to create business opportunities connected to the tourism, which according to the respondent called awareness programs. Respondent seven states that the awareness programs are an action in order to enhance the culture in Sri Lanka. One respondent is talking about that Sri Lanka strives for treating the tourists well in order to satisfy them. To reach this goal, there are training schools for employees within the hotel management business. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is encouraging visitors who had a good experience on their vacation to share their thoughts and to upload photos on their website. One respondent claims that Sri Lanka tries to follow their core values in order to deliver the brand experience that is expected by the visitors.
5 Analysis

This chapter contains an analysis of the theoretical framework together with the empirical findings, furthermore, it presents interpretations made by the authors. In order to ease the legibility, the analysis is structured in the same way as the theory- and empirical chapter. The analysis ends with an overall analysis which analyzes the connection between the components.

5.1 Brand evaluation

In accordance with Hanna and Rowley (2011) who declare that it is important to evaluate the place brand prior to branding, Sri Lanka performed a SWOT analysis prior to marketing. Like the theory tells (Olins, 1999; De Mooij, 2010; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006) this analysis was by Sri Lanka done both internal and external. Kapferer (2008) mean that evaluation should be done in order to discover potential problems and opportunities. By evaluate Sri Lanka internal and compare it with countries like India, Malaysia and Maldives the country found out problems and opportunities, and what to marketing in order to diverse the country and attract customers. This can be connected Ghodeswar (2008), who claims that a comparison between brands can be a measurement in how well a brand is doing on the market at the moment.

Hanna and Rowley mean that evaluation is a continuously process in order to develop and become better. Sri Lanka have somewhat followed this and do each year conduct an airport survey with the main objective to get to know their visitors thoughts about their stay in the country. However, some respondents say that the answers can be hard to evaluate though they tend to be broad and unspecified, it can therefore be interpreted that Sri Lanka might want to overlook the structure of the survey and involve more variables in order to be able to use the survey in a larger extend. The airport surveys that are done approximately once a year could, according to Hanna and Rowley (2011) be done on a regular basis and more essential, in order to get more information out of it. This goes along with the thoughts of De Chernatony (2001), saying that evaluation should be done in order to get a deeper understanding regards to the satisfaction and positive perceptions of the brand essence, which can help the management to adjust the brand in order to develop further. Sri Lanka also perform another survey every third-fourth year, where they try to listen on WOM online on their website and also handle
feedback from hotel organization, all to gather more information to develop from in order to improve the organization and their work.

Sri Lanka does mainly measure their brand in terms of income of tourist, arrivals and effect of marketing campaigns. A brand could be monitored in more variables such as consumption, brand recognition, brand recall and awareness (Ghodeswar, 2008). Chernatony (2001) goes on saying that it is necessary to evaluate many variables in order to get a better overview of a brands situation on the market. It could therefore be interpreted that Sri Lanka, by monitor more variables then today, could get a better overview of their opportunities on the market.

5.2 Stakeholders engagement (Management)

The empirical investigation indicates that stakeholders are connected to diverse areas of the Sri Lankan Tourism. The private sector owns 99 percent of the tourism industry, the respondents therefore highlights the importance of a good relationship between the government and the private stakeholders. The respondents’ understanding of having an effective relation between the tourism sector and stakeholders can be connected to the development of marketing capabilities (Evers et al., 2012).

According to the respondents, the collaboration with stakeholders can be seen as satisfying, as they participate in the process of deciding what brand identity and positioning to use. These actions, together with the joint promotion between Sri Lankan Tourism and other parts such as investors and trade with the participation in travel fairs can be connected to the discussion by McAlexander et al., (2002), which claims that a good relationship with stakeholders has the possibility to increase the stakeholders’ support of the brand strategy, and motivate the stakeholders to deliver the wanted brand experience.

However, several of the officials mention the difficulty in coordinating stakeholders and ensure that everyone agrees in the process of decision making. This is supported by Papadopoulos (2004), saying that the coordination of the stakeholders is one challenge in the place branding process. The stakeholders have to be united in order to be able to deliver and communicate the brand experience (Papadopoulos, 2004). Furthermore, the literature highlights that it is important to estimate the uniqueness of each and every of the stakeholders in order to take advantage of their expertise. (Ferrell, Gonzalez-Padron, Hult, and Maignan,
With this information in mind, it can be interpreted that Sri Lanka might have more to extract from their stakeholders.

