Co-created reputation in a nonprofit context:

A mixed-method study of SACC-DC

Authors: Denise Ampuero
                  Sophie Holmberg

Supervisor: Galina Biedenbach

Student
Umeå School of Business and Economics
Spring semester 2014

ABSTRACT

Reputation has been the subject of marketing research throughout recent years, and it was found to be an important measure of how organizations are perceived. The theory of co-creation, where organizations interact and deliver value through the involvement of customers, has also shown positive effects on performance. The main purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of how reputation and co-creation are managed internally. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the impact of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience on co-creation and reputation by evaluating the external perceptions of members of a nonprofit membership organization, the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce of Washington, D.C., Inc. (SACC-DC). For a nonprofit membership organization, both reputation and co-creation can be of importance, as they do not compete by financial means, but instead by how the members perceive the networking service that they provide.

We could identify a research gap, since there is no study that examines co-creation in relation to reputation. Furthermore, there is a need to conduct more research on co-creation in the nonprofit context. We could also see that more in-depth studies need to be done on reputation in order to understand the underlying factors of the internal management of the reputation.

In order to fulfill the purpose of the thesis, a mixed-method study has been conducted. In the qualitative study, we have conducted eight semi-structured interviews with board members and employees of SACC-DC. Through the interviews, we gained a deeper understanding of how the reputation is managed by exploring how the organization works with co-creation, identity, desired identity and perceived quality. From the interviews, four themes were derived to explain how the organization co-creates their reputation together with their members. The themes were brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. Our qualitative findings resulted in a table, showing that the reputation could benefit from being co-created in nonprofit membership organizations.

In order to advance an understanding of how members of SACC-DC perceive the reputation and co-creation, a quantitative study was conducted. We assessed the effects of brand image, brand experience, satisfaction and perceived quality on co-creation and reputation. Our regression analyses showed that brand image and brand experience had positive significant effects on both co-creation and reputation, and that perceived quality had a positive significant effect on reputation. We could also conclude that co-creation had a positive significant effect on reputation.

From our qualitative interviews together with the results of our quantitative study, we could conclude that there are perceptional differences regarding the reputation between board members and members of SACC-DC. We can also conclude that the reputation of SACC-DC is indeed co-created by board members together with other members, which implies that both management and customers take part in the process of creating the best possible reputation. In addition to our theoretical contributions, we also made practical recommendations for both managers of nonprofit organizations in general and for SACC-DC in particular, on how to enhance the co-creation process of the reputation.

Umeå
June 3, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sophie Holmberg   Denise Ampuero

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1. INTRODUCTION

We begin this thesis by providing an understanding of how we have to selected the topic for our degree project, and by presenting the organization we are writing on commission for. We also formulate the problem we have encountered, and give a background to the theories and research that have set the theoretical foundation of this thesis. The chapter ends by stating the research question and purpose that have been the guiding tools throughout the entire degree project.

1.1 CHOICE OF SUBJECT

We are two marketing and management students currently enrolled in the International Business Program at Umeå School of Business and Economics. Both of us were interested in writing on commission, thus reaching the decision to contact The Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce of Washington, D.C., Inc., (from now on referred to as 'SACC-DC'), where one of us was on internship for six months. We both have previous working experience at Swedish banks, and this previous experience contributed to our desire to write for an organization that operates in a nonprofit manner. We think that the nonprofit setting would broaden our understanding about branding and reputation, since it is a new environment for us compared to our previous employers. We also think it would be challenging and interesting to write for a nonprofit organization where financial feasibility and profit maximization are not the overall goals, since this implies that we have to think in new terms.

As for the choice of theories for this thesis, we have chosen relevant concepts in branding research, such as reputation, co-creation, brand image, brand identity, brand experience, perceived quality and satisfaction. These concepts are explained and discussed further in this thesis. Upon discussing the theories we were interested to include, brand image and brand identity were the first concepts we discussed, as they reflect the external and internal perceptions of a brand, respectively. Reputation was then chosen as another concept, as it is concerned with the perceptions of an organization by all involved stakeholders, thus complementing theories on brand identity and brand image very well. Further, we chose to include co-creation as one of our main constructs, as we deemed it to be suitable for the nature of the organization we are writing on commission for. Brand experience was another chosen construct for this thesis, as it is concerned with how organizations create better experiences for customers through the brand. Perceived quality and satisfaction were addressed because we wanted to explore how these were related to co-creation and reputation, and to be able to enhance our practical implications to the organization in question.

1.2 PROBLEM BACKGROUND

Nonprofits organizations are driven by mission, and do not aim towards the common profit goal shared by for-profit firms, but rather attempt to apply a social mission (Laidler-Kylander & Simonin, 2009, p. 58). It has been acknowledged for decades that nonprofit organizations must operate in a for-profit manner (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003, p. 6). Particularly, marketing is a discipline that has been described as important when adopting business-like measures in the nonprofit setting, as it involves understanding the customers' needs (Day, 1994, p. 41; Gonzalez et al., 2002, p. 59). Gonzalez et al. (2002, p. 56) explain

nonprofit marketing as *"the management process of those interchanges undertaken by nonprofit organizations aimed at generating a social benefit to a specific sector of society."* Many researchers agree that managers in the nonprofit context are better off when adapting the marketing activities to match the customer (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003, p. 45; Kara et al., 2004, p. 68; Macedo & Pinho, 2006, p. 534; Padanyi & Gainer, 2004, p. 44; Sargeant et al., 2002, p. 58). In their study, Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009, p. 288) found that a small part of their sample was involved in strategic marketing of some type, including market research. Research has also shown that managers in nonprofit settings are disinclined to keenly take on brand building activities (Ewing & Napoli, 2005, p. 851). According to Laidler-Kylander et al. (2007, pp. 274-275), branding is a crucial tool to stimulate nonprofit organizations, and the brand is the most significant benefit.

SACC-DC is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1906 (SACC-DC, 2014). According to Reg. 1.501(c)(6)-l of the Internal Revenue Service in the United States, a chamber of commerce falls under the category of a business league, which is defined as *"an association of persons having a common business interest, whose purpose is to promote the common business interest and not to engage in a regular business of a kind ordinarily carried on for profit"* (Reilly, Hull, & Braig Allen, 2003). The primary task of SACC-DC is to enhance trade between Sweden and the United States through networking (SACC-DC, 2014). SACC-DC has around 200 members in four different categories; Corporate, Business, Individual and Young Professionals (SACC-DC, 2014). Corporate membership is for large companies based in D.C., and include companies such as Volvo Trucks, Ericsson, and SAAB. Corporate members receive publicity on SACC-DC's website and get two persons listed in the membership directory that is sent to all members each year. Business membership is also designed for companies, and includes members such as Icelandair and General Electric. Individual membership is directed towards individuals living in Washington, D.C., and Young Professionals are aimed towards people under 35 who are living and working in Washington, D.C. The members pay a yearly fee to SACC-DC, and through their membership receive the benefit of being invited to various events throughout the year, as well as receiving contact information to other members (SACC-DC, 2014). A few times per year, events are targeted towards a certain membership category and they are exclusively invited to participate.

SACC-DC consists of the Executive Board of Directors, the Executive Director and the Executive Assistants (SACC-DC, 2014). The Board of Directors is made up of around 20 individuals with an interest in Swedish-American trade, who set the strategic vision for SACC-DC, as well as executes decisions regarding the budget and marketing. The board members contribute voluntarily and do not obtain any monetary compensation for working with SACC-DC. SACC-DC is located in Georgetown, Washington, D.C., in House of Sweden. The building was inaugurated in 2006, and hosts the Embassy of Sweden in the USA, as well as other organizations with connections to Sweden (SACC-DC, 2014).

According to the Executive Director of SACC-DC, Anna Lohmeyer (2014), SACC-DC could benefit by obtaining a more updated view of how its members perceive the organization and the brand. Nandan (2005, p. 271) argues that correspondence between brand identity and brand image is desirable, and that through this, consumers will clearly understand the brand message and therefore be loyal to the brand. As explained by Laidler-

Kylander et al. (2007, p. 262), nonprofits and for-profits face many similar challenges when building brands. The external brand image of customers needs to be aligned with the view of the internal management and the organization's identity, as the competition for nonprofit organizations is getting increasingly intense (Laidler-Kylander et al., 2007, p. 262). In our opinion, understanding how managers in nonprofit settings work and develop the internal brand strategy of the organization, i.e. the brand identity, could be useful as this will affect what marketing activities and events are carried out to their customers. SACC-DC had tried to perform a market research with its members last year. However, the number of participants turned out to be too low to acquire a representative view of how the members perceived the organization. The market research was conducted by board members who called and asked questions regarding SACC-DC to the members through telephone. The results showed that enough data could not be collected, possibly because the respondents were not anonymous and due to the time it took to complete the research. This attempt indicates that the organization lacks an updated view of how SACC-DC and its brand image are perceived by the members.

Based on the problem background above, we have searched for relevant theories in order to understand the practical problem. The literature review has allowed us to detect gaps that have not been addressed by previous researchers.

1.3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Kotler and Levy (1969, p. 15) recognized that marketing practices should be applied to all kinds of companies and businesses, but concepts have to be adapted to fit each context. The application of classical marketing theories to the nonprofit context has been supported by other researchers as well (Goerke, 2003, p. 317; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009, p. 277). According to Slatten et al., (2011, p. 113), stakeholders of nonprofit organizations are increasingly interested in for-profit measures in order to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the organizations. It has been argued that "*as many nonprofit board members come from the for-profit sector, many of these traditional business tools effectively transfer to the nonprofit organization*" (Slatten et al., 2011, p. 117), and as this is something that holds for SACC-DC, we argue that the theories traditionally applied on companies can be applied in our thesis. Furthermore, we see that SACC-DC's main focus is to provide services to the members in the form of events, to create the chance to network, and to attract new members. Therefore, we assert that branding theories are highly relevant for the literature review of our thesis.

Reputation has been extensively discussed by several researchers, as it is a very useful measurement of how an organization is perceived, both from internal and external stakeholders' points of view (Chun, 2005, p. 91; Musteen et al., 2010, p. 498). Furthermore, as corporate reputation includes both external and internal views of a company or organization, we see that it useful for the nonprofit context of our study. As we have noted above, nonprofit organizations operate in corporate-like manners, which makes it justifiable to use 'corporate reputation' in this thesis even though it concerns a nonprofit organization. From now on, we will refer to this concept as 'reputation'.

The reputation of an organization consists of many perspectives, where the two most important ones are the views of its main stakeholders; employees and customers (Davies et

al., 2003, p. 61). Reputation complies, according to Chun (2002, p. 102), all stakeholders' collective view of an organization's reputation, and includes branad identity, image and culture, which are interrelated. Reputation differs from brand image in the sense that reputation is a broader view that is shared by many stakeholders, such as employees, governmental bodies and customers, while brand image is the single view of the customers that will purchase the brand (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008, p. 19). We think it is important to take the views of both customers and employees as stakeholders into account, making reputation a relevant concept for our research.

Hall (1992, p. 143) was among the first researcher to show that an organization's reputation should be considered a competitive advantage, and later research has also stated that the reputation is the most important factor for obtaining a *sustained* competitive advantage (Hall, 1992, p. 143; Barney, 1991, p. 115, Firestein, 2006, p. 25). Many definitions of reputation have been suggested (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 24; Barnett et al., 2006, pp. 30-32), and often 'identity' and 'image' are used interchangeably (Davies et al., 2003, p. 61). Barnett et al. (2006, pp. 32-34), also state that reputation should be kept separate from corporate image, corporate identity and corporate reputational capital, as reputation is made from observers' judgment about an organization. Compared to perceptions, judgments are subjective and may be grounded by the corporate identity or image, but *"often occurs as a consequence of a triggering event"* (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 34), which could be exemplified by viable mistakes or successes. Highhouse et al. (2009, p. 783) argue that the time aspect is missing from Barnett's et al. (2006) definition of reputation, and that this cannot be excluded. Gotsi and Wilson (2001, p. 29) include this perspective in their definition, and explain that reputation is *"a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time"*. The time consideration is important as a reputation takes long time to build, but it does not imply that reputation cannot be changed. Reputation does not vary from day to day, but incidents such as drastic events or scandals can have great impact on a reputation (Highhouse et al., 2009, p. 783).

Davies et al. (2003, p. 61-62), propose a model called "Key Elements of Corporate Reputation". This model shows how the various parts of the reputation are interlinked and need to be considered in relation to each other. The main elements in the model are identity, desired identity and image, and the authors argue that managers of any organization have to consider the harmonization of these three elements in order to reduce possible gaps between how the organization is perceived and how it wants to be perceived (Davies et al., 2003, p. 75). Traditional views of an organization's value and reputation are usually measured in financial terms, where a "good" reputation will lead to a higher profit (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995, p. 7). This view poses a problem for nonprofit organizations as the goal is not financial, and Sarstedt and Schloderer (2010, p. 277) have therefore developed a model in order to measure reputation for nonprofits. They argue that reputation is of growing importance for these organizations as well, as it can enhance marketing performance and willingness to donate if the nonprofit knows how consumers perceive and judge their organization (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010, pp. 277-278). In our study, the organization in focus does not receive or compete for donations, but rather relies on membership fees from its members. We assert that this implies that the environment where the organization and the customers meet resembles a community, where both parties can interact. For SACC-DC, we believe that it is important to measure the number of members

that renew their membership each year instead, or the number of new members signing up each year.

Organizations that wish to be groundbreaking and have the desire to expand and create new markets have to start by acquiring an understanding of the customers and their requests and needs (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5). This process is described as co-creation, and implies that organizations know how to bring customers, managers, and staff together to play a part in brand development and to create different products and services (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5). Co-creation could take place in brand communities, originally defined by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 412) as *"a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand"*. Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 603) suggest that managers should view consumers as an essential part of a brand, or as strong foundations of diversity and creativity that aid organizations in obtaining more appropriate products and services for consumers. Co-creation must be able to provide advantages both for organizations and for those who are active in it, in order to be viable (Ind et al., 2013, p. 7). Moreover, the benefits provided to the individuals include satisfaction and socialization; and insight, development, and marketing platforms for the organization (Ind et al., 2013, p. 9). In their study, Ind et al. (2013, p. 16) found that the more the customers come to know a brand, the more positive their thoughts about it. Also, the study revealed that there is an inherent prize in knowing that their opinions are given attention, and that they possess some impact on the forthcoming path of the brand (Ind et al., 2013, p. 16).

Several studies have looked at co-creation and suggested that the main players involved in the process are the brand managers and the consumers of the brand (Sherry, 1998; Brown et al., 2003, Coupland, 2005). Sherry (1998, p. 138) affirms that Nike's brand arose *"from an act of co-creation transacted by the firm's stakeholders"*. Accordingly, Coupland (2005, p. 107) remarked that consumers are active partners together with the marketing managers when forming brand-meaning, which is confirmed by Brown et al. (2003, p. 30), who observe that the brand is an environment *"where marketing management and consumer commitment co-exist."* Therefore, we focus on board members and members of SACC-DC to advance knowledge on how they jointly create value.

Another main focus of this thesis is how the reputation of SACC-DC is perceived by the board members and members. As mentioned previously, Davies et al. (2003, pp. 61-62) created a model to show how the three elements of reputation (identity, image, desired identity) are connected to each other. Davies et al. (2003, p. 75) describe that identity is the part of reputation concerned with the internal view of the organization. Brand identity is the unique set of associations that a brand consists of (Srivastava, 2011, p. 340), and these associations need to be developed continuously in order to keep a competitive advantage (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 40). The brand identity shows what a brand stands for, and gives it meaning, guidance, and provides strategic direction (Aaker, 1996, p. 68). All brands need to consider what they stand for, and how they would like to be perceived in the mind of its consumers (Aaker, 1996, p. 78).

According to Kapferer (1997, p. 99), the brand identity consists of six facets, which can be conceptualized by 'The Identity Prism'. The prism defines the identity of a brand and

shows that the various concepts: physique, relationship, reflection, personality, culture and self-image, are interrelated (Kapferer, 1997, pp. 100, 105). Kapferer (1997, p. 94) explains that brand identity is what is communicated from the organization's side, and the consumers will, in turn, perceive the communication as the brand's image (Kapferer, 1997, pp. 94-95). de Chernatony (1999, pp. 159; 170) has suggested alterations to the prism, where emphasis is put upon the reputation as the outcome of identity instead of image, as image can be different over time. The reputation of an organization is the general picture the public has about it, and is considered to be stable over time (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997, p. 7-8). As important as it is to look at the organization's own perception of its brand, we believe that it is equally important to have updated knowledge about customers' view of the brand.