One respondent describes that the Promotion Bureau is just deciding what promotion tool to use when branding the country; other decisions are taken together with the stakeholders. In the empirical investigation it can be seen that action plans are created in corporation with the private sector. Hence, it can be interpreted that the stakeholders might have an important role in the decision making process.

5.3 Infrastructure

Infrastructure is argued to be an important component when it comes to create an attractive tourist destination (Gunn, 2002; Inskeep, 1991). Researchers such as Crouch and Ritchie (1999) claim that infrastructure has impact on the brand experience. Hanna and Rowley (2011) argue that in order for a place brand to success the infrastructure has to support the promised brand experience. According to the respondents Sri Lanka are in need of better infrastructure, both tangible and intangible, in order to deliver what the customers aim for. Roads, hotels and service schools are under construction and more is to come. This in accordance with Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Smith (1994) who mean that by enhancing the service experience a place will also enhance their brand experience.

Khadaroo and Seetanah (2007) say the infrastructure has to facilitate people’s needs to move around in the country and at a certain place. This is something Sri Lanka is working on and according to the interviews, Sri Lanka invests time and money in improving the country’s road infrastructure. Another aspect to consider is that visitors from developed countries are used to effective and modern infrastructure (Cohen 1979; Mo et al., 1993), and therefore they might have higher expectations on the infrastructure then Sri Lanka can offer. This can be seen as another important reason why it is important to improve the infrastructure in the country, especially since Khadaroo and Seetanah (2007) discuss that if the destination fails in deliver what the tourist expects in infrastructure the visitor might consider other destinations.

Sri Lanka is also providing hotel management training schools, which helps hotels and other service businesses to become better and more service minded. The intangible infrastructure might become even more important in the future, since multiple hotels being built and more tourists are arriving.
It can be interpreted that the infrastructure is an important part in the SPBM-model since it is what direct affect people’s brand experience (Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Smith, 1994). Enhancing the infrastructure is an action which could be taken in order to enhance the brand experience and thereby WOM and it could also be a foundation for the country’s communication. An interpretation to be made is that Sri Lanka should be aware of the importance of infrastructure and that it might be important for them as a developing country and a growing tourist destination to evolve the infrastructure within the country.

5.4 Brand identity

According to the literature, the identity of a country should derive from values and beliefs of people living in the country and their style of doing business (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002;), as well as from the culture within the country (Dzenovska, 2005). As mentioned in paragraph 5.2 - Stakeholder Engagement (Management), stakeholders are involved in the process of the tourism strategy framework. Yet, the interpretation is that Sri Lanka might want to capture the spirits and values of the inhabitants in a larger extent, and not only stakeholders related to the tourist industry. According to one respondent as well as Aronczyk (2010), cooperation with the whole population is important since all people in Sri Lanka can be seen as brand ambassadors who make impressions on tourist in the country, an impression that affect the brand experience and hopefully will lead to customers spreading WOM, telling their friends and family about the country. As people in Sri Lanka might be seen as brand ambassadors it can be interpreted as a positive aspect to educate people in villages and schools about tourism and the consequences that come with it. This initiative can also be interpreted as a good way to motivate and invite the people in the country to participate in the branding of Sri Lanka. When working with the identity of the brand, the management has to identify what core values the brand has (Harris and De Chernatony, 2001; Hatch and Schultz, 2008; Ghodeswar, 2008). Multiple respondents talk about authenticity, diversity and compactness as Sri Lanka’s core values, also the country’s friendly and smiling people seems to be a repetitive focus. These values are communicated in the Tourism Development Strategy, and this might indicate that the management is familiar with the brand identity and how it is expressed within the organization.
5.5 Brand architecture

The government of Sri Lanka has created an Tourism Development Strategy which shows directions for where Sri Lanka are heading. In the plan different interest groups are addressed, in terms of plans and expectations. This plan seems to be an attempt to organize and manage different interest groups/ sub-brands and there relation between each other (Douglas, Craig and Nijssen, 2001; Sanchez, 2004). A strong architecture results in a better control over the many sub-brands within the country brand and it also helps define different roles of the groups/brands and their relationship to each other (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). This could be positive for Sri Lanka to work with since the country under the tourist part has a wide diversity of attraction, which results in many sub-brands with different interest but whom all strive to increase the tourism industry in the country.

The shopping mall activity is an example in how different sub-brands goes together and collaborate with each other. Even though they have different objectives with the event they all favors and benefit from each other’s present. This in accordance with Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) who mean that in a brand where sub-brand cooperate tight with each other they all gain from each other’s success. Together they reach different target groups and also make people and companies aware of other parts in what Sri Lanka have to offer. By cooperate, benefit from each other and build relations between the different interest groups in Sri Lanka, the country is moving closer to unite the country under one joint brand message (Douglas, Craig and Nijssen, 2001; Sanchez, 2004).