Brand image can be defined as how the consumers perceive a brand, i.e. how it is positioned in the market to a certain group of consumers (Kapferer, 1997, p. 94). The brand image is what consumers currently associate a brand with, while brand identity is how the organization would like the brand to be perceived, and therefore, brand identity is aspirational while brand image is actual (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 40). Aaker explains the 'brand image trap' where too much focus is put on consumers' view of the brand instead of how the organization would like to position the brand, and how this can lead organizations to allow consumers to have too much influence on who they are (Aaker, 1996, pp. 69-70). By comparing the brand identity with the brand image of consumers, organizations can assess what needs to be altered in order to achieve the brand identity that the organization wants (Aaker, 1996, p. 180). We believe that this process can, in the long run, enhance customer satisfaction. Indeed, previous research has shown that there is a positive relationship between brand image and satisfaction among consumers (Martenson, 2007, p. 551). In contrast to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 40), Davies et al. (2003, pp. 61-62) suggest that identity is divided into two concepts: identity and desired identity. Identity is the internal perspective currently held by management, while the desired identity is how the organization would like to be perceived, and these two might differ. Identity and desired identity, together with image, are what comprise a reputation. We believe that this constitutes an even richer perspective on corporate reputation, and will therefore refer to brand identity as how management of an organization perceives the brand at present.

Olorunniwo et al. (2006, p. 63) explain satisfaction as a signal of the customers' views on the likelihood of a service resulting in a positive feeling. According to Helm et al. (2009, p. 73), satisfaction should be seen as an important factor that affects reputation. Previous research has established a relationship between the two factors, but Helm's et al. (2009, p. 73) research ruled that it is indeed satisfaction that positively affects a favorable perception of an organization's reputation, and not the other way around (Helm et al., 2009, p. 73). Both managers in service context and researchers are now focusing on understanding the perception of customers on the quality of services and how the perceptions are transformed into customer satisfaction (Olorunniwo et al., 2006, p. 59). The relationship between satisfaction and quality is the focus of many studies in the field of branding, and we believe they are important concepts in relationship to reputation, brand image and identity. Spreng and Mackoy (1996, p. 201) state that there is vast similarity between service quality and satisfaction. Nevertheless, academics consider them as separate concepts. Specifically, Cronin and Taylor (1992, p. 56) express that *"this distinction is important to managers and*

researchers alike because service providers need to know whether their objective should be to have consumers who are 'satisfied' with their performance or to deliver the maximum level of 'perceived service quality.'" Various opinions seem to have emerged on whether satisfaction is the predecessor to service quality or vice versa (Olorunniwo et al., 2006, p. 63). According to Brady and Robertson (2001, p. 55), the researchers who believe that service quality is the predecessor to satisfaction claim that, because quality is a mental assessment, a positive perception of quality can result in satisfaction (see e.g. Cronin & Taylor, 1992). We believe that Brady and Robertson's (2001, p. 59) statement about quality and satisfaction applies well to the setting of our thesis, since the quality of the services provided by SACC-DC, i.e., the events, must match or exceed the members' expectations. Once the quality has matched or exceeded the expectations of the members, they will develop a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, which implies that quality precedes satisfaction.

An important criterion in evaluating the reputation of nonprofit organizations is perceived quality (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010, p. 291). Quality cannot be measured with the same standards in a service setting as in a product setting, wherefore other methods and models have to be used (Davies et al., 2003, p. 12). The quality of a service is dependent on other variables than the physical attributes of a product, and the customer's involvement affects the perceived quality of the service. In service settings, the quality is usually referred to as 'meeting or exceeding customer expectations' (Davies et al., 2003, p. 12). It is very important for organizations to pursue and maintain high quality of its goods and services, as it serves as the main input for satisfied customers, which, in turn, leads to a positive reputation (Helm et al., 2009, p. 73).

In former research, reputation has been measured using quantitative scales in order to compare the views of internal and external stakeholders. For example, Gardberg and Fombrun (2002) developed the 'Reputation Quotient Scale', which allows reputation to be quantified and measured amongst various interest groups. Qualitative interviews regarding reputation have also been studied (see for example Dickinson-Delaporte et al., 2010). Furthermore, Sarstedt and Schloderer (2010) did, through qualitative and quantitative methods, develop a scale through which nonprofit organizations' reputation can be measured. Despite this, we see a research gap in that no study has examined different stakeholders' views of the reputation for one particular organization before. We believe it would be interesting to use a triangulation method and explore how the internal stakeholders work with the identity of the brand, by using a qualitative method, and how this is transferred to the external image that consumers hold by conducting a quantitative study. To our knowledge, triangulation has not been conducted before in a nonprofit setting regarding reputation, wherefore we would contribute to a deeper understanding of how the reputation is created due to the board's efforts and how the outcomes of these efforts affect members' perception of the reputation.

The process of co-creation has been studied by previous researchers in traditional company settings (see e.g. Boyle, 2007; Payne et al., 2009; Ind et al, 2013). Juntunen et al. (2013), however, have studied co-creation from a nonprofit perspective. The authors examined nonprofit brand equity from a co-creation viewpoint (Juntunen et al., 2013, p. 122). We see that there is a gap in research since there are no studies concerning reputation in

relationship to co-creation of value. Previous studies often focus on one group of stakeholders, namely customers. We address this gap by taking the management into account in our research. More specifically, we will fill the identified research gap by approaching the main stakeholders in a nonprofit organization and capture the co-creation, rather than only the external stakeholders, which previous studies have focused upon. We believe it is important to study how the brand is perceived internally, and that this perception is consistent throughout the whole organization. Furthermore, we see that our research in the nonprofit setting is unique in the sense that no other study has looked at co-creation and reputation in a nonprofit setting. As stated in the problem background, SACC-DC is a membership organization and its members are part of creating the service themselves, and it would therefore be highly relevant to include theories regarding co-creation in relation to reputation. We believe that it would be interesting and useful to examine this further, as other organizations that operate in the same manner as SACC-DC could benefit from this knowledge as well. By combining these two concepts, we would make both theoretical and practical contributions.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How are reputation and co-creation managed internally, and what effects do customers' external perceptions of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience have on those concepts?

1.5 PURPOSE

The main purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of how reputation and co-creation are managed internally. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the impact of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience on co-creation and reputation by evaluating the external perceptions of members of SACC-DC. In order to fulfill the main purpose, we will perform a qualitative study where we aim to explore how the board members of SACC-DC work with reputation and co-creation, and how they perceive the brand identity and the quality of the service that SACC-DC provides. We will also examine the effects of brand image, perceived quality, satisfaction, and brand experience on the reputation and co-creation, by conducting a quantitative survey to the members of SACC-DC. This part will serve as a complement to the more extensive, qualitative interviews of the board members. By using a mixed method study, we aim to make theoretical and practical contributions, and compare and contrast the internal and external stakeholders' views of SACC-DC. From a practical perspective, this thesis will serve as a guiding tool for managers in the nonprofit context to understand and manage an organization's reputation when financial resources are limited. We will also contribute to research and advance knowledge in this area by using a triangulation method. The qualitative study, which is the main part of this thesis, will allow us to develop a deeper understanding regarding co-creation and reputation for nonprofit organizations by using the thematic network analysis. By conducting the quantitative study we will test a conceptual model consisting of constructs to show significant effects. Through these two types of methods of research, we will be able to answer our research question.

2. SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains explanations of our philosophical stances, where we describe how we view the nature of social entities and the nature of knowledge. Further, this chapter includes an explanation of the research approach and design of this study. The chapter ends with a clarification of the chosen theories in this thesis and a criticism of our sources.

2.1 ONTOLOGY

Ontology concerns the nature of reality, and the central issue is the idea whether social objects can be viewed as impartial objects with an external reality to social actors or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 20; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 130). In other words, this philosophical stance concerns whether social entities are objects existing independently from social actors, or whether they are social constructions created by the actors within them that cannot exist by themselves (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 20). There are two main ontological positions, objectivism and constructionism (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 20). Objectivism suggests that social phenomena present us with external realities that are outside our reach and pre-determined. Thus, this ontological position suggests that phenomena, such as reputation, exist independently from the entity that is being studied, and it is considered to be a separate reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21). Saunders et al. (2012, p. 131) point out an example of objectivism, where they explain that objectivists assert that management is an objective being, since managers of an organization have tasks and assignments that stipulate their duties, making them part of a prescribed structure. The second orientation in ontology is constructionism, which deals with the social world being an unceasing procedure created again in each new encounter as individuals (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p. 494). Thus, while objectivism is concerned with pre-existing social phenomena existing independently from social actors, such as culture or organization, constructionism holds that the phenomena exist because of social actors and their actions (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21). The ontological position we embrace is constructionism. Since the main part of this study is qualitative, we deem that constructionism is the most relevant doctrine regarding ontology for this thesis. As we aim to study how the board members of an organization view its reputation and co-creation and how they are managed, the constructionist position supports our desire to explore how these concepts are constantly being recreated by social actors. Our view on reality is that a phenomenon, such as reputation, exists in an organization because of the social actors within it. If there were no social actors to create and develop a reputation about an organization, there would be no phenomenon to study or observe. Furthermore, the nature of co-creation per se requires social actors to collectively create value. The value that is co-created is not pre-existing, in our opinion. In addition, our quantitative study aims to look at the external perceptions of the organization. The perceptions would not exist if the social actors i.e. the members, were not a part of the social phenomena, i.e. the organization. The perceptions we will study in the quantitative part of our research do not exist independently of the social actors, who create them.

2.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge, or what can be considered as acceptable knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132). In other words, epistemology deals with if researchers are a part of knowledge, or if they are external to it.

One of the main issues within this philosophical orientation is whether the social world can be studied with the same procedures and measures as the natural sciences or not (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15). There are four main orientations of epistemology: positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 134-137). Researchers with the philosophy of positivism believe that knowledge can only be obtained by studying observable phenomena, and apply many techniques used by natural scientists (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 134). The positivist researcher aims to conduct a value-free research, where the researcher does not take a personal standpoint, but is rather an external observer, and the generation of new theories comes from the results of testing hypotheses (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 15). The realist approach is similar to the one of positivism, where the view is that there is an external, objective reality (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 136). However, due to interpretations caused by personal social conditions, we all understand this objective reality differently, and therefore laws from the natural sciences cannot be fully applied (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 136). In contrast to positivism and realism, the interpretivist philosophy emphasizes that there are differences between studying objects and human beings, and argue that nuances of the complex world of business can be lost when applying methods intended for natural science (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 16; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137). It is not possible to be objective when the researchers are part of the world of studies, and people will interpret things differently depending on our pre-understandings and knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137).

Pragmatism is said to be adopted when a research question does not clearly propose either a quantitative or qualitative study, and the pragmatist believes that it is possible to work with more than one philosophical standpoint (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 130). Many researchers who adopt a mixed method approach are said to be pragmatists, where the research question dictates their view of the world (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 164). There are many ways of looking at a problem, and according to the pragmatic standpoint, no single philosophy can answer a research question alone (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 130). As our main goal is to understand how reputation and co-creation work together, we argue that our study would benefit from the epistemological view of pragmatism. We believe that reputation is constructed by the social actors within the entity, in this case the employees and the members of the organization, and it cannot be separated and analyzed by using techniques from natural science. We will interpret our data from the stance that our respondents are part of the reality that we are trying to research, and that they cannot be separated from the reputation but instead are part of creating it themselves. We believe that an even richer interpretation of our data could be reached by adopting the pragmatist's philosophy.

We agree with the argument of Niglas (2010, p. 216) that scientific philosophies cannot and should not be divided into two polarized standpoints, but should rather be seen as a continuum of various views. This view is also supported by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15), who say that mixed methods are in the middle if one thinks of quantitative and qualitative as situated on two opposing sides. Mixed method research design is often applied by pragmatists, and as we believe that the most appropriate way to answer our research question is to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. The use of mixed methods in research has become increasingly popular in recent years (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 628). The motive for using this type of study is that it can bring the strengths of

both qualitative and quantitative into the research, and provide a more fruitful and enriched analysis (Lopez-Fernandez & Molina-Azorin, 2011, p. 1460).

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Deduction, induction and abduction indicate the various ways that the researcher can work with to relate theory and empirical data (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). A researcher working deductively can be said to follow the path of evidence (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). Deduction can, at first, seem very linear in nature, as it follows a logic sequence (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 11). A deductive approach is characterized by the researcher, based on general principles and existing theories, drawing conclusions about individual phenomena (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). Similarly, according to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 11), a researcher who deduces a hypothesis, which is then exposed to empirical analysis, is dealing with deduction. Our study consists of both qualitative and quantitative research, where the literature review and findings from previous studies guide the data collection approaches. As a result, this degree project, which centers around reputation and co-creation, is done based on general theories about these concepts and their components. An already existing theory has then been allowed to decide what information is collected, how to interpret this information, and finally how to relate the results to the existing theory (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). From this procedure, the qualitative study will provide themes that can be identified and analyzed, and the quantitative study will generate derived hypotheses that can be tested empirically in our particular case. Because of the results we aim to obtain, we deem that deduction is the most appropriate approach for our study.

Research that is conducted by working inductively can be said to follow the path of discovering (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). The researcher can then study the research object, without having anchored the survey in a previously accepted theory, and based on the gathered empirical data, formulate a theory (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). The risk here is that the researcher does not know anything about the theory's scope, since it is based on an empirical basis that is typical for a particular situation, time, or group of people (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). Roughly, one could say that induction involves a progression where observations and empirical findings lead to theory, making theory the result of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). The inductive method can be used to detect connections in exploratory research, i.e. qualitative studies, but it cannot be used to justify general relationships (Hartman, 2004, p, 150). The inductive approach was not selected as a research approach for our study, as theory has served as the basis for both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative questionnaire, allowing us to collect and analyze data as the finals steps of our degree project.

Abduction involves a combination of induction and deduction (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). According to Patel and Davidson (2011, p. 23), abduction means that, based on an individual case, a researcher formulates a hypothetical pattern that can explain the case, i.e. a proposal for a theoretical depth structure. The first step is characterized by being inductive, then the hypothesis or theory is tested on new cases (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). In the second step, the researcher works deductively, and the original hypothesis or theory can then be developed and extended to become more general (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 23). For our study, we deem that the theoretical background is important as a first step in conducting research, and that a sound theoretical background is required before

collecting data, whether qualitative or quantitative.

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

There are two main types of research design that can be employed in business research: qualitative and quantitative (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 27; Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 159-161). The two designs differ in terms of their connection between theory and research, ontological considerations and epistemological assumptions (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 26). Qualitative research is generally more often used to generate new theory by an inductive research approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 387). In contrast to numerical methods used in natural sciences, qualitative research focuses more on words and their meanings (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163), although this does not have to be the case (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 27). Quantitative research usually starts off with theory from which a hypothesis is drawn, and a deductive approach between theory and research is taken (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 162). Some of the distinct features of quantitative research are that results can be measured and generalized among other populations (Bryman & Bell, 2011, pp. 163-165).

The choice of strategy, method and design should all be assessed depending on the research question and what is practically feasible. According to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 35), practical implications are important to consider when deciding upon what research design will be used for the thesis in question. The initial discussion with SACC-DC regarding this degree project was for us to conduct a research of what the members' attitudes and perceptions were about the organization. After taking the academic implications into consideration, we jointly decided that a mixed method-study would be feasible and useful for SACC-DC, wherefore we began discussing how to put this into practice. Through our research question, we want to gain a deeper understanding of how the reputation and co-creation is worked with internally within the board, as well as examining the external perceptions of the organizations' reputation and co-creation of the members. To enhance the depth of the topic, it would be preferable to examine the reputation from both perspectives, but to use the same method for the two groups would not be optimal. Our aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the reputation and the internal strategy around it, and, moreover, get a more generalized picture of how the reputation is perceived from the outside. Therefore, a natural choice would be to mix the two methods, and use what is often referred to as triangulation when more than one method is used "*in the study of a social phenomena*" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 397). Triangulation means combining more than one method to research the same phenomena. It is often used in order to confirm that the findings from one method are actually telling the researcher what he or she thinks it is (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 179). Jick (1979, p. 602) argues that triangulation allows the researcher to obtain greater accuracy when combining more than one method, and that weaknesses of each method will be compensated by the advantages of the other method (Jick, 1979, p. 604).

Some researchers have claimed that the two designs, quantitative and qualitative, stand on either side of a continuum and there are strong differences between them, but Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 29) argue that the designs should not be seen as separate but instead they could complement each other with their different perspectives. When applying techniques from both sides of the spectrum it is often referred to as a mixed-method study, which can help to develop the research and provide a broader view of a problem (Bryman & Bell,

2011, pp. 28-29). A mixed-method research is not limited to a single worldview; in fact, it is essential to combine different views of the world due to the nature of the research (Venkatesh et al., 2013, p. 23). When carrying out a mixed-method study, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to conduct the study, and the two methods are either used concurrently (at the same time), or sequentially (one following the other) (Venkatesh et al., 2013, p. 23). According to Venkatesh et al. (2013, p. 26), researches have to clearly motivate their reasons for using a mixed method study, as it is not the natural choice in social and behavioral sciences. Venkatesh et al. (2013, p. 26) have developed a table called 'Purposes of Mixed Methods Research' (see Table 1), where various reasons for combining the methods are explained. In our thesis, the purposes of 'complementarity', 'completeness', and 'diversity' are appropriate, as they all serve to gain a complete view of the studied phenomenon. All these purposes aim to study one chosen phenomena from different perspectives, and as we seek to understand reputation and co-creation from more than one perspective, we argue that these purposes are appropriate for us. Moreover, it would add richness to the study to look upon the concepts by using more than one method.

		Prior IS Research	
Purposes	**Description**	**Examples****	**Illustration**
Complementarity	Mixed methods are used in order to gain complementary views about the same phenomena or relationships.	Soffer and Hader (2007)	A qualitative study was used to gain additional insights on the findings from a quantitative study.
Completeness	Mixed methods designs are used to make sure a complete picture of a phenomenon is obtained.	Piccoli and Ives (2003) Hackney et al. (2007)	The qualitative data and results provided rich explanations of the findings from the quantitative data and analysis.
Developmental	Questions for one strand emerge from the inferences of a previous one (sequential mixed methods), or one strand provides hypotheses to be tested in the next one.	Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal (2001) Ho et al. (2003) Grimsley and Meehan (2007)	A qualitative study was used to develop constructs and hypotheses and a quantitative study was conducted to test the hypotheses.
Expansion	Mixed methods are used in order to explain or expand upon the understanding obtained in a previous strand of a study.	Ang and Slaughter (2001) Koh et al. (2004) Keil et al. (2007)	The findings from one study (e.g., quantitative) were expanded or elaborated by examining the findings from a different study (e.g., qualitative).
Corroboration/ Confirmation	Mixed methods are used in order to assess the credibility of inferences obtained from one approach (strand).	Bhattacherjee and Premkumar (2004)	A qualitative study was conducted to confirm the findings from a quantitative study.
Compensation	Mixed methods enable compensating for the weaknesses of one approach by using the other.	Dennis and Garfield (2003)	The qualitative analysis compensated for the small sample size in the quantitative study.
Diversity	Mixed methods are used with the hope of obtaining divergent views of the same phenomenon.	Chang (2006)	Qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted to compare perceptions of a phenomenon of interest by two different types of participants.

*Adapted from Creswell (2003), Greene et al. (1989), and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003a, 2008).
**Many of these examples can be placed in multiple purpose categories. For example, although Bhattacherjee and Premkumar's (2004) paper is placed in the corroboration/confirmation category, it can also be placed in the expansion category because the authors noted that, in addition to confirming the findings of the quantitative study, the purpose of the qualitative analysis was to "possibly gain additional insights into the nature and causes of the hypothesized associations" (p. 246).

TABLE 1. PURPOSES OF MIXED METHODS RESEARCH (VENKATESH ET AL., 2013, P. 26)

2.5 PRE-UNDERSTANDINGS

A basic assumption within scientific philosophy is that researchers cannot understand the world without pre-understandings (Gilje & Grimen, 2007, p. 179). Our pre-understandings will lead us to understand things differently, and pre-understanding is necessary in order to make sense of the world (Gilje & Grimen, 2007, p. 179). Our choice to study the reputation

and co-creation in an nonprofit organization can be derived from our pre-understandings, both from our education in business administration as well as our international experiences from around the world. An important part of a person's pre-understandings are one's personal experiences (Gilje & Grimen, 2007, p. 183), and this will affect the way we interpret things (Hartman, 2004, 191). The experiences will be different from each person depending on what background someone has, and it will affect the way that a person interprets interactions with other people (Gilje & Grimen, 2007, p. 183). Our interest and desire to learn more about the reputation and co-creation came from discussions where we wanted to integrate knowledge from both our field of studies, and reputation and co-creation with elements of strategy was something that we both found very interesting.

Pre-understandings can also refer to previous experiences, knowledge and insights that the researcher has about the organization that they are about to study (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 414). Because one of us have been on an internship for the organization at hand during six months, we started with different pre-understandings of the organization and the people within it. As this could have effects on how we perceive the organization and our topic, we have kept these differences in mind throughout the whole research process. We have had thorough discussions on various issues to avoid that our pre-conceptions came in the way for an open-minded research with as little bias as possible. Even so, we believe that our different backgrounds and understandings of the organization could be of value for our thesis, as they can hopefully contribute with two different, but complementing, perspectives. As the degree project has proceeded, we have increasingly gained knowledge regarding our theoretical framework and the organization at hand.

2.6 LITERATURE SEARCH

Our theoretical framework is based on previous research within the areas that we have chosen to examine. As a researcher, it is important to choose not only theories that support one's own arguments, but instead aim for a broad and diverse literature review that cover many aspects of an area (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 69). In order to enforce this, we commenced with a broad approach in our literature review, in order to gain as many perspectives and influences as possible before narrowing it down to the theories of reputation and co-creation that are the focus of our thesis.

It is important for researchers to judge the objectivity and validity of sources used, as this will have an impact on the quality of the work (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 69). Throughout our literature review, we have tried to analyze the material in a critical way, which has allowed us to have as little bias as possible in our research (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 73-77). For our search for relevant academic articles in our fields of study, we have searched on databases from Umeå University Library, such as Business Source Premier (EBSCO). We have also searched on Google Scholar, but always ensured that it was peer-reviewed before using it in our research. This was done to assess the academic relevance of the article. Our goal has always been to use peer-reviewed articles, to be certain that we use the best quality possible for our work.

Key words are very useful when looking for literature in a certain area (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 84). As we began our literature review we used certain key words when looking for academic articles, such as: *corporate reputation, co-creation, brand identity, desired*

identity, brand image, brand experience, quality satisfaction, service brand, nonprofit, service dominant logic. Moreover, Ejvegård (2003, p. 45) claims that a fruitful way to find information is to screen other researchers' reference lists. As we discovered that certain books and authors reocurred many times in articles' reference lists, we decided to use these sources as they can be considered classical in their area of research. This way of finding central themes in a research area has also been supported by Ejvegård (2003, p. 45). All of the books we used have been cited several times, and are written by notable researchers. Even though some books do not contain the most recent research in the area, they have all greatly contributed and added important elements to their fields, respectively.

According to Ejvegård (2003, p. 63), things could lose its original meaning when extracted from its original purpose. We have tried to avoid this by using secondary referencing as little as possible, as it might distort the meaning of the original source when cited by someone else. Although, for a few references it was not possible to find the original source due to high costs, and in these few cases when we assessed that the reference could not be excluded, we used secondary referencing.

2.7 CHOICE OF THEORIES

Conducting a literature review is important as it allows the researcher to put the study within its broader setting, and to demonstrate how the research augments the work that has been performed previously on the specific subject (Saunders et al., 2011, p. 603). We agree with the authors' statement, and believe it is important to argue why the chosen theories are of relevance for this thesis.

The theoretical framework begins with the main theme of our degree project, reputation, which is *"a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals"* (Fombrun, 1996, p. 72). We have chosen to let this definition guide us in the process of our degree project, as it is the most cited definition that we have encountered. In our literature review, we have found that nearly all authors that have touched upon the subject of reputation have in their definitions included the importance of the internal and external perceptions. Because of this, we decided to include a discussion in the theoretical framework about what constitutes reputation and its components. We think that the reputation is an important phenomenon to take into account, regardless of the type of organization one is studying. However, we believe that for a nonprofit organization, such as SACC-DC, reputation is highly critical, since the stakeholders in this context do not assess the success of the organization in terms of financial accomplishments.

Identity is one of the components of the corporate reputation, and it can be described as the internal perspective of the organization and the brand (Davies et al., 2003, p. 61). The brand identity is important as it is aspirational and shows how the organization wants to be perceived (Kapferer, 1997, p. 94), and it is important to create a strong brand identity that is coherent throughout the whole organization. For our study, we wanted to examine how the brand identity is treated through the organization, both by board members and employees. We also believe that it is interesting to look at this, as SACC-DC is a nonprofit organization where all board members and employees work voluntarily, and this might possibly have an effect on how the brand identity and its strategy is treated. Another aspect of identity is the

desired identity, which is the part of identity that treats how the organization would like to be perceived (Davies et al., 2003, p. 61). We have chosen to look at desired identity as it could be interesting to examine whether it differs from the actual identity or not, and what vision the board members have for the organization.

Another element of corporate reputation is image, which is the outside perspective of an organization from external stakeholders, where customers are usually referred to as the most important group (Chun, 2005, pp. 94-95). The image is more volatile than the reputation, and while reputation is built up over time, image is more of a snapshot at a certain point in time (Chun, 2005, p. 96). For our study, one of the initial inquiries was to examine how the members perceive the brand of SACC-DC. As the brand image is a widely used measure to examine this, we believe it is highly relevant to include this in the quantitative part of our thesis. Furthermore, the image that consumers have of an organization is the result of the management's efforts to communicate the strategy (Kapferer, 1997, p. 94), and it is therefore connected to the brand identity. Researchers agree that any possible gap between brand identity and brand image should be eliminated, but in order to be able to reduce or eliminate this gap, identity and image need to be explored.

As for co-creation, we have chosen to scrutinize Prahalad and Ramaswamy's extensive work, as these are said to have introduced the notion of co-creation in branding-related academic research. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b), organizations can create not only goods and services, but also experiences by means of unique value by having participating customers and other stakeholders, where continuous innovation and learning is the focus. The reason behind choosing this theory is that, in a nonprofit membership organization where mutual benefit is the preferred outcome rather than profit, we are interested in understanding if co-creation plays a big role. Within the co-creation theories, we found that value was brought up frequently. It is a rather ambiguous term to define, however, it is still important to highlight in this study. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 7) value is the result of an inherent negotiation between the consumers and organization.

Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) were the first researchers to introduce brand experience, and define the concept as *"subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments."* Brand experience has an impact on consumer loyalty, meaning that the better the brand experience, the higher the intention to repurchase a good or service (Iglesias et al., 2011, p. 571). For SACC-DC, it is important to retain its members as it is a networking organization, and it lies in its interest to have loyal members that are renewing their membership each year. Moreover, as the main service of SACC-DC are its networking events where they are selling an "experience", it would be beneficial for them to understand how their members relate to the feelings of brand experience. Brand experience plays a significant role in co-creation according to Prahalad (2004c, p. 23), who states that co-creation is where the *"experience is the brand."* According to Frow and Payne (2007, p. 90), co-creation also plays an important role with regard to creating a perfect customer experience.

Quality and satisfaction theories are widely used in branding articles. According to Nandan (2005, p. 267), brand image depends on how consumers perceive a product and its position in the market, and we believe that perceived quality and satisfaction plays a major role in assessing this. Service quality is formed by comparing ideals and perceptions of performance in relation to quality dimensions, while satisfaction changes according to the disproof of prognostic expectancies concerning both quality dimensions and non-quality dimensions (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996, p. 204). Therefore, it can be assumed that studying quality is important to understand how customers assess and evaluate a service, and satisfaction is important as it is prone to change based on expectations.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will give an overview of the previous literature that has been scrutinized for this study. The theoretical framework begins with explanations of reputation and its key elements, and continues with the theory of co-creation and brand communities. Then, we review previous research on brand experience, perceived quality and satisfaction. The chapter ends with a presentation of our mixed-method research, explaining the reasons for our qualitative and quantitative studies.

3.1 CORPORATE REPUTATION

The number of scholarly articles written on "corporate reputation" has greatly increased in recent years, and organizations are increasingly concerned with how to manage their reputation (Barnett et al., 2006, p. 27). Even though there is great interest in the subject, there are still ambiguities regarding the definition, and the various explanations depend largely on what discipline researchers are from (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997; Barnett et al., 2006). At times, researchers have even stated contradictory explanations of the concept (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 24). In the first number of the academic journal 'Corporate Reputation Review', which was published in 1997, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997, p. 6), discussed six schools of reputation, which all had a convergent view on the expression. Five of these came from the world of business administration and economics, while one concerned the sociological perspective. In 2001, Gotsi and Wilson (2001, p. 25) further suggested that the various perspectives on the subject should be merged into two distinct views, analogous school of thought and differentiated school of thought. The former views reputation as synonymous with corporate identity, while the latter considers the two terms as being different, yet interrelated (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 25). Gotsi and Wilson, (2001, p. 26) state that the analogous school of thought has, in recent years, been criticized for considering the terms 'reputation' and 'identity' as identical, as this has caused much confusion in research of the subject. They state that the analogous school is the reason why ambiguous definitions of the concept exist, and that the differentiated school of thought has emerged in order to explain the confusion, and provide possible explanations to the phenomena. According to Gotsi and Wilson (2001, p. 28), the differentiated school of thought has gained more support and reputation and image should be seen as interrelated. There are three different views within the differentiated school of thought, where the first considers reputation as totally separated from image (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 27). The second view considers the two expressions as related and state that they cannot be considered in isolation, and therefore, corporate image's effect on reputation is examined (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 26). The third, and last point of view is where researches state, *"corporate reputation is a snapshot that reconciles the multiple images of a company held by all its constituencies"* (Fombrun, 1996, p. 72). For our thesis, and with our backgrounds in marketing and management, we believe that the third viewpoint of the differentiated school of thought is the most relevant, as it concerns reputation from perceptions of many different stakeholders. We also agree with the notion of the third viewpoint, that reputation and image are related, yet separate concepts, as various stakeholders can have different perceptions of the same organization, and reputation and image can therefore not be considered to be identical measures.

As explained by Walsh et al., (2009, p. 188), corporate reputation is the outcome of

consumers' interactions with an organization, and therefore a highly relevant concept for our study where interaction is the outcome of the main service provided by the organization at hand. Many researchers have tried to find a common definition of the term corporate reputation (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Barnett et al., 2006; Walker, 2010), and the most recent paper by Walker (2010, p. 368) concludes that the most cited definition of corporate reputation is the one by Fombrun (1996, p. 72): *the overall estimation in which a particular company is held by its various constituents"*. Although many studies refer to "corporate" reputation, we notice that this concept has been applied in different contexts. For example, Sarstedt and Schloderer (2010) has studied how the reputation should be measured in nonprofit organizations. Moreover, Andreasen and Kotler (2003, p. 6) explain that nonprofit organizations should operate in for-profit manners in order to be successful. Therefore, we argue that theories of corporate reputation can be applied for our context of a nonprofit organization as well. Though, we will, from now on, refer to it as 'reputation' only.

Reputation is often described as being built up over time, and is also said to be more stable as opposed to corporate image, which can change more rapidly (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p. 697). It is very important to build a strong reputation, as negative perceptions of the reputation can be very damaging for organizations (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p. 697). According to Firestein (2006, p. 25), a strong reputation is the strongest sustained competitive advantage for an organization, but it is also most difficult to repair if damaged. Moreover, Money and Gardiner (2005, p. 43) argue that in today's society, it is not what an organization does that matters but instead how it is perceived, and, therefore, reputation is of growing importance.

Research has indicated that an organization does not have just one source for their reputation, but instead they have many, as reputation is derived from the views of many stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, p. 1050). Moreover, reputation is usually derived from very subjective views of stakeholders, and is not only determined from what the organization wants to communicate therefore it presents a difficulty to manage (Money & Gardiner, 2005, p. 43). Some of the stakeholders that organizations should be concerned with in building their reputation are customers, employees, suppliers, managers, creditors, media and communities (Chun, 2005, p. 105). But, according to Abratt and Kleyn (2010, p. 1058), all stakeholders do not have the same impact on an organization and its reputation. Stakeholders can be grouped into primary and secondary stakeholders, with varying impacts on the organization (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Primary stakeholders are the stakeholders that an organization cannot survive without, as they are continuously involved in the organization, and the organization and primary stakeholders are highly interdependent on each other (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Examples of primary stakeholders can be customers, employees and investors (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). Secondary stakeholders are the ones that influence and affect an organization, but are not engaged in transactions with the organization and are not essential for the survival (Clarkson, 1995, p. 107). Typical secondary stakeholders are competitors, social pressure groups and the government (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, p. 1058). Clarkson (1995, p. 107) describes an organization to be a *"complex set of relationships between and among interest groups"*. Depending on what an organization wants to manage in its reputation, the right stakeholder group has to be defined and analyzed in order to take the right decisions regarding

questions such as how the organization wants to be perceived (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, pp. 1058-1059). Various groups of stakeholders can have different views on how they want the organization to be perceived, and organizations have to manage the difficulty of possible conflicting views when developing marketing communications (Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 736). Dickinson-Delaporte et al. (2010, p. 1871) suggest that marketers should constantly orient themselves towards the most relevant stakeholders and perform research, and keep an ongoing dialogue in order to know stakeholders' needs and wants. This will in turn enhance the organization's reputation. In our research we will focus on the primary group of SACC-DC's stakeholders - their board members and members, because they are the stakeholders that make up the organization and are the most involved in the activities and services provided by SACC-DC.

Dowling (2004, p. 25) has stated that the top management of an organization is ultimately responsible for the organizations reputation, in the sense that they are the ones guiding the organization's identity and validating that key parameters are maintained. We agree with this argument, and believe that it is especially important for SACC-DC in their organization, as the board of directors is highly involved in the strategy and execution of events (A. Lohmeyer, personal communication, December 19, 2013). Musteen et al. (2009, p. 499) have also argued that the research on board characteristics' impact on reputation has been much too understudied, and claim that factors such as size and numbers of outside directors will affect the reputation (Musteen, 2009, p. 506). According to Musteen et al. (2009, p. 507), board attributes play a critical role and affect reputation, and there are various measures that can be used in order to enhance the most preferable board construction. For SACC-DC, it would, therefore, be relevant to explore the reputation from the perspective of the board members as they play such an important role. This would allow us to develop a deeper understanding about the internal perceptions of the reputation and brand of SACC-DC.