Sri Lanka cooperates with other countries such as India and the Maldives, this in order to attract tourists to the area. These three countries have different things to offer their customers and should all benefit from the cooperation. On Sri Lankans behalf this cooperation could be seen as positive since the two other countries both are well known and attract much attention, to be seen in their company could strengthen the brand of Sri Lanka and due to that attract more customers. On the other hand, if one of the countries gains negative publicity this could also affect Sri Lanka in a negative way (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).
5.6 Brand articulation

Sri Lanka earlier discovered problems with the visual communication surrounding the brand, as one respondent described in the empirical chapter when the tagline “A Small Miracle“ were criticized as being irrelevant and inappropriate in a country where a major part of the inhabitants are Buddhists. This can be connected to Woo Jun and Lee (2007), who claims that cultural differences are a common obstacle within the area of communication. Moreover, the problems that occurred with the new tagline, shows that it is vital to have knowledge about how symbols, icons and pictures are perceived by different cultures, especially more traditional cultures as may exists in developing countries. (Woo Jun and Lee, 2007) The logo, together with the present tagline “Wonder Of Asia” is recurrent in all material derived from the organization, which can be connected to the theoretical chapter where Montana et al., (2007) claims that a consistent brand design may help the consumer to get a better understanding of the brand. According to Olins (1999), the tagline plays an important role in the visual communication, as it is connected to the campaigns. It can be interpret that Sri Lanka might have been through a challenge where the wrong tagline was chosen. However, today the slogan is perceived by officials to go along with other promotion material, which may give the visitor an overall impression of consistency. On the other hand, the respondents bring up the eight themes which constitute the result of the core identity of Sri Lanka. These eight themes are communicated in order to show potential customers what Sri Lanka can offer.

5.7 Brand communication

As presented in the empirical material, Sri Lanka does not have a media communication plan at the moment, due to reasons such as financial restrictions. According to the respondents, most of the promotions are today through public relations and events, and there are also some advertising done in magazines. Duncan and Moriarty (1998) discuss that communication plays an important role in the relation with customers and other stakeholders. Stakeholders influent the brand message and communication is therefore one of the key aspects when creating relationship with the stakeholders. Moreover, the brand message has to be consistent
in order to create positive associations, and it is also important to have all stakeholders in mind when communicating. (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998) According to the respondents Sri Lanka try to gather their brand message around their identity of authentic, diversity and compactness and further on the eight themes (described earlier). When communicating Sri Lanka in general does not segmenting their market but rather communicating the same brand message to all markets. In this way they, in line with Duncan and Moriarty (1998), take a broad approach in their communication that includes a wide range of stakeholders. To include all stakeholders and unite them under one single brand message could according to Hanna and Rowley (2011) be difficult since it usually are many different objectives among different stakeholders. It could therefore be seen as positive that Sri Lanka have a wide approach in their communication in which they try to include many stakeholders objectives, this in order to create a good relation with the stakeholders and to create one united and consistent brand message (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998).

The campaign in TV-channels such as BBC and CNN is according to the respondents the biggest communication campaign for the country so far. It was broadcast in order to inform the world about the country, that the war was over and by doing this change the negative approach people might had about the country. This action goes in hand with Duncan and Moriarty (1998) and Keller (2001) who say that communication can help a brand stand out from the rest and also help to inform, influent and remind the customer about its existence.

Sri Lanka is working with smaller event such as shopping mall events where focus is on their most emerging markets such as India, Kina, Japan, Russia and South Korea. This way of communicating can be seen as positive for Sri Lanka since they focusing on their bigger markets in the first place due to their lack of economic resources to put on advertising.

Sri Lanka´s largest communication channel is according to the respondents the country´s own website www.srilanka.travel. The country is also active in social media through their own blogging team, on different web pages and through different journalists that´s been visiting the country. However, the website is their main communication tool in order to attract tourists to Sri Lanka from around the world. According to Li and Bernoff (2011) new technology such as websites has many advantageous for brand managers when communicating with their consumers.
5.8 Word of mouth

The empirical investigation shows that the main reason why people chose to travel to Sri Lanka is because of a friend’s recommendation. This equals to the statement by Buttle (1998) who says that WOM has a major influence on consumers’ decision making process. As WOM is the most important promotion tool it is important that the country try to create and enhance positive WOM. Swanson and Kelley (2001) highlights that WOM can be seen as a trustworthy communication tool since it is cannot be controlled by the country itself. The fact that most tourists visit the country due to recommendations from friends can therefore be seen as positive. As WOM in the SPBM-model is the link between what has been communicated by the country and the customers experience of the country (Hanna and Rowley 2011), a positive WOM indicates that what Sri Lanka communicates also is what the customer have experienced.