According to Walsh et al. (2009, p. 187), customers are the most important group of stakeholders when it comes to reputation, as they are the ones who generate revenues, and there is not enough research that only focuses on this important group of stakeholders. For SACC-DC, the most important groups of stakeholders would be the customers, i.e. the members, as this is the group of stakeholders that the organization is made up of. Moreover, Walsh et al. (2009, p. 189) argue that customers are likely to have a great impact on the reputation because of word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth among customers could possibly be of greater importance than any communication effort that an organization is trying to push, another reason why it is important to study this group of stakeholders.

Service companies differ from product companies in many ways, one of them being that service production and consumption are conducted simultaneously (Wu, 2011, p. 863). Walsh et al. (2009, p. 188) argue that reputation is even more important for service companies than product companies, as other factors than physical product attributes determine what the customers think of the organization and the experience. Moreover, pre-purchase evaluations are more reliant on reputation, as the quality of the service is difficult to determine and consumers are more likely to listen to other customers' previous evaluations. Research has shown that word-of-mouth among consumers is more likely to affect reputation rather than marketing campaigns from the organization (Walsh et al.,

2009, p. 189).

It is important to clarify the various concepts used in research on reputation, as they are sometimes applied interchangeably, but have different meanings (Chun, 2005, p. 95; Highhouse et al., 2009, p. 782). As discussed earlier, the most important stakeholders for an organization are its customers and its employees, and Davies et al. (2003, p. 61) therefore consider the most important features of reputation to be the image and identity concepts, as these two capture the views held by these stakeholders. For SACC-DC, we agree with the notion that employees and customers are the most important stakeholders, and therefore, we argue that the concepts of identity and image are highly relevant to our study. Moreover, many researchers define reputation as being made up of image and identity, and how these concepts are related to each other (Chun, 2005, p. 95; Verčič & Verčič, 2007, p. 279; Barnett et al., 2006, p. 28). Every brand consists of an identity and an image, and it is important to understand these concepts in order to communicate them as efficiently as possible to consumers and other stakeholders (Srivastava, 2011, p. 340). According to Davies and Miles (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, pp. 61-62), reputation also contains 'desired identity'. They conceptualize reputation in a model where the three elements are interlinked (see Figure 1). As for our study, we consider this model to be a foundation for understanding what the reputation constitutes of. We believe that the elements need to be studied in relation to each other, as this approach enhances knowledge about links between them, and deepens understanding about each phenomenon. When combined as in the model of Davies and Miles (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, p. 62), the concepts can be compared and analyzed in relation to each other, something that we believe will give a more nuanced view where it would also be possible to detect gaps that needs to be addressed and preferably eliminated. As the purpose of this thesis is to study the reputation it would be a relevant model to consider, because it allows the researcher to compare views from various stakeholders' perspective. The names of the key elements are not preceded by any specification, but our interpretation is that this model is applicable in the branding context, and therefore, in our study. We will therefore refer to the concepts of identity and image as brand identity and brand image, as we find these names to be used by other researchers in the field.
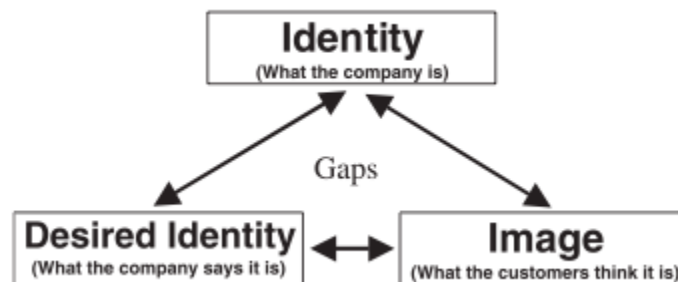
FIGURE 1. ELEMENTS OF CORPORATE REPUTATION
(DAVIES & MILES, 1998, CITED IN DAVIES ET. AL., 2003, P. 61)

3.2 BRAND IDENTITY AND BRAND IMAGE

Successful corporate brands rely on being expressed clearly, established internally, and conveyed reliably (M'zungu et al., 2010, p. 616). Similarly, Khan (2009, p. 25) explains that corporate brands are dependent on the fruitful interaction between *"strategic vision, organizational culture, and corporate image."* The overall objective of corporate branding

is to create a maintainable tie between the branded organization and the customers, using a strong value proposition (Schultz & de Chernatony, 2002, p. 107). Literature suggests that the awareness that brands are important intangible assets is increasing continuously among organizations, and that special attention should be paid to the value it generates (M'zungu et al., 2010, pp. 606; 607).

One of the key elements contributing to reputation is identity, as it can be seen from Davies and Miles' (1998, cited in Daviet et al., 2003, p. 61) model. Brand identity is made up of an organization's unique features, and it is affected by behaviors from the members of an organization (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997, p. 341). Ghodeswar (2008, p. 5) explains brand identity as "*a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers and includes a core and extended identity*". Brand identity is different from brand image, as it is aspirational and represents what the organization wants its brand to stand for (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 40). The brand identity needs to be established by management of an organization, by treating questions of what the organization is and what it wants to be (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012, p. 1059). We believe that both employees and board members of SACC-DC should be involved in the development and management of the brand identity, because they both have important parts in reaching out and promoting the brand. We think that it is vital that everyone communicates the same message throughout the organization. As most studies are conducted in a traditional company setting, there might be differences in how the brand identity is treated when managers work voluntarily and does not have the organization as their full-time employment. This fact highlights the need to get a deeper understanding about the board members' work with the brand identity of SACC-DC, and how it is managed internally in the organization.

Kapferer (1997, p. 99) was among the first researchers to underline the importance of brand identity compared to brand image. According to Kapferer (1997, p. 99) brand identity is better to focus on as it concerns the essence of the brand, and is not as volatile as the brand image. The identity and the unique characteristics of an organization derives from the employees of the organization, and has to be strategically managed in order to maintain or build a favorable identity (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997, p. 341). In order to develop a successful and strong brand identity, organizations need to thoroughly understand the context that they are operating in, which involves customers, competitors and business strategies (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 13). By knowing how the members perceive the organization, the communicated brand identity could be evaluated and updated and adapted by the board members to fit the customers' idea of what SACC-DC should be and stand for. Moreover, a strong brand identity can generate loyal customers, as it can differentiate the brand from competition (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 5). It is desirable for SACC-DC to have loyal and recurring members, as it demands more resources to recruit new members than keeping old ones (A. Lohmeyer, personal communication, January 30, 2014). Measuring identity and comparing it with outside perceptions is a common practice among researchers (Davies & Chun, 2002), as it gives the opportunity to locate possible gaps that should be eliminated (Balmer & Greyser, 2002, p. 75).
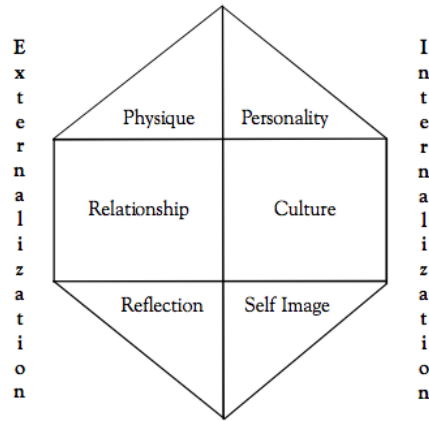
FIGURE 2. BRAND IDENTITY PRISM (KAPFERER, 1997, P. 100)

The identity prism (Figure 2), developed by Kapferer (1997, pp. 99-105), defines the brand identity by six features: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. The three concepts on the left side of the prism, such as physique, relationship and reflection, give the brand its outward expression (Kapferer, 1997, p. 106). The remaining three facets on the right side such as personality, culture and self image, are internal features of the brand and give the brand its spirit (Kapferer, 1997, p. 106).

The physique of the brand is the basics of the brand, which first comes to mind when a consumer thinks about it (Kapferer, 1997, p. 99). It is the tangible basis of the brand, and without this the brand would not exist. Ponnam (2007, p. 65) also adds that the brand physique are the features that are common throughout a whole product or service portfolio. Relationship is a very important aspect of the brand prism for service brands, as those brands concerns interactions with consumers (Kapferer, 1997, p. 103). Brand relationship is an extension of the brand personality, and trust and satisfaction are the two main factors to influence the brand relationship (Blackston, 1992, p. 82). A brand speaks to a consumer's feelings, and it is therefore important that the consumer experiences the relationship with the brand as this can affect loyalty (Kapferer, 1997, p. 103). The brand is a reflection, in the way that it reflects the 'typical consumer' of the brand. Though, reflection is not to be mixed up with the target consumer of the brand. The reflection of the brand should be the 'result' of how a consumer would like to feel by consuming the brand, while target customer is a group of consumers that an organization is trying to reach (Kapferer, 1997, p. 103) The brand should aim to be perceived in a way that its consumers like, and try to "*project a flattering image of their clients*" (Kapferer, 1997, p. 104).

Personality signifies the features of the brand that are comparable with a human person, and the attributes that consumers associate when asked to describe a brand as a personality (Kapferer, 1997, p. 101). A common way of creating a brand personality is to give the brand a spokesperson or figurehead (Kapferer, 1997, p. 101). Culture is the set of values that inspires the brand, and is considered the core of the brand (Kapferer, 1997, p. 101). Culture is often discussed together with reputation, and can be referred to as how things are done in an organization, and the cultures shapes employees' attitudes and judgments about an organization (Davies et al. 2003, pp. 141; 197). In many cases, the culture is not easily determined and not always outspoken, and therefore it can be difficult to communicate to

others, in an objective way (Davies et al. 2003, p. 197). The last concept in the identity prism is the self-image, which can be considered to be the inner feelings of a consumer towards a brand (Kapferer, 1997, pp. 104-105). Consumers sometimes buy things merely to prove to themselves that they are the kind of person that the brand communicates that it is (Kapferer, 1997, p. 104). This is important to know for the brand as they can take advantage of this knowledge. Kapferer (1997, p. 105) describes the identity prism as an entity which defines the brand. In order for a brand to be successful it needs to communicate, and it is necessary to know how the brand communicates. By looking at the identity prism, managers can identify what the brand stands for, and within what boundaries it needs to be marketed (Kapferer, 1997, p. 105). We believe that the identity prism can be used as a basis for our perception of the brand identity within SACC-DC, as it gives an overview of many elements within identity.

Brand identity is closely related to desired identity, constituting another key element of corporate reputation. Desired identity is the identity that an organization wishes to have, it is visionary and often stems from management of an organization (Balmer & Greyser, 2002, p. 75). According to Khan (2009, p. 29), the desired identity should be upheld by the organization's capabilities, but Balmer and Greyser (2002, p. 75) argue that this is not always the case. Rather, the desired identity can sometimes be inappropriate for where the organization is situated at the time, as it might be affected by personal goals of, for example, a CEO. The desired identity can be explained as being what the organization would like its stakeholders to think it is, and it is not unusual that there is a gap between the identity and desired identity (Davies et al., 2003, p. 61). We believe that it would be interesting to examine the board members' desired identity of SACC-DC, as this could possibly differ from the identity at the moment. The desired identity should be represented by organizational capabilities (Khan, 2009, p. 29). It is therefore relevant to evaluate what the board members and employees wish the organization to be and analyze if this is possible with regards to the actual capabilities. As SACC-DC is mostly driven by voluntary work efforts, there could be a risk that the desired identity lies too far away from what is possible to achieve, and in that case, this needs to be taken into consideration and discussed in order to align the desired identity to what is possible to achieve. We believe that it is useful to view the desired identity as a foundation for the organization's vision, which gives us a strong incentive to examine this phenomenon further.

In addition to brand identity and desired identity, Davies and Miles (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, p. 61) highlight brand image as another key element of corporate reputation. Brand image captures the outside perspective of an organization from external stakeholders, where customers are usually referred to as the most important group (Chun, 2005, pp. 94-95). Brand image can be easily interlinked with the performance of the brand to meet the expectations of consumers. It is an after-effect of the brand communication and positioning based on the benefits to be enjoyed by the consumers. A positive image of a brand is none other than a brand with a set of desired benefits (Banerjee, 2008, p. 314). The perceived image of an organization is the result of the management's efforts in communicating their strategy to consumers, and the interpretation of the consumer "*results from decoding a message, extracting meaning, interpreting signs*" (Kapferer, 1997, p. 94). Because of the impact of management's efforts on the brand image, we believe that it is important to examine this concept in our study as the board members of SACC-DC can have an impact

on how the customers perceive the brand. The brand image is influenced by the interaction of organizational members and the customers (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 359), and a strong image can generate many positive outcomes for the organization, such as attracting employees (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p. 698).

The brand image usually provides a historic perspective, and it is not strategic in the same way as identity is (Aaker, 1996, p. 70). Instead of considering the two concepts to be equal, brand image should be considered as one of many inputs to understanding brand identity, instead of *being* brand identity (Aaker, 1996, p. 69). If the brand image *becomes* the brand, it can possibly lead organizations to let customers dictate what it is, rather than what it aims to be (Aaker, 1996, p. 70). Though, management of brand image and brand identity are closely related (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 365), and many researchers agree on the notion that brand image and brand identity should be aligned in order to maintain customers (Nandan, 2005, pp. 270-271; Davies & Chun, 2002; Roy & Banerjee, 2007, p. 144). Verčič and Verčič (2007, p. 287) state that companies "*whose employees and customers have similar perceptions of its corporate personality are more successful than companies whose personality is evaluated differently by its employees and customers*". Nandan (2005, p. 267) argues that consumers have certain associations to a brand, and depending on what associations a person holds, they form their image of the brand. It is important that the management of an organization or brand communicates one coherent identity to its employees, as this will lead to the customers receiving one certain brand image (Kennedy, 1977, p. 123).

The greatest difference between reputation and image is that reputation is built up over time, and therefore represents an accumulated view of an organization (Chun, 2005, p. 96). Image resembles a snapshot at a certain point in time, and can shift from various time periods (Chun, 2005, p. 96). Although the marketing literature has shifted its focus from examining brand image to examining brand identity (Harris et al., 2001, p. 442), brand image is one of the key concepts of reputation. Therefore, we argue that it is important for SACC-DC to understand how brand image is treated within the organization by the board members.

Researchers have suggested that the most important aspect of managing reputation is how to minimize, and preferably eliminate, any possible gap between brand image and brand identity (Roy & Banerjee, 2007, p. 142; Davies et al., 2003, p. 61; Davies & Chun, 2002, p. 146). This view is also illustrated in the model of reputation by Davies et al. (2006, p. 61). The best way to prevent any gaps between image and identity is to match the benefits that the organization offers to its customers with the expectations customers have about the organization (Roy & Banerjee, 2007, p. 144). Nandan (2005, p. 265) describes the gap between identity and image as a discrepancy between the encoding and decoding in the communication process, and brand loyalty can be achieved by reducing the differences between the two concepts (Nandan, 2005, p. 268). If brand image and brand identity are aligned, the customers are more likely to be loyal to the organization, as they have a better understanding of what the brand stands for (Nandan, 2005, p. 271). For this alignment to be possible, gaps between the two concepts need to be detected in order to be minimized. The first step in this process is to examine and measure brand identity and brand image (Davies & Chun, 2002, p. 146). As for our study, we will examine both brand identity and brand

image, due to the purpose of our research, and in order for us to see if any differences exist between the internal identity and the external image.

3.3 CO-CREATION IN MARKETING

Previous research on reputation and its elements highlighted the role of primary stakeholders as those that are most involved and committed to the organizational activities. Co-creation is a process that brings consumers, managers and employees of an organization together to engage in the development and creation of brands, products or services (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b) described co-creation as a new philosophy in marketing where they suggested that organizations could create products, services and experiences of distinctive value through the participation of customers and other stakeholders, where the process focuses on continuous innovation and learning. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 8) have focused many of their studies on co-creation, and define the concept as a *"joint creation of value by the company and the customer. It is not the firm trying to please the customer"*. Payne et al. (2009, p. 383) hold that co-creation between customers and organizations develop as a result of various encounters. For instance, the authors explain that the encounters can *"occur either on the initiative of the company (e.g., through an outbound telephone call), or on the initiative of the customer (e.g., via an enquiry or complaint); or on the initiative of both (e.g., attending a car auction)"* (Payne et al., 2009, p. 383). Researchers' interest towards co-creation was facilitated by the introduction of a new service dominant logic.

In 2004, Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 2) argued that a new kind of logic needed to be considered in marketing, as the old theories did not fit into the competitive environment of that time. Early theories on marketing were borrowed from theories of economics, and were centered around a goods-logic, where tangible output and exchange of commodities were the fundamental features (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, pp. 1-2). Service-dominant logic should be considered a new type of philosophy rather than a theory, and it represents a fundamental shift in how business is viewed (Lusch et al., 2006, p. 276). Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 2) argue that all companies need to be service-centered rather than goods-centered, even if companies produce tangible goods, and that the service-dominant logic is valid for all types of businesses. The most important feature of service-dominant logic is the importance of identifying and developing core competences (Lusch et al., 2006, p. 268), and we believe that this is crucial for SACC-DC as they are a nonprofit organization that needs to compete on the basis of their competitive advantages, rather than their financial performance.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) presented eight foundational premises that characterize the service-dominant logic from goods-dominant logic, and two more have been added later on: FP9 and FP10 (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). These premises lay the foundation of service-dominant logic, and they are presented in detail in appendix 1.

Yong et al. (2013, p. 219) argue that two of the foundational premises of Vargo and Lusch are more prominent than the others. The first one is the fourth fundamental premise, *"operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage"* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p. 7). The second one is the sixth fundamental premise, that *"the customer is always a co- creator of value"* (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, p. 7). Yong et al. (2013, p. 219) claim that these two premises are united in the way that they are both stressing the growing

importance of employees. Operant resources are knowledge in the employees' brains, and when the customer is a co-creator of value, he or she will be very much influenced by the employee that in the end will affect loyalty (Yong et al., 2013, p. 219). We agree with Yong's et al. (2013) proposition that these two premises are most important, as it is truly the case for SACC-DC. As SACC-DC is a nonprofit organization with limited financial resources, it is crucial that the employees and the quality of the events holds a certain standard so that the members want to continue their membership with the SACC-DC. The key benefit for members are networking opportunities (A. Lohmeyer, personal communication, December 19, 2013), and the employees are very important in creating the best networking possibilities for the members. Although the fourth premise is highly relevant for SACC-DC, we argue that the impact of the co-creation with its customers is the most important premise to consider, as SACC-DC are very much subject of co-creation with its customers during their events. Based on our knowledge of how SACC-DC functions and our direct experience with this organization, we can conclude that co-creation is one of the key features of a membership organization like SACC-DC, and we therefore consider it important to examine this concept more in detail.

In a recent study by Gouillart (2014, p. 2), the author states that in the near future, co-creation will be the key source of an organization's competitive advantage. Further, Gouillart (2014, p. 2) notes that as times goes, competition among organizations will be on the basis of the value that their network generates. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a) highlight the importance of understanding what co-creation is not. It is not the relocation or outsourcing of actions to customer (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, p. 6). Co-creation is also not a minimal customization of products and services, nor is it about putting on customer events about the services or products that an organization provides (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, p. 6). Co-creation branding differs from product branding in the sense that co-created brands are not merely created by organizations, but rather the customers (Boyle, 2007, p. 126). In other words, the customers are the driving forces of the process of brand co-creation. Similarly, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 7) assert that value is the outcome of an inherent negotiation between the consumers and organization. Here, we can see that co-creation is used both to create stronger brands and increase value for both parties. When customers create value, Payne et al. (2008, p. 86) explain that they are engaged in various activities where the customer attempts to accomplish a specific goal. Related to the co-creation of value is the co-creation of experience. According to Payne et al. (2008, p. 86) creating customer experience is not much about products, but rather about relations the customer has to the total offering. Helm and Jones (2010, p. 584) state that co-creation emphasizes that the value of an organization's production as being reliant on the quality of the whole experience that the output provides, rather than merely on the quality of the product or service. Some researchers claim that consumers can co-create value by participating in the market or organization, but that the risk of this is that they can outmaneuver organizations (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006, p. 964).
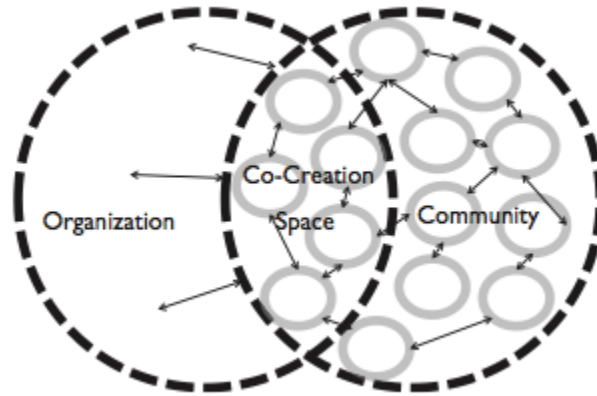
The co-creation space is a model proposed by Ind et al. (2013) to show how the interaction between the organization and customers functions. The middle section of the image where the circles intersect shows where co-creation occurs according to Ind et al. (2013, pp. 9-10). This is where customers and the organization meet either through face-to-face gatherings or via online meetings. According to the Ind et al. (2013, p. 9), *"brands are discussed and developed and people participate in the movement of ideas"* in the co-creation space. Also, the individuals moving around the "community" part are of importance as they can benefit from goods and services created by those that are actively engaged in the co-creation process, thus providing knowledge to the organization. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 11) focus their study on customer experiences, and explain that in the co-creation space, managers have at best restricted control over the experience of the customer and the networks created by managers to enable co-creation experiences. However, the authors hold that organizations cannot influence how customers co-construct their experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b, p. 11).

We believe that the aspect of value is important when considering co-creation, since it is the main outcome of the process where customers and organizations jointly develop and create brands. Further, we also deem that for nonprofit organizations, such as SACC-DC, it is particularly important that value is created mutually, as financial resources and staff is limited. Zeithaml (1988, p. 14) states that consumers' perceived value is the general evaluation they make of the utility of a good or service, which is based on the perception of what the consumers obtain and deliver. When a customer believes that a product or service will deliver value, they are more prone to adopt a continuing relationship to a brand (Dwivedi, 2014, p. 42).

Co-creation takes place in social activities such as events, according to Ind et al. (2013, p. 5). The context where co-creation occurs is important, as it gives a good understanding of where the interaction between consumers and organizations could happen. Although sometimes addressed implicitly, the theme of co-creation and its context can be found in previous marketing research, especially in prior studies focusing on brand communities. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 412) introduced the idea of brand communities, and define it as a *"specialized, non-geographically bound community",* established on a systematized collection of social interactions amid followers of a brand. Algesheimer et al. (2005, p. 20) state that due to this geographical independence of brand communities, they can exist as

local clubs or interest groups. Consumers participate in co-creation as a natural outcome of belonging to a brand community (Schau et al., 2009, p. 41). Similarly, Hatch and Schultz (2010, p. 592) argue that brand communities are relevant to brand co-creation studies due to the way members of a brand community partake in dialogues and cooperate with each other. For instance, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 426) found that brand communities denote a significant information resource for customers. Also, the authors found that members of brand communities can effortlessly approach each other in a recognized collective for information on the brand. The authors found that brand communities offer broad social benefits to its members to the same degree as mutual communication usually provide. Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 427) argue that brands with a strong sense of community typically have greater value to managers than brands with weak sense of community. However, the authors emphasize that the risk with strong brand communities is that it can be dangerous to managers if a community jointly discards the marketing efforts of the organization, and use collective communications means to propagate the refusal of the brand (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001, p. 427). This can be connected to what Denegri-Knott et al. (2006, p. 964) stated above, where customer power can outplay organizations. The shared quality that the brands in brand communities have in common is a strong and distinctive positioning together with customers who deeply relate with the brand (Felix, 2012, p. 225). A study by Muñiz and Hamer (2001, p. 360) showed that consumers label themselves by the brands they utilize and do not utilize, leading the brand community to categorize the brands as "our brand" and "other brands." We believe that co-creation can take place in settings where an organization has an established brand community, and also in settings where customers of organizations have a common sense of community even though there is no formally established community, and that these can have different levels of attachment from consumers. Being a network organization, SACC-DC resembles a community as the members make up a group of individuals and companies that have common interest, and there is a sense of "community" among its members.

3.4 BRAND EXPERIENCE, PERCEIVED QUALITY AND SATISFACTION

Research has shown that consumers are not merely purchasing services or intangibles, but are rather buying the experience that embrace what is being sold (Pullman & Gross, 2004, p. 551). Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) were the first researchers to introduce brand experience, and define the concept as *"subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments."* This is the definition that the most prominent researchers within this field of marketing agree with. When it comes to the nature of brand experiences, the authors state that some brand experiences are deeper and more powerful than others, and that some brand experiences happen unexpectedly, while others occur intentionally (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). The long-lasting brand experiences, which are kept in the consumers' memories have an impact on consumer loyalty, meaning that the better the brand experience, the higher the intention to repurchase a good or service (Iglesias et al., 2011, p. 571). Moreover, research suggests that brands that have accomplished to provide inimitable and distinctive experiences by handling the functional and emotional features of what the organization provides (Berry et al., 2002, p. 87; Morrison & Crane, 2007, p. 417) increases loyalty towards the brand (Pullman & Gross, 2004, p. 570).

Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) mention that brand experiences are not overall assessments about the brand, but that they rather involve special senses, opinions, perceptions, and behavioral reactions caused by brand-related incentives. For instance, rather than merely "liking" a brand, the brand experience is about the explicit feelings that are activated when the customer gets in contact with a brand. Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) further state that brand experiences can even occur when a customer is not strongly involved with a brand or has any personal interest in it. Similarly, customers that do consume a specific brand frequently and have a strong relationship to it may not essentially induce strong feelings of brand experience (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). When it comes to brand experience before and after consumption, Brakus et al. (2009, p. 54) affirm that they take place whenever the customer has a direct or indirect contact with the brand. Riley and de Chernatony (2000, p. 148) state that brand experience involves providing a brand promise and offering consistent action. This notion is supported by Brodie et al. (2009, p. 347), who state that if the experiences between the customer and the brand are optimistic and in line with the "*making of promises*", the result is increased customer trust. In their study, Iglesias et al. (2011, p. 573) found that brands that are competent enough to deliver a higher level of experience than other brands are more probable to achieve affective attachment by the customer.

Prahalad and Ramaswamy are, as mentioned above in this chapter, two of the main researchers within the field of co-creation. They suggest an approach where the brand becomes the experience, a statement that is also supported by Payne et al. (2009, p. 387). Brand experience plays a significant role in co-creation, according to Prahalad (2004c, p. 23), who states that co-creation is where the *"experience is the brand."* According to Frow and Payne (2007, p. 90), co-creation also plays an important role with regard to creating a perfect customer experience. The authors also affirm that the meaning of branding has shifted from being connected to advertising and traditional brand-related actions to creating practices that favor the customers' experience (Frow & Payne, 2007, p. 91). Moreover, Brodie et al. (2009, p. 347), explained that a positive brand experience can generate greater trust with an organization, and we can therefore see a connection between brand experience and reputation. As can be seen from the 'Reputation Quotient', developed by Gardberg and Fombrun (2002), trust is one of the themes that are included when assessing the reputation of an organization.

Parasuraman et al. (1988, p. 16) describe perceived service quality as *"a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service."* Brand image associations will affect consumer perceptions of the quality of a brand when they offer signals about the likely status of a brand (Martenson, 2007, pp. 546-547). Managers and researchers in the service setting are focusing their attention to grasping how consumers observe the quality of services, and also how these opinions transform to satisfaction (Olorunniwo et al. 2006, p. 59). According to Spreng and Mackoy (1996, p. 202), the perceived service quality is the outcome of an analogy of performance and what the customer believes the organization ought to provide. Further, the authors assert that service quality is shaped by comparing ideals and perceptions of performance with regards to quality dimensions, whereas satisfaction varies according to the disproof of prognostic expectancies concerning both quality dimensions and non-quality dimensions (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996, p. 204). Prahalad and Ramaswamy mention that quality is dependent on the possibility for collaboration between organizations and consumers, where the organization must have enough aptitude

to generate a multiplicity of experiences (2004a, p. 6). Thus, we can see that there is a connection between perceived quality and co-creation of brands. Moreover, Sarstedt and Scholderer (2010, p. 284) found that quality have an impact on nonprofit organizations' reputation, further indicating that it is a relevant concept to include in our study.

Kotler and Keller (2009, p. 164) define satisfaction as "*a person's feelings of pleasure of disappointment that result from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) to their expectations*", and suggest that organizations should continuously measure satisfaction, as satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal to a brand or organization (Kotler & Keller, 2009, p. 165). Therefore, satisfaction is not an absolute measure of how an organization is doing, but rather depends on what customers expect from the organization (Davies et al., 2003, p. 177). For our study, it is interesting to examine the satisfaction of the members, as it could possibly affect how the members perceive the reputation. One of the distinct features of service settings is the inseparability of production and consumption (Wu, 2011, p. 863), and as the consumer takes part in the service delivery, they are contributors to their own satisfaction (Wu, 2011, p. 865). Consumers who take part in the service delivery process (e.g. members of SACC-DC), could be considered 'organizational members' (Kelley et al., 1990, p. 316), and organizations should try to make the customer aware of their participation in the service delivery, as this can lead to a greater customer satisfaction (Kelley et al., 1990, p. 322). Wu (2011, p. 865) has suggested that more customer participation leads to a higher level of satisfaction, and as SACC-DC's main activity is networking, there is a possibility to raise the customer involvement to a higher degree and therefore increase satisfaction. A higher level of satisfaction will be achieved as organizations engage in organizational socialization, which means that the organization educates consumers about their values and goals (Kelley et al., 1990, p. 318).

Satisfied customers can have a great impact on an organization's profitability, and there are three significant reasons why it is important to have satisfied customers for any organization. First of all, satisfied customers generate repeated income (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990, p. 106). Second, it is cheaper to maintain customers than finding new ones due to costs of advertising and sales etc. (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990, p. 106). Third, satisfied customers are more likely to generate positive word-of-mouth that can attract new customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990, p. 106; Zeithaml et al., 1996, pp. 32-33). All these reasons clearly demonstrate that customers' satisfaction is an important concept that needs examination, and we believe that SACC-DC could benefit by understanding their members' level of satisfaction and its influence on reputation and co-creation.

Helm et al., (2009) have researched the subject of whether it is satisfaction that affects reputation, or the other way around. Research has pointed to contradictory results, but Helm et al. conclude that it is satisfaction that affects reputation, and not the other way around (Helm et al., 2009, p. 70; 73). Helm et al. (2009, p. 73) state that "*investing in, and maintaining, high quality in products and services is one important cornerstone of reputation management as it is a prerequisite to achieve consumer satisfaction*", making it highly relevant to include measures for this in our study. Therefore, it is of relevance for SACC-DC to understand their members' level of satisfaction, and also to understand how board members perceive satisfaction and manage it in order to maintain a favorable

reputation.

3.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF SACC-DC

Based on our theoretical framework, we can see that reputation is an important concept for any type of organization (Walsh et al., 2009, p. 188). It is crucial that organizations have a favorable reputation, as it can be the source of a strong competitive advantage (Firestein, 2006, p. 25). In the model by Miles and Davies (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, p. 61), reputation is explained as having three main elements, brand identity, desired identity and brand image. Brand identity and desired identity are described as the organization's internal perceptions, which will then be perceived as the brand image by external actors, i.e., customers. Co-creation is another concept that is considered vital for any organization that wishes to be groundbreaking and innovative (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5). Co-creation lets customers engage in the development of the brand and contributing with their knowledge and experience, and Gouillart (2014, p. 2) suggests that co-creation will be a new source of competitive advantage. We believe that external perceptions of reputation and co-creation are reliant on brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality and brand experience, and will therefore examine these further in our study.

The reputation of an organization needs to be managed internally, as the management is ultimately responsible for the reputation (Dowling, 2004, p. 25). It is crucial that the management of an organization establishes both brand identity and desired identity, in order to communicate a coherent image to customers (Srivastava, 2011, p. 340). For SACC-DC, we argue that a thorough understanding of board members' perceptions of the brand identity is necessary, as we believe it could help them improve the reputation and affect their members' level of involvement in co-creation. The model "Key Elements of Corporate Reputation" by Davies and Miles (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, p. 61) will serve as a basis for understanding how the reputation is managed and perceived by the board members. It will also be useful in order to understand any perceptual gaps between brand identity and desired identity that board members might have. Gaining a deeper understanding of board members' view on reputation and co-creation will serve as the qualitative part of our mixed-method study, and we will provide new knowledge on the subject of how reputation and co-creation are managed internally in a new context.