Findings in the empirical investigation indicate that visitors in general had a positive experience in Sri Lanka, as they recommend other people to travel to the country. This can be an indicator for the ones working with the brand of Sri Lanka that they are developing in the right direction. However, since WOM is hard to control, the country have to keep on creating positive WOM and as one of the respondents say make decisions that support Sri Lankas growth and take credible and relevant actions. In order to do this Sri Lanka could, according to Li and Bernoff (2011), Dellarocas (2003) and Bickart and Schindler (2001) try to listen to the WOM.

5.9 Brand experience

Govers and Go (2009) bring up service as an important role in the place brand experience, especially in situations where there are cultural differences between the individual who performs the service and the receiver of the service. This information can be connected to the information about Sri Lanka having a training school within service and hotel management, which furthermore can be seen as an arrangement that are done as a quality assurance. Even though education is provided to employees in the hotel management, there may still be difficult for the management to ensure the visitors’ experience beings followed according to their expectations. As mentioned in the literature, the customer experience starts prior to the experience, this is especially true in place brand experience situations, since the initial contact
with a travel agent or flight service may compose the foundation in the experience. (Govers and Go, 2009) For that reason, the collaboration between stakeholders in Sri Lanka is of importance as it might create a brand experience for the visitors even before they have arrived to the country. According to McAlester et al. (2002) good relationships with stakeholders increase the ability to make them deliver the desirable brand experience. This aspect along with the result of the empirical investigation, may consider the importance of stakeholders when it comes to place brand experience.

5.10 Overall analysis

The component of the SPBM-model in which Sri Lanka seems to be most active in is the infrastructure as they at the moment are building multiple roads, hotels and service schools. This in accordance with Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Smith (1994) who mean that by enhancing the service experience a place will also enhance their brand experience and WOM. However, not too much effort seems to be put on the two components of brand experience and WOM instead these two is interpreted to be indirect affected when managing other parts in the place branding process. For example McAlester et al., (2002), claims that a good relationship with stakeholders increase their support of the brand strategy and motivate them to deliver the wanted brand experience. Furthermore, a cooperation with the whole population is important since all people in Sri Lanka can be seen as brand ambassadors who make impressions on tourist in the country, an impression that affect the brand experience and hopefully will lead to customers spreading positive WOM (Aronczyk, 2010).

The component of stakeholders can be interpreted as broad since a stakeholder can be a variety of different organizations, companies and individuals on many different levels. With support from the component of brand architecture, stakeholders can be organized and managed in different interest groups/sub-brands (Douglas, Craig and Nijssen, 2001; Sanchez, 2004). The empirical investigation indicates that Sri Lanka is cooperating with stakeholders at different levels, such as the private sector, people living in the country, visitors and other countries. According to the respondents, stakeholders are helping in the evaluating of the country. However, in the theoretical framework (Chernatony, 2001) it can be seen that the evaluation process could be developed and evaluate more variables and in that way give more valuable information to the country. Furthermore the cooperation with stakeholders is important when building the brand identity, as the brand identity have to derive from values
and beliefs of people living in the country and their style of doing business (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Duncan and Moriarty (2001) claims that stakeholders influence the brand message, the brand communication is therefore one of the key aspects when creating relationship with the stakeholders. However, when exploring the case of Sri Lanka it can be interpreted that the components of both communication and articulation seems to gain little attention.
6 Conclusion

This chapter presents the results of the study. The chapter also provides limitations made in this study.

It can be revealed that by applying the SPBM-model on the place branding process of Sri Lanka, it has been possible to explore how the country is working with the different components and also the relation between them and how they affect each other. By putting the SPBM-model on the Sri Lankan place branding process it can be interpreted that all components are tightly connected to each other, and also that some parts seems to be more important for Sri Lanka then others.

The result of this study shows that Sri Lanka put more effort in some of the components of the SPBM-model than others. However, since the components are tightly connected to each other, managing one of the components also affect the others. Therefore it can be stated that the country impact all components in the SPBM-model in some way, actively or not.