The reputation of an organization stems from the views of many different stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, p. 1050). Customers are among the most important primary stakeholders, and it is important to know what affects their view of the reputation (Clarkson, 1995, p. 106). With this in mind, we argue that SACC-DC needs to understand how its members perceive the reputation. We believe that it is relevant to examine what affects members' perception of the reputation and co-creation, as it can help SACC-DC understand its position in their members' minds. Throughout the theoretical framework, we have argued that factors such as brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality and brand experience will affect reputation. Based on our review of previous research, we will test this through our first four hypotheses:

| **H1** | Brand Image has a positive effect on reputation |

H2	Satisfaction has a positive effect on reputation
H3	Perceived quality has a positive effect on reputation
H4	Brand experience has a positive effect on reputation

Considering the findings of prior research addressed in our literature review, we also think that these factors will have an impact on co-creation. Therefore, we will test the effects of these factors on co-creation as well. Our next four hypotheses are as follows:

H5	Brand image has a positive effect on co-creation
H6	Satisfaction has a positive effect on co-creation
H7	Perceived quality has a positive effect on co-creation
H8	Brand experience has a positive effect on co-creation

We can see a link between co-creation and reputation in the sense that both concern interactions between organizations and customers. Based on our literature review, we argue that it is important for SACC-DC to engage in co-creation, as well as having a favorable reputation, in order to continue its growth and maintain satisfied members. This discussion has led us to the ninth hypothesis, which is:

H9	Co-creation has a positive effect on reputation

Our conceptual model that will serve as a basis for our statistical analysis is displayed in Figure 4. However, it must not be forgotten that the conceptual model is one element of the mixed-method study. Thus, together with the empirical findings of the interviews that will be held with the board members of SACC-DC, the conceptual model will serve as a complement to the qualitative part of our research. In other words, the conceptual model will not be our final contribution to research alone, but will instead help us enrich the analysis to provide practical and theoretical contributions of higher quality.
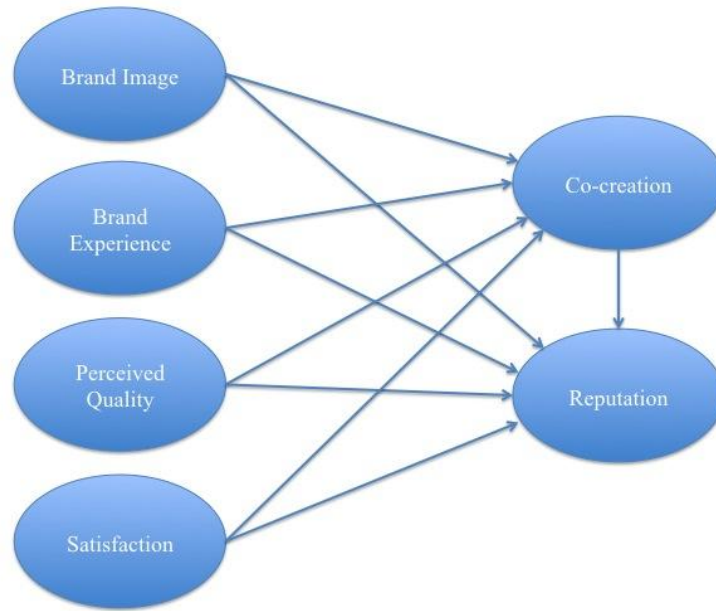
FIGURE 4. FACTORS AFFECTING CO-CREATION AND REPUTATION (OWN MODEL)

Because we aim to provide recommendations to managers in nonprofit settings, we see the great advantage of using the results from our conceptual model together with the qualitative findings. This is because we will be able to provide inside-out suggestions, as we will look at the internal and external views, and compare these. The conceptual model is a useful way of showing the organization we are writing on commission for how the members perceive the organization and its brand. As mentioned before, SACC-DC could benefit from knowing how their members perceive the reputation, and understand how board members affect the management of this concept. Being a nonprofit organization that relies on new and renewed memberships, we are, with our study, able to show SACC-DC not only how the reputation is viewed, but also which factors that affect it. The results from the regression analyses, can be used by SACC-DC and other organization of similar natures to create and implement marketing strategies and activities that help them maintain a strong reputation and brand, and to take advantage of co-creation opportunities.

4. PRACTICAL METHOD

In order for the reader to understand how we have conducted our study, this chapter contains an explanation of how data was collected. We have divided the chapter into two parts, where we begin by presenting the qualitative method of collecting and analyzing data, and later explain the quantitative method. The chapter ends with a discussion on the ethical aspects of conducting research.

4.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There are two types of data: primary and secondary (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 304). When collecting new data for the specific purpose of the study at hand, primary data is used (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 304). Data that has already been collected for other purposes than the one at hand, and used as the basis of analysis is known as secondary data (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 312; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 304). Sources of secondary data can be for example annual reports, minutes of meetings, accounts of sales and goods etc., and both qualitative and quantitative data can be sources of secondary data (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 304; 307). An advantage of secondary data is that it is usually much cheaper to collect, and not as time-consuming (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 317). Though, disadvantages can be that the secondary data source has been collected to meet another purpose than the study that is performed, and that it does not fit the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 320; Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 319-320). Because of the reasons mentioned, we consider it necessary to collect primary data, as we believe that our research question cannot be answered through the secondary data that is available. We want to examine co-creation and reputation, and as this has not been studied together before we need to collect primary data through various sources to answer our research question. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 419) suggest that all possible data collection methods available are subject to evaluation before deciding on which method is most suitable, and in our case we concluded that we would need to apply more than one method to fully answer our research question. Our research question is formulated so that it would need both qualitative and quantitative primary data collection methods to be answered, as it contains elements of deeper understanding as well as generalization and explanations.

After evaluating various methods that are available, we decided upon using interviews for the qualitative part, and conducting a survey for the quantitative part. Interviews are one way of collecting primary data, and there are many types of interviews that can be conducted (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 372). The type of interview that is applied needs to connect to the research question, research design and research strategy (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 376), and as our research question has the purpose of answering 'how?' as its first part, semi-structured interviews that are analyzed qualitatively would be most suitable (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 376). The second part of our research question is concerned with reputation and co-creation and the effects of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience on those concepts, and to answer this part of our research question we decided that a questionnaire would be most appropriate. A questionnaire is relatively cheap and easy to administer (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 232), and as this part of our research question concerns generalization, a quantitative survey would be suitable.

4.2 FIELD TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

In order to collect the data that we need for this study, we chose to focus on SACC-DC. The way this organization functions fits the purpose of our study well, and as they wanted an updated view of how the members perceive the organization it was suitable to write on commission for them. In order to collect the data that was needed for this thesis, we visited Washington, D.C. from March 19 to 28, 2014. We decided to hold our interviews at the location of the organization, as we appreciated that the quality of the interviews would be significantly better by conducting the interviews face-to-face rather than via Skype or telephone. This argument is also supported by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 404), who states that interviewing has many drawbacks when conducted via telephone or internet. When conducting qualitative interviews it is important to not only interpret and analyze what is being said, but also how it is being said (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 482; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 550), and we felt that through face-to-face interviews we could take nonverbal signals from the respondents into consideration as well. This could possibly be considered in the analysis of the interviews, and enrich our understanding of certain themes. We also believe that our visit in Washington, D.C. facilitated our quantitative data collection, even though we sent out our survey online. When we sent our pilot-test for the quantitative study we were able to get feedback in person as we were at the office of SACC-DC, something that might had taken longer if we would have been in Sweden at the time. Moreover, creating the email-list of respondents that would receive the survey was also done quickly, as we gained access to SACC-DC's member lists for the purpose of our study. Due to the circumstances mentioned above, we believe that our visit to Washington, D.C., improved the overall quality of our data collection, for both parts of the study.

4.3 QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The approach in qualitative interviewing can be either structured or unstructured, depending of what type of questions are asked (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 374). If the purpose of the interviews is to generate findings that can be generalized over a population, standardized interviews with exact same questions are recommended to use (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 204). When the questions are unstructured and the purpose is to understand the perspective of the respondent, this is called unstructured (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 466; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 374). For our study, we applied what Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 467) refer to as semi-structured interviewing, a type of unstructured interview. As the focus of our first part of the research question is to generate a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, reputation and co-creation, we do not believe that structured interviews would be suitable as we aim to understand the underlying factors to the reputation. By letting the respondents express themselves freely and not follow a standardized questionnaire, we hope to understand *how* and *why* the reputation and the process of co-creating it is conducted, questions that are typically answered with unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, pp. 466-467). Semi-structured interviewing can be described as somewhat structured, as there are certain themes or topics that the interviewer wants to cover, but the respondent can freely answer the questions as he or she like, and the interviewer can ask follow-up questions that do not look the same for all interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467; Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 374-375). We believe that this kind of interview would be the best way to collect our qualitative data, as we could ask the same questions to all respondents so that we might detect possible patterns in the

answers from our analysis, but at the same time get the richness of open questions regarding our themes where respondents can freely elaborate on issues raised in the questions.

As we had a research question already in mind with various themes we wanted to know more about, semi-structured interviewing is a natural choice as it allows the researcher to concentrate on the certain topic in mind rather than focus on a general understanding (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 472). For our interviews, we altered the questions depending on the respondents position within the organization, and depending on how the answers varied, follow-up questions and probing was different among the interviews. We held our interviews during our visit to Washington, D.C., in March 2014. We interviewed current board members and employees, as well as one former employee.

4.3.1 QUALITATIVE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND ACCESS

We wanted to develop a deeper understanding of co-creation and reputation of a nonprofit organization, and study this from the internal perspective of the organization. Therefore, we decided to interview board members and employees at SACC-DC as they are the ones involved in the management of the organization.

In order to gain access to the data that is needed for a study, it is important to have a strategy to gain access (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 427; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 216). It is recommended to prepare well before presenting research ideas, as this could help to gain access (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 217), and many researchers suggest using existing contacts to gain access (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 429; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 219). Even though one of us had been on internship with the organization before and worked closely with the executive director, we had made sure to prepare our research idea before contacting the organization at hand. We presented our research proposal during the first of our Skype-meetings with the executive director of the organization. We introduced our idea of interviewing the board members as part of our qualitative study. This idea was well received, and as the executive director of the organization thought that our idea of study was needed, she gave us permission to contact the board members and set up times for meetings ourselves.

In business research, it is not always possible or desirable to use probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 281). This is especially common when a certain case is studied and non-probability sampling can therefore be applied (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 281). According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 283), there are no general rules for the size of non-probability samples, but rather, it is a question of judgment when the data saturation is reached, i.e., where *the additional data collected provides few, if any, new information or suggests new themes"* (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 283). We held eight interviews, as we felt that the data saturation was reached after this. The sampling process of which board members to interview can be considered to be purposive sampling, where the sample a non-probability sample based on personal judgment (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 281; 287). A purposive sample is chosen based on the research question and objective of the study, and it is not representative of the whole population (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 287). In this case, we based our sampling on judgment, as we wanted to interview board members that had been with the organization for long and short time, respectively. Moreover, we wanted to

interview board members of both genders and as the board consists of more men than women in total, another type of sampling could have made this difficult. We also took into consideration how long the board members had been part of the organization, and as we also wanted to look at the time perspective of the reputation, a former member of the management was included as a respondent.

The board of the organization at hand is made up of people working voluntarily, and most of them have other jobs as their primary occupation (A. Lohmeyer, personal communication, December 19, 2013). As managers often get many requests regarding various events and meetings, it is important to approach possible respondents with care, so that a favorable response to an interview could be reached (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 473). As one of us had done an internship with the organization before and have already had contact with the board members, we started by sending an email where we stated the background information and purpose of the interview, and asked if they would have time to meet us. According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 473), it can sometimes be difficult to gain access to managerial interviews due to time restrictions. Luckily, this was not a concern for us, as all our respondents were very helpful in finding time to meet us. We kept in touch with the respondents through email, and we made sure to point out that if they had any concerns or questions, they were able to get in touch with us.

4.3.2 INTERVIEW GUIDE

When conducting semi-structured interviews, an interview guide is often used (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467). The interview guide consists of a list of questions that the interviewer wants to cover, but it also allows flexibility as the interviewer can ask other questions that are not included in the interview guide as well depending on e.g. what the respondents answer (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467). If the research includes questions that will be the same for all respondents, it is important to ask these questions in the most similar way as possible, in terms of wording and tone (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 52; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 389). We constructed our interview guide based on our research question and the theoretical background of our thesis, and we started off by deciding upon which themes to cover, and then wrote down all questions we came up with. We made sure to write the questions so that they were open-ended and not pointing the respondent in a specific direction, an important feature of being neutral as an interviewer (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 52; Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 391; 393). The themes included in the interview guide are brand identity, desired identity, reputation, quality and co-creation. Apart from these, we began with three background questions. As we had gone through the questions, we narrowed it down and decided upon three questions for each theme that we wanted to cover, but kept the remaining questions as we felt that we might wanted to ask them as probing questions or if we had time left with a respondent. The interview guide can be given to the respondent if he or she would like to see it (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 473), and we always brought an extra copy of the interview guide to the respondents in case they wanted to see the questions as we started the interview. Our interview guide can be found in appendix 2.

4.3.3 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

Table 2 shows an overview of the respondents for our interviews, and they were asked to participate in our study as they all participate in the management of SACC-DC. Through their involvement, regardless of whether they are board members or employees, they are

taking part in management regarding the reputation of the organization, and we consider them suitable for answering questions related to our research question.

As an interviewer, it is important to gain the respondents' trust and establish yourself as a researcher, wherefore the first minutes of the interview should be designated to introduce the topic and the research, as well as establishing the rights of the respondent and hopefully gain consent (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 389). To ensure this, we started all of our interviews by introducing our thesis and the purpose of the interview, and made sure that the respondent felt comfortable with answering our questions. We had decided to divide the interview questions amongst ourselves, and kept the same division throughout all interviews. We covered three themes each of the interview guide, but either one of us could ask follow-up questions during the whole interview. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 398) discusses that interviewing can be a very time-consuming process, but we believe that it was beneficial to conduct the interviews together and not split them up between us, even though this might have been more time efficient. Because both of us were present at all interviews, we could discuss the responses afterwards and made sure that we had the same interpretation of what had being said.

As described by Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 467), follow-up questions can be used depending on the answers of the respondents. Though, we made sure to ask the questions that we had for all respondents in a similar manner in terms of voice and wording, an important feature of interviewing (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 467; Ejvegård, 2003, p. 52). As discussed by Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 482), the length of qualitative interviews can vary to a great extent, and this was the case in our study as well. The interview time varied from 33 minutes up to 1 hour and 34 minutes, as can be seen in table 2.

It is desirable to hold interviews at a location where it is convenient for the participants, where respondents feel comfortable and where the interview is not likely to be disturbed (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 386). For our interviews, they were conducted either at the office of SACC-DC, or at the office of the respondent, depending on what they preferred. Because we let the respondent choose where to meet, they picked the place that suited their schedule best, and we believe that this was appropriate as it made it possible for us to conduct all our interviews face-to-face. We held our interviews in either Swedish or English, depending on the mother tongue of the respondent. The process of translating questions and answers into another language could present difficulties when analyzing the material later on (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 488), but we felt that it was important to conduct the interviews in the language in which the respondent could express his or her thoughts freely and not be hindered by trying to find the right words. In order to avoid translation problems, we always collaborated in the translation of specific quotes.

Interviewee	Interview Time	Place
1	41 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007
2	1 h 34 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007

3	39 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007
4	1 hour	1634 I Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20006
5	35 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007
6	53 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007
7	40 minutes	2900 K street NW, Washington, D.C., 20007
8	33 minutes	2300 N Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20037

TABLE 2. TABLE OF INTERVIEWEES

4.3.4 TRANSCRIBING

When interviewing in qualitative research, it is recommended to record the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 482; Ejvegård, 2003, p. 51; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 394). Before each interview we held, we asked the respondent if he or she felt comfortable with recording the interview, and all of the respondents agreed to recording. Recording and transcribing the interviews afterwards is preferable, as the interviewers do not lose focus of what is being said due to the distraction of taking notes (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 482). We made sure to stress the fact that all respondents would be anonymous, and this is considered to be a useful technique to make sure that the respondent feel comfortable with opening up and talk about things freely (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 51). We also told them that all names they mentioned would be censored, so that they would feel comfortable with speaking freely during the interview and not lose focus on the message that they wanted to tell us about. In our transcriptions, we included pauses and nonverbal signals in our written documentation as well, as these could possibly be important features in the analysis of the data later on (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 550). We transcribed the interviews after we had conducted all of them, and in order to avoid mistakes from the transcribing process, we listened to each other's transcriptions when they were done.

4.4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Qualitative research can easily generate a large amount of data, and there are few widely accepted rules for analysis of such data (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 571). Qualitative data analysis needs to be based on the nature of the research at hand, and as there is no standardized way for analyzing, research question, research design and research approach need to be taken into consideration when choosing what method to use (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 556). The choice of what analysis method to undertake is usually connected to whether the research is of deductive or inductive nature (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 544). There are also techniques that are more general in nature, and one of the most used methods in qualitative research is thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2012, p. 571). Thematic analysis can be applied in almost any type of qualitative research, and coding is a central theme to this type of analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 572).