Findings reveal that infrastructure is the component in the SPBM-model where Sri Lanka put most time and effort. This further means that Sri Lanka indirect also manages the brand experience, stakeholder management and WOM, as these parts are affected by an improved infrastructure.

The two components of infrastructure and stakeholders depend on each other. In order to attract investors there is a need of tourists, and in order to accommodate tourists Sri Lanka are in need of infrastructure. Infrastructure and stakeholders can therefore be seen as the most important components of the SPBM-model in the case of Sri Lanka as the build the foundations for the other components. Furthermore, the results in this study show that evaluation is an essential part in the SPBM-model when applied on Sri Lanka, as the result of this component can improve and develop the place branding process as a whole.

If Sri Lanka put more time and effort in the three components of infrastructure, stakeholders and evaluation, also the other six components of the SPBM-model (brand identity, brand experience, WOM, brand architecture, brand communication and brand articulation) indirect will be affected in a positive way. Moreover, the research reveals that every action that are made affect the brand experience, which is the consumers’ perception of the brand.
6.1 Limitations

The study is conducted as a single case study in Sri Lanka, which means that this thesis has limitations due to methodological choices. As the place branding concept is broad and due to reasons such as the need for economic growth and history and bio diversity of the country studied, the research is limited to focus on place branding with a tourism perspective. Since this research is a Minor Field Study funded by Sida; a government agency working with the mission to reduce poverty in the world, the paper have been adapted to their requirements. The main requirements made by Sida were to write the thesis in a developing country with the aim to development and human rights, in this case the economic development.

There are some aspects notable when conducting a study in another culture and country. Obstacles might occur in the communication between respondents and researchers due to language and culture differences. It could therefore be a challenge to conduct a research in another culture, challenges which also can be seen as limitations.
7 Research Implications

The following chapter provides the reader with information regarding aspects that may have impact the result of this study. It will also give recommendations on future research within the area of place branding.

7.1 Managerial implications

The findings made in this study gives valuable insight to managers who handle the brand of Sri Lanka, as the travel industry is acknowledged to be one of the key factors regarding economic development in Sri Lanka. The study has revealed place branding to be a challenging, yet important process. By using the SPBM-model, different areas of the place branding process of Sri Lanka have been identified, as well as how the parts interact with each other. The management of Sri Lankan Tourism could thereby achieve valuable insight to use in order to develop the organization further and enhance their work. Recommendations for managers involve continue to improve the infrastructure and evaluating the place branding process further. To extract more information from the evaluation process the country could evaluate more variables and starting with enhancing their airport survey which is rarely carried out and were the answers can be hard to interpret. As the study shows that stakeholders have an important role in the Sri Lanka, a suggestion for managers are to nurture the relationship to stakeholders and to in a greater extend involve them in the different part of the place branding process. The management could also put more effort in affordable actions such as listen to the WOM and thereby gather information about the customers brand experience in the country as well as online marketing.

7.2 Theoretical insight

The findings made in this research have brought valuable insight to the area of place branding with focus on tourism. In the field of research, a gap of holistic models has been identified. The SPBM-model made by Hanna and Rowley (2011) is the result of a literature review of acknowledged place branding models, which consists of nine components connected to each other. As the SPBM-model is relatively new, it has to be tested in order to find out how it
could be applied in reality. The contribution to the field of research is therefore that the SPBM-model has been applied Sri Lankan conditions as a case study. Furthermore, the focus has been to explore the nine components in the model further, in order to provide evidence on how Sri Lanka manages these components. Additionally, an understanding of how the components in the SPBM-model interact has been revealed.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the purpose in a qualitative study is not to create generalizations. However, by providing the readers with a distinctive picture of the study, it is up to each person to decide how and to what extent the research can be generalized. (Cohen et al., 2007)

7.3 Suggestions for further research

There is need for further research in the area of place branding with a tourism perspective, as there still are gaps in the field of research. Having the outcome of this study in mind, it would be interesting to look further into the SPBM-model and the components. One advice is to apply the SPBM model on another country and then analyze the differences between that outcome and the result in this study. The SPBM-model could then be revised or developed further as a result of the investigation. Another suggestion for further research is to apply the model on a region or city rather than a country. Furthermore, it would be valuable to study the SPBM-model and in the empirical investigation focus on customers who want to visit the country. Other suggestions in the area of place branding could be to conduct a study based on a quantitative method.
List of references


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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sri Lanka

The ones responsible for the development of the travel and tourism industry in Sri Lanka is the Ministry of Economic Development, who also are in charge of areas such as poverty alleviation, regional and rural development, promoting investments and nature and wild life conservation.