Attride-Stirling (2001) introduced a tool for thematic analysis (Figure 5), where qualitative data is organized and interpreted in a systematic way. For our study, this type of analysis

will be used for the qualitative analysis, as we believe that the features of this tool are useful in order to interpret the data and gain a deeper understanding of the subject at hand. Analysis of qualitative data needs to consider the richness of words, and that words can have different meanings (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 546). Furthermore, qualitative data is usually very large in volume, and does therefore need to be broken down in order to make sense of it and explore the information in it (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 546). Thematic Network Analysis "*aims to explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea*" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387), and applies networks as organizing principles to understand a common theme, which is derived from the qualitative data (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388). The method is used in order to break up text, which is then conceptualized into themes that have different orders (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388).
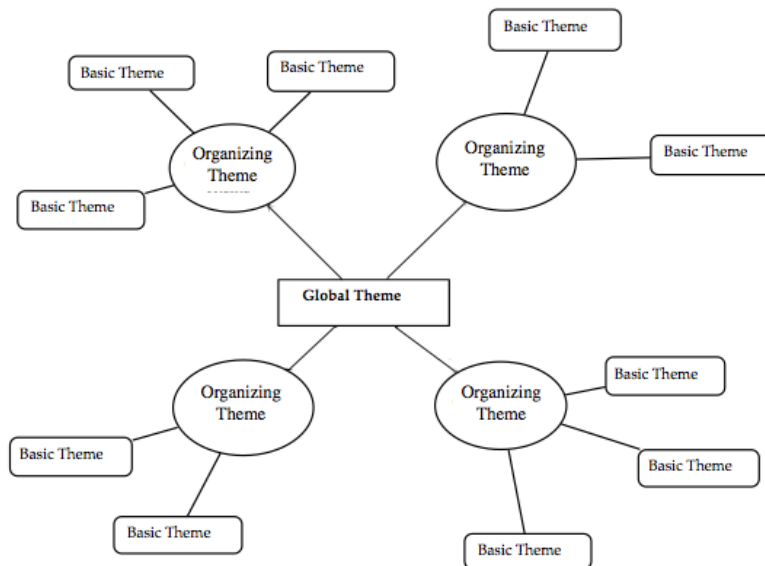
FIGURE 5. THEMATIC NETWORK ANALYSIS, (ATTRIDE-STIRLING, 2001, P. 387)

A thematic network is derived in three broad steps. First, the data is coded depending on either theoretical background or what is said in the data collection. The most relevant words or collections of words are grouped together, in order to make sense of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390). The second step is to explore the data, which is done by creating the thematic networks, based on themes that have emerged (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390). The last step is to explore and analyze the data with regards to the thematic networks, which is done in the light of the research question and the theoretical framework underpinning it (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 402).

The basic theme is the lowest-ordered theme that is collected from the data, and these themes do not conclude anything about the data as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2011, pp. 388-389). The basic themes need to be paired up with other basic themes, and these can then be considered to make up an organizing theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389). These themes are telling something about the patterns from the data, as many basic themes are piled together to make sense (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389). As many organizing themes are grouped together, underlying patterns of significance can be detected, and these make up what is referred to as a global theme. According to Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 389), global

themes can be said to tell the researcher what the data is about in the specific context, and the global themes summarize the lower-ordered themes in order to make sense of the data. The themes derived can be based on either theoretical grounds, or depending on the content and coding of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392).

When conducting thematic network analysis, more than one global theme can emerge from the analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389), and from our transcriptions we developed four global themes. We have based our thematic analysis on the content of our qualitative data, bearing our theoretical background in mind, meaning that we have developed new themes that we detected through the analysis. The themes that we came up with were: brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. A complete overview of our thematic networks can be found in appendix 3. The networks that have been identified need to be analyzed and interpreted in order to make sense of the themes that have been derived (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389), and we interpreted our themes based on our research question and the theoretical framework of our thesis.

4.5 QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires include those methods where data is collected through asking each person in a sample the same set of questions in a prearranged order (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 416). According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 417), the use of questionnaires is a commonly used method to collect data, and is an efficient technique to gather responses from a large sample. We believe that the use of questionnaires is a good way of reaching the external stakeholders of the organization, since these are larger in number than the board members, who make up the internal stakeholders. One disadvantage of using questionnaires to collect data is that the researcher is incapable of returning to the respondents who choose to participate anonymously, and gather supplementary data using another questionnaire (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 419). Saunders et al. (2012, p. 420) state that the choice of questionnaire is affected by the several factors regarding the research question and purpose of the study. We have taken this into account when designing our questionnaire.

Structured interviews are a common way of conducting business research, and the method can be applied both in quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 202). The method allows standardization of both questions and answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 202), and a typical view of conducting structured interviewing is where the interviewer and respondent meet face to face (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 420). Structured interviewing can also be conducted over phone, and this is considered to be a cheaper and quicker way to administer the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 206). Conducting the interview over telephone has also shown to have less effect on the respondent's answer than conducting it face to face, as characteristics of the interviewer otherwise might influence the respondent (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 206). According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 419), self-completion questionnaires are completed by the respondents. There are three types of self-completion questionnaires; web-based, postal or delivery and collection. Web-based questionnaires are sent to respondents through the Internet, either by e-mail or accessed via a web page (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 421). The sample size with these types of questionnaires is large and can be spread out geographically. Postal questionnaires are sent to the respondents by post and are returned in the same way (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 231). For these types of questionnaires, the researcher must have the contact details available in

order to reach the respondents. Finally, delivery and collection questionnaires are, according to Saunders et al., 2012, p. 419), handed out to respondents and gathered later. As with postal questionnaires, contact details must be at hand to be able to perform this type of collection method.

In order to collect the data used for the quantitative part of this study, we have composed self-completed web-based questionnaires. We used a website called esurv.org, which is a free, online survey tool. Due to the fact that our respondents live and work in Washington, D.C., postal questionnaires would be too costly and time-consuming for us to conduct. Structured interviews would not have been practically feasible due to time constraints. Also, we believe that we would receive more honest responses as anonymity is assured by using self-completed questionnaires.

4.5.1 SURVEY CONSTRUCTION

Saunders et al. (2012, p. 423) state that the questions in the questionnaire should be defined correctly before collecting data, since questionnaires merely offer one opportunity to collect data. The quantitative part of this thesis will be explanatory in nature, meaning the researcher is studying a situation so as to justify the relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 172). Saunders et al. (2012, p. 424) further state that the literature needs to be reviewed carefully since the theories will serve as the basis for the variables that will be tested and analyzed. For our questionnaire, we chose to examine six main variables: brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, reputation, brand experience, and co-creation, which are the main concepts of the theoretical framework. The scales used were derived from previous research, and the sources are shown in appendix 4. The items derived from previous research were measured by using the Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. According to Patel and Davidson (2011, p. 88), the Likert scale is the most accessible and therefore most used way to develop an instrument to measure the attitudes. It consists of a number of claims that individuals should point out how much or how little they agree with a number of statements, or items. The first seven questions in the questionnaire were concerned with demographics, and asked about respondents' gender, age, type of category membership, etc. All but two questions were mandatory, and the two that were not were questions that respondents were directed to if they had answered 'Yes' to the question 'Are you a member of SACC-DC? *If you are not a member please go directly to Question 6.'* Since some of the respondents were not current members, the question regarding their membership category was not relevant for all respondents.

The use of previously tested items allows the researcher to compare the results with previous findings, in order to assess reliability (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 431). As mentioned above, six constructs were used in the questionnaire, and a total of 48 items were included, all originating from previous research. The first construct, satisfaction, included constructs from Wu's (2011) study (appendix 4, questions 8 & 9). To measure brand image, we used scales from Balaji's study from 2011 (appendix 4, questions 10-13). The items concerning perceived quality come from the study performed by Balaji (2011) (appendix 4, questions 14-17). As for reputation, the scales used are previously tested by Gardberg and Fombrun (2002), which are called the 'Reputation Quotient' (appendix 4, questions 18-39). As the 'Reputation Quotient' is often used to measure reputation of

organizations and as it is compiled by many studies of reputation, we regard this scale as the best measurement to examine reputation. Brand experience was tested by using the scales of Brakus et al. (2009) (appendix 4, questions 40-49), which have been used in most studies concerning brand experience. Finally, we used Yi and Gong's (2013) measures of co-creation in our questionnaire (appendix 4, questions 50-55.)

4.5.2 QUANTITATIVE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 176), there are two main ways of choosing an appropriate sampling technique for a quantitative study, probability sampling and non-probability samplings. Probability sampling means that each member of a population having an equal possibility of being part of the sample (Churchill & Iacobuddi, 2005, p. 324), meaning that the sample has been chosen using random assortment so that every unit in a population obtains an equivalent chance of being chosen (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 176). Non-probability sampling is characterized by the fact that the researcher is incapable of approximating the probability that the population will be a part of the sample (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2005, p. 326). Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, where the researcher chooses the sample based on what is available and accessible to him or her (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 190). This thesis uses census data, which according to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 176) is when data is gathered with regard to all individuals in a population. This means that we have not used probability or non-probability sampling, as we contacted all members of SACC-DC, as well as those that were on the 'General Interest' list that received newsletters. Sampling is utilized when the researcher is not capable of conducting census. This is because populations tend to be very large in size, which implies higher distribution costs and time constraints (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 449). In our case, the population as a whole was small which made it more relevant for us to use census, rather than sampling.

As mentioned above, all respondents are either members of SACC-DC or have signed up for the newsletter, which can be both former and potential members. This means that all respondents are familiar with the organization and have varying levels of involvement. Those respondents that are members belong to different membership categories; corporate, business, individual or young professional. Before launching the questionnaire, it was pre-tested on two employees at SACC-DC; the executive director and one trainee. Since we were already aware that we had a quite small sample, we chose to not to test the questionnaire on potential respondents, as this would make our sample smaller. Shiu et al. (2009, p. 65) stress the importance of pretesting the questionnaire on individuals that are representative of the respondents that will take the final questionnaire, hence the decision to perform the pretest on employees of SACC-DC that work closely to the members. According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 451), pre-testing allows the researcher to improve the questionnaire to facilitate any problems the respondents might have in answering the questions. We asked the individuals who pre-tested the questionnaire to comment on any unclear items and to specify how much time the questionnaire required to complete. After receiving their feedback, we were informed that the questionnaire took around eight minutes to complete, and that the items were comprehensible, therefore the questionnaire was not altered after the pre-test.

A total of 392 people received the questionnaire on March 25, 2014. On April 2 we sent the

first reminder, and the second reminder was sent on April 8. The questionnaire closed on April 11, 2014. A total of 59 respondents accepted the invitation to the questionnaire, from which we received 52 complete answers. In order to calculate the response rate, we divided the number of complete answers by the total the total sample minus unreachable respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 189). This gives us a total response rate of $52 \div (392\text{-}7) \times 100 \approx 13{,}5\%$. According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 268), we can exclude the 202 individuals that did not open the email containing the questionnaire. This means that the active response rate is $52 \div [392\text{-} (202\text{+}7) \times 100 \approx 28{,}4\%$. Considering the low participation SACC-DC had experienced earlier when conducting a survey of their members, the amount of complete answers for our study was not surprising, and we believe that the participation rate can be subject to analysis and used for the managerial implications.

4.6 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the data that we have collected, we first exported the results from Esurv.org to an Excel spreadsheet, which was exported to SPSS, a statistical analysis software package (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 473). Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 334) stress the importance of bearing in mind how the data will be analyzed prior to collecting the data. Therefore, we will in this section explain the statistical tools used to analyze the data that we gathered through our questionnaire. By analyzing our data in SPSS, we are able to measure the effects of brand image, brand experience, and satisfaction on reputation and co-creation (and co-creation on reputation) by using Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics and regression analyses.

4.6.1 CRONBACH'S ALPHA

In order for measures to be valid and provide fruitful results, they must be reliable (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 430). Reliability indicates the usability of a measuring instrument and the measurement unit (Ejvegård, 2003, p. 70). Complete reliability is a prerequisite for full validity, according to Patel and Davidson (2011, p. 102). Reliability is concerned with internal consistency, which entails *"correlating the responses to questions in the questionnaire with each other"*, thus determining the consistency of the constructs (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 430). Although there are many ways to test the reliability of scales in a questionnaire, the most commonly used method to calculate reliability coefficients is Cronbach's Alpha (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 430). This statistical tool consists of an alpha coefficient, which should have a value between 0 and 1 (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 430). Most importantly, the value of the coefficient ought to be above 0,80 in order to determine that the scales combined measure the same things (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 159).

4.6.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive statistics will be used to analyze our data, as they permit us to explain variables statistically (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 502). Central tendencies are a part of descriptive statistics, which allows the researcher to review and abbreviate the retrieved information to get at the fundamental meaning of the results (Shiu et al. 2009, p. 529). One of the main central tendency measures is the mean (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 344). The mean is the most frequently used arithmetic tool in descriptive statistics, and is the one that we will use to analyze our results. The computation of the mean contains all data values (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 504). To calculate the mean, the values of a distribution of answers are added up

and divided by the number of usable answers (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 259). It is important to note that the value of the mean is very affected by extreme data values in skewed distributions, which may show results less representative of the central tendency (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 506). Apart from the central tendency for variables, Saunders et al. (2012, p. 506) states it is important to bear the dispersion around the central tendency in mind, because the central tendency does not reveal everything about a distribution of responses (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 532). Measures of dispersion explain the difference between the mean or other measure of central tendency to the rest of the values in the distribution (Bryman & Bell, 2011, pp. 344-345). We used the measure of standard deviation to describe the variability in our distribution of responses. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 506) describe the standard deviation as the level to which values fluctuate from the mean. We will perform a Pearson's correlation analysis, which is another statistical assessment that measures the significance of the relationship between two data variables (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 521). In other words, Pearson's correlation measures the strength of a linear connection between two variables (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 554). Pearson's correlation coefficient should be between -1,00 and 1,00 (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 347), where a value of 0 represents perfectly independent variables with no connection to each other (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 521). Negative values imply that a rise in the *Y*-value is related to decreases in the *X*-value, i.e. negative correlation, and vice versa (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 554).

4.6.3 MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES

We used the statistical technique multiple regression analysis to analyze the relationship between the independent variables (brand experience, brand image, satisfaction, and perceived quality), and the dependent variables (reputation and co-creation). We also tested co-creation as an independent variable and reputation as the dependent variable in our third regression. A regression analysis that uses two or more independent variables is called multiple regression analysis (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 523). This type of regression analysis is appropriate for our study as we have four constructs representing the independent variables. The formula used to calculate the straight line regression equation is: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \ldots + \beta_n X_n + \varepsilon$, where Y is the dependent variable, β_0 represents the intercept, β_n indicates the slope, X_n is the independent variable, and ε signifies the error for prediction (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 564). The linear relationship is explained by Saunders et al. (2012, p. 524) as the extent to which a variation in the dependent variable is linked to the change in the independent variables. By performing a multiple regression analysis, we will be able to determine the coefficient of determination, or R-square. This coefficient measures the percentage of the deviation in the dependent variable that can be justified statistically by the independent variables (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 523). The value of R-square should be between 0 and 1, and should be as high as possible. In our case, this means that if all the variation in reputation and co-creation can be explained by brand experience, brand image, satisfaction, and perceived quality, the coefficient of determination will be 1. With multiple regression analyses, we will assess the effects and see whether the relationship are significant or not, and analyze positive or negative relationships. One simple linear regression will be performed, where we have one dependent variable (reputation) and one independent variable (co-creation).

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When conducting research, it is highly important to raise the ethical aspects that have been

considered in order to improve the quality of the study, and also to avoid unethical conduct (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 128). One of our greatest and most vital guidelines throughout the process of writing this thesis has been to process ethical issues to reduce unethical conduct and attempt to perform every step of the process in an ethical manner. In this section we will present the most important topics within ethics in research and argue how our study has followed the recommended ethical guidelines.

An important matter of ethics in business research is to respect participants and people affected by the research, and that the researcher needs to establish trust and respect (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 231). We composed an introductory letter that would be visible in the email that was sent to the participants of the questionnaire. Prior to launching the questionnaire, we asked a board member who had been engaged in SACC-DC for many years to proof read the letter and provide comments and suggestions. We did this because we wanted the letter to give a good and respectable impression. Due to the fact that the board member's native language was American English, we saw his inputs as invaluable, as we believe this minimized the risk of being misunderstood due to language barriers. The introductory letter was sent from SACC-DC's email address, which is also used to send out electronic newsletters and information. This meant any mistakes in the letter from our part could have potentially damaged the reputation of SACC-DC. Due to our respect and appreciation towards the organization, we wanted the introductory letter to sound as professional as possible, so we could avoid the risk of presenting harm to the organization.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 128) state that it is the researchers' responsibility to cautiously evaluate the risk of harm to research participants. Additionally, the authors assert that researchers should do all in their power to minimize the risk of harm. Not only should physical or emotional harm to participants be avoided as much as possible, the issue of harm to participants also raises the question of confidentiality and anonymity of respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 129). To the greatest extent, we have aimed to not cause any harm to those who participated in the interviews or those who answered the questionnaire. During the interviews, this was done by trying to maintain a positive and pleasant environment, where the interviewee felt comfortable and relaxed. As mentioned above, we provided hard copies of the interview guide to those participants who asked for it in order to show them that we maintained a professional attitude. As for the quantitative part of our study, we emphasized the fact that all responses were anonymous so that the respondents felt that they could answer in honest ways.