In 2007 the Sri Lankan government implemented a new tourism act to the country (The Tourism Act No. 38 of 2005). The previous Sri Lankan tourism Board was replaced by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) and also three other units was introduced; Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB), Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB), and Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM).

The objectives of SLTDA’s are mainly to develop Sri Lanka, domestic and abroad, as a tourist and travel destination. The organization should also advise the minister of Sri Lanka in questions regarding the industry. Some of the activities on SLTDA’S table is to regularly identifying and expanding the products and services, managing the tourism development guidelines as well as assist in the legal and administrative process for new products and service development (sltda.lk).

The unit called SLCB supplies with a variety of service, for example conducting marketing activities, implementing researches and assist the industry, for instance by organizing events. The mission is to promote Sri Lanka globally as a one of a kind venue when it comes to activities such as activities, conferences and meetings, and to make sure that these activities are professional managed.

The SLTPB is responsible for all the direct and indirect marketing and promotion of the travel and tourism industry in Sri Lanka. Besides the Chairman, Managing Director and a board of Directors, the SLTPB also includes people from other organizations such as Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka and Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism. (srilanka.travel)
The SLITHM is a training institute in order to develop human resources (HR) in the areas of the tourism sector.

Appendix 2 - The Tourism Development Strategy

The document Tourism Development Strategy 2011-2016 was developed by the organization of SLTDA in 2010. The goal of the strategy is to enhance the economic growth and to benefit a cross-section of the country’s population. Key objectives of the strategy are to:

- Increase tourist arrivals from 650,000 in 2010 to 2.5 million by 2016.
- Attract USD 3,000 million as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the country within 5 years.
- Increase the tourism related employment from 125,000 in 2010 to 500,000 by 2016 and expand tourism based industry and services on the whole island.
- Distribute the economic benefits of tourism to a larger cross section of the society and integrate tourism to the real economy.
- Increase the foreign exchange earnings from USD 500 million in 2010 to USD 2.75 million by 2016.
- Contribute towards improving the global trade and economic linkages of Sri Lanka.
- Position Sri Lanka as the world’s most treasured island for tourism.

Other goals of the plan is to create a environment that fits tourism, attracting the right type of tourists, ensure that departing tourists are happy, improve domestic tourism and improve the global image of Sri Lanka.

In the document obstacles related to the industry of tourism, for instance the government policy, development of the infrastructure, regulations, guidelines, marketing and promotion and public relations are stated. The management working with the economic development of Sri Lanka also distinguishes areas were the country lack of resources. In order to improve the performance in these areas, there are development guidelines provided. The guidelines are described as infrastructure to meet the industry requirements, human resources requirements of the industry, transport solutions, and finally, product development and supporting SME sectors.
Appendix 3 - Interview guide

Introduction

- Name, e-mail and phone number:
- What is your position?
- For how long have been working on this position?
- What are your main tasks?

Identity

1. What you would say is the core values and identity of the brand Sri Lanka that you want to communicate to the rest of the world?

2. A. Can you tell us about how you came up with this identity and these values?
   B. Are the stakeholders involved in this process, which influent you the most?

3. Do you think Sri Lanka’s identity is similar to the world’s perception of the country? Is there something that differ?

Customers

4. How does your target group affect your way of marketing Sri Lanka?

5. A. How do you know the target group’s wants and needs?
   B. How do you measure the customer’s satisfaction?

6. In order to develop and attract more tourists, which parts in the infrastructure do you need to work more with?

Communication

7. A. Can you tell us about how you communicate the brand Sri Lanka?
   B. Which channels do you use mostly and in which way?
8. A. How do you work with the design and the visual communication around Sri Lanka?

9. How do you work in order to collaborate your messages in different channels?

10. How do you communicate your message to the private sector and other stakeholders within Sri Lanka?

11. Regards to the different stakeholders’ interests within Sri Lanka, how do you encourage their communicated message to be similar to yours? I

12. A. What are your thoughts about Word Of Mouth, Is this something you use in your work. In which way?

13. A. Do you evaluate and measure your work? In which way?
   B. How do you use this information in order to develop?

14. A. If looking at the whole country, what is your opinion about the different parts tourism, export, governance, investment and immigration, how do you think that they collaborate and interact with each other?
   B. How much directions do you get from (government) and how much can your organization decide yourself?

15. What do you see as the most important part in the process of marketing Sri Lanka?

16. What do you see as the most difficult part in the process of marketing Sri Lanka?

17. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding the marketing of Sri Lanka?
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