According to Diener and Crandal (1978, p. 34) it is crucial to deliver the correct information about the research purpose so that the participant can decide for himself or herself whether or not he or she wishes to be a part of the study. This applies to both the interviews and the questionnaire, and we have carefully studied our research question and have tried to communicate it in a way that is understandable and logical. Saunders et al. (2012, p. 222) explain that the introductory letter, which asks for access should include a short summary of the research purpose, and how participation adds value to the study. During the interviews, we explained the concepts to the interviewees if they did not understand them, but avoided doing this if the interviewees seemed to understand the concept, as we did not want to provide leading questions that could alter their spontaneous answer. In order to show our appreciation, we sent personal thank you emails to all eight

board members that were included in our interviews, upon leaving Washington, D.C.

Potential respondents should not be pressured into participate in a research project, and when asking people to take part in a project their privacy should always be respected (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 237). As a researcher, it is important not to "confront" people or make them uncomfortable in order to get their acceptance to take part of a project (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 237), and this is something that we took into consideration when asking our respondents to take part in our project. According to Saunders (2012, p. 241), it is also important to consider participants' privacy during the data collection, and make sure that respondents do not feel pressured to answer questions that they feel is too private to share. Participants should always have the right to withdraw or not answer questions that they feel uncomfortable with (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 241), and the respondents in our study could, at any time that they wanted, withdraw or not answer the question that we asked. We have made sure throughout the qualitative part of our study to code the material so that participants could not be identified by anyone else, and that we will not reveal who said what in our interviews. Another important aspect of respecting respondents' privacy is to inform them about the confidentiality of recordings during interviews and to receive their permission to do it (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 136), and we made sure to inform our respondents of this in the beginning of each interview. As for our quantitative survey, we wrote already in our first information email that anyone who participated in this study would be anonymous, in order for participants to feel that their privacy was protected. Furthermore, we chose the option for our respondents to be untracked by the survey software, so that it would not be possible for us to identify who had answered what in the questionnaires. By doing so, we feel that we considered the respondents' right to privacy in the best way possible.

Deception means that a researcher is actually researching something other than what he or she has told the participants, and this might cause harm to participants (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 238). The principle of always telling respondents why they take part of a study is referred to as 'the information principle' (Patel & Davidson, 2011, p. 63), and for our interviews we were always open with the purpose of our study. The questions in from our interview guide and the follow-up questions that were asked are the ones that will be analyzed, and therefore we claim that no form of deception has been applied. For some research, deception could be motivated in case revealing the real purpose of the study might affect respondents' willingness to answer to certain questions or affect how they respond to certain things (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 137). In our case, we considered our themes to be non-sensitive matters and that our research would not gain anything by using deception, wherefore we told our respondents about the purpose of our study from the beginning. In online research, a form of deception can happen when the researcher is collecting data without letting the participants know (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 233), but as our respondents got our survey by email and they could choose whether or not to participate by opening the survey or not, we have not engaged in any deception.

Our desire was to write on commission for our degree project, as we felt it would be an appropriate way to be able to find interesting results that could generate practical implications for managers in nonprofit settings. We were fortunate that we could collaborate with SACC-DC, who allowed us to select research topic and purpose quite

freely. Because of this, there were no problems in combining our academic agenda with their requirements. Despite time differences, we were able to keep in touch with the organization and updated them frequently regarding the process of our writing. Maintaining an open dialogue with our supervisor and the executive director has helped us fulfilling our theoretical and practical objectives regarding this degree project. Overall, we have followed ethical guidelines and taken the organization's needs and wants into consideration at all times.

5. QUALITATIVE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will start with an outline of the qualitative empirical findings, which follows the structure of the interview guide. This part of the chapter serves as the basis for the thematic networks, on which the qualitative analysis is based on. Furthermore, we will discuss the thematic networks we identified in relation to previous research.

5.1 BRAND IDENTITY

When discussing what the organization SACC-DC stands for and what it represents, many of the respondents brought up promoting business as a key feature of what SACC-DC does. One respondent gave a more general explanation to what he thinks a chamber of commerce represents "*I think a chamber of commerce in the United States brings with it a certain brand expectation from the people outside*" (4). Other respondents discussed SACC-DC specifically: "*It's a way of promoting business between Sweden and DC*" (6) and "*it has to be promoting business in some way*" (6), and another respondent said that it represents "*Swedish companies getting together to work together on common interests*" (2). Some answers concerned how business can be promoted by various forms of exchange such as, "*interact with one another and exchange information*" (3), and building relationships was also brought up as an important matter. As one respondent explained, "*develop relationships with the US or Swedish businesses that have an interest with Sweden* (8)", where she thought that this was one of the key features of the organization. Another respondent stated, "*it is definitely business relations*" (7), further adding to the element of building relationships as important and a main activity for SACC-DC. "*A platform for networking and a place to be*" (1) was also used to describe what SACC-DC is, and the word networking was mentioned several times throughout the interviews.

Two respondents mentioned that SACC-DC is a non-threatening and safe environment for interaction. The respondents stated that SACC-DC creates "*an opportunity to interact in a non-threatening area*" (3) and "*a protected forum*" (4). When asked to develop this answer, the respondent explained that SACC-DC should be a place where you feel that you are among friends and can talk freely about things, even though you might be competitors otherwise. The word family was mentioned as an explanation to what feeling SACC-DC should provide.

When talking about board members' role in creating the brand identity of SACC-DC, many respondents pointed out that they have a responsibility in promoting and representing SACC-DC in their organizations, respectively. As one interviewee stated: "*An important part of the brand identity is how the board members communicate with the rest of the world*" (1), indicating that board members are an important channel in SACC-DC's communication. Moreover, one respondent said that board members should be representing SACC-DC at their primary place of work as well: "*Board members have a big role in their own organizations trying to promote the chamber of commerce, but especially during the various meetings and events circulating and meeting members who have joined or potential members and just representing the chamber well*" (3). Even though the respondents seemed to agree on this, one respondent claimed that he thought board members could do more in order to spread the word about SACC-DC. There might be different levels of how much board members talk about SACC-DC in their primary work, as one respondent explained:

"*I guess some are talking more than others, some are more proclaiming and push more than others. I know some are talking about SACC-DC in everything they do*" (7). Although the board members seemed to agree on that they all had a responsibility to promote SACC-DC in their own organizations as well, many expressed that they do not have any explicit strategy for the brand identity. Comments like "*we probably haven't* [worked on the brand identity] *so much in the past*" (2), "*trying to figure out why we're so successful*" (3) and "*the mission and the objective of the chamber is a little fuzzy*" (4) were all mentioned when discussing the brand identity of the organization. It seems the brand identity has not been a topic for discussion before, but that it is being raised for discussion: "*that's actually a question we're wrestling with*" (6).

The quality of the events that SACC-DC puts on was discussed by two respondents as an important feature of the brand identity: "*We realize that it's gonna* [sic] *have an impact on our brand if we do an event that is not successful. So we really try to make sure that they are valuable for our members and other people who are participating. I think that is the most important tool for us*" (1). Another answer concerning the events was "*it's a very strong brand and people I think recognize when SACC-DC is putting on events*" (3). Moreover, one respondent claimed that "*if it's going to be a SACC-DC event it's gonna* [sic] *be as first-class as we can make it*" (3), further discussing that SACC-DC holds very well attended events despite its few resources.

5.2 DESIRED BRAND IDENTITY

When asked how they believe SACC-DC should be represented, as opposed to how they perceive the brand identity, half of the respondents brought up the fact that there are many groups of members whose expectations need to be taken into account. For instance, one interviewee stated, "*as long as we're mindful of the different interest groups that we have, I think it's possible to target at least something for everybody, in a way that has a cohesiveness that relates to the overall affiliation with SACC*" (8). This respondent also claimed that the board has to make sure that the goals of SACC-DC are related to the strategy that there is communication towards all types of members. Similarly, another respondent explained: "*the value proposition is different from different members. And I think SACC can do that. I don't know that we have to change, I mean, we don't have to be narrowly targeted, and it would be stupid to be narrowly targeted because then we would be cutting out* [members]" (2). The board members seem to be in agreement that all needs should be fulfilled and that the SACC-DC should be viewed as an organization that addresses all members regardless of the category type they belong to. Another respondent explained that the events should be a mix of business and pleasure: "*I think it is good that you mix social and business and mix those events because I don't have time to just go out and drink, you want to get to know [people] and at the same time get somewhere, so you have an event where you meet friends, meet new and interesting colleagues. So I think it's great to have business events, it's exciting to find those events that are interesting for members. As broad as possible*" (7). One respondent said, "*we try very hard to meet all of those expectations*" (3), since the members at different levels have different expectations. However, the same respondent explained: "*obviously if we have to make a decision it's going to be towards the corporate members that are paying the most money. Young professionals we love to have their activities, we love to have them part of it, but many of them will move away just because of the way their life paths are going. So, if we had to*

make a decision where we're going to focus, it will be on activities that benefit the corporate members, because they're paying the most money and they have the least amount of time which to get the value out of the chamber" (3).

As for the future outlook for SACC-DC's desired brand, many respondents asserted that not only the brand, but also the entire organization is where it should be. For example, one respondent thought that SACC-DC is standing *"pretty much where* [it] *should be… it doesn't make a lot of sense to mess with* [the brand]*"* (6). Another respondent provided a similar answer to this, and said that where SACC-DC is now is not a disadvantageous position. He thinks that *"the connections, the value that the Embassy* [of Sweden] *sees, the* [U.S.] *government sees … is pretty high, so it wouldn't be a bad thing to be just where we are, but there's room for improvement"* (3). Likewise, one respondent explained that: *"I think we just have stumbled into a model that seems to work and that people like and you know its self-sustaining and all the different groups seem to appreciate, and* [his/her] *sound advice is don't change things radically cause its not broken, tweak around the edges but don't mess up what we have, and I think that's valid"* (4). One respondent answered the question about the desired identity slightly different than the three previous ones. He stated that (1), *"my personal opinion is that we should be stronger where we are strong, and that's on the network side, and utilize the Embassy* [of Sweden] *and House of Sweden as a platform."* This statement implies that SACC-DC should build on its current strengths and success by taking advantage of the relationships it possesses today.

When asked if the board members believed that the members perceived the brand in the same way as themselves, there were mixed answers. One respondent (1) mentioned, *"I believe that most members confuse all these brands found within the Embassy, House of Sweden, SACC-USA, SACC-DC and maybe Business Sweden too. If you are American and looking at it from the outside you might say 'oh, that it is the Swedish embassy or House of Sweden', and it does not much matter who is providing the service or who the contact-creator is, and so on. I think us* [who] *are on the board think everyone knows what we stand for, and so on, but I think those that looking outside confuse all these concepts. I do not think it's necessarily bad."* Another statement was made by another respondent (8), who said that in a strategy meeting with the board members, *"there were all sorts of opinions what it is to be in SACC-DC"*, implying that there is not a clear coherence of what the brand identity is. One respondent (8) did not believe the perceptions of the brand identity were similar between board members and members, because the former group was more involved than the latter. This respondent believed that those members that are very engaged have a similar perception of the brand as the board members. Another respondent had similar opinions, and mentioned that in general, the members and board members perceive the brand in the same way, *"but the differences are that the members don't have the hands-on appreciation for whatever particular problems, or difficulties, or financial issues that may be present in the Chamber at any given time"* (3). What the respondent highlights is that any differences in perceptions are based on the access of information, and once the information gap is filled, the perceptions become more alike. Likewise, one respondent stated that *"I think the board members are the ones who are most engaged in sort of what's going on"* (4), while another thought that *"it is not entirely clear to all the members what SACC is. It may be blurry"* (2).

5.3 REPUTATION

All respondents claimed that they perceive the reputation of SACC-DC to be very good: "*we seem to be well-regarded in this town, and being one of the broader, one of the more visible and effective chambers that are tied to a country*" (2). Another answer was "*my understanding is we have other national chambers that are up in DC etc. that come to us saying 'You guys do awesome stuff, we would like to learn more from you guys', we sort of go: 'We do? We are?' So my sense is that SACC-DC does have a reputation in amongst like organizations as having figured some stuff out*" (4), indicating that other chambers of commerce had asked SACC-DC for advice and tried to learn from them. Professionalism was mentioned as one of the most important parts of the reputation, as one respondent explained: "*the reputation of SACC that we would really jealously guard is the one of quality and professionalism*" (3). An interesting observation was that three respondents added that they thought that the reputation was good because they had not heard anything to the contrary (2, 3, 6). Though, one respondent claimed to have heard things that are not as good, but even so, she thought that the overall reputation was good. What was brought up in many interviews was that SACC-DC managed to have a very good reputation even with very few resources: "*I think that the reputation is one of very powerful members and a relatively low resourced organization that achieves an awful lot in a very high quality way*" (3). Although all respondents claimed that they perceive the reputation as being very good, three respondents explained that there has not been any conscious effort of managing it. The statements such as "*we maintain the reputation probably by accident*" (4) and "*I think it just kind of happens*" (2), indicate that the reputation has not been subject to discussion. One could argue that the reason is that board members perceive the reputation as being very good. As one respondent explained: "*I mean I have never heard anything negative. Um, it's one of those, sometimes you try to drill too hard or press too hard or too deeply about how people think about something. It kind of turns them off and they don't wanna* [sic] *answer. I think the nature, human nature is that if they have, if people have a problem with something they'll let you know, but if they're kind of ok and things are what they expect, they don't even bother answering questionnaires*" (6). One respondent explained that even though she perceives the reputation as being good, one should never settle. The reputation is always subject to improvement: "*even though the reputation is good, I'm sure it could be even better*" (7). Another respondent discussed the same thing, and explained that the reputation can always be better, in any organization.

Other stakeholders' view of the reputation was also brought up during the interviews. Three respondents mentioned SACC-DC's reputation with the Swedish government, and one respondent discussed that relationship as a metric of how successful the chamber is: "*It's whether the embassy of Sweden - which has many choices - looks at the chamber as being a worthy or desirable pathway in which to interact*" (3). Another respondent claimed, "*it* [the reputation] *is certainly very well regarded by the government of Sweden, by this ambassador, by previous ambassadors, and the whole Embassy* [of Sweden]" (2). The relationship with the Embassy of Sweden was brought up several times when discussing the reputation, indicating that this was an important factor for all board members, and that it might serve as a quality measure. The relationship between Sweden and America was also mentioned as something adding to the positive reputation of SACC-DC: "*I think that Sweden in general has a very positive image and reputation among the American people*"

(6). Two respondents talked about the ethnic heritage as a factor to why SACC-DC is so successful. To add, one respondent claimed that Sweden benefits by having successful American people spreading its reputation, making it a win-win situation for both countries.

Some board members discussed whether people really know what SACC-DC does or offers: "*I would think that they're kind of clued into what we're doing. We pretty much do what people want us to do*" (6). This was somewhat contradicting to another response "*if I join something then I might have certain expectations, and sometimes I get more, sometimes I get less. So, I think that it might depend on what you make out of it*" (7), which could indicate that sometimes people's previous knowledge might not match what they get out of their membership and that the final outcome or benefit depends on their own efforts.

When asking what effect members' word-of-mouth have on SACC-DC's reputation, respondents had different answers depending on how they perceived the purpose and outcomes of word-of-mouth. Three of the respondents talked about word-of-mouth as something that the board members can use as a communication tool to attract new members. One reflection was "*I think it's the most important way we can attract new members*" (1), and another respondent (2) stated that he thinks word-of-mouth is an important tool to spread the word about the organization. The remaining respondents had a different view on word-of-mouth, and perceived it as something that is going on between members. One reflection was that word-of-mouth among members will have an effect on the reputation, either positive or negative. "*I think it* [word-of-mouth] *affects a lot, sure. There is nothing worse than bad word-of-mouth. ... If you have a good event it will have a great effect* [on the reputation] *and if you do something bad, yeah that will make it really bad*" (7). Another response was that at the times there had been negative word-of-mouth and the president or chairman had a great responsibility in talking to members who were not satisfied, in order to minimize the damage from negative word-of-mouth.

5.4 PERCEIVED QUALITY

We asked the respondents to identify what services they think that SACC-DC provides to its members. Networking was one of the most frequently mentioned answers: "*Certainly networking types of opportunities*" (8), "*we sell access, we essentially sell memberships to an organization. We sell an opportunity to network with people*" (3). All respondents talked about the networking as one of the key aspects of why people join SACC-DC, either because they want to network with other members, the embassy of Sweden or U.S. government officials. One respondent discussed that SACC-DC can provide valuable information, something that, according to the respondent, is very important in Washington, D.C: "*Our services really are that we provide very well vetted information, confirmed information, validated information*" (3). Another person mentioned that the network is a resource, and that business can be improved by knowing the people in the network of SACC-DC. Respondents seemed to agree that the networking is mainly done through the events, "*what brings people together to network are our events*" (4), and another respondent explained that "*we provide events for people who have common interest, to get them to come to these events, so hopefully, they can network*" (3). The social aspect of the events was also brought up as something important for the members. "*Networking, business networking clearly, business and social networking*" (4), which might indicate that people does not only attend events for business purposes.

When discussing how the respondents perceive the quality of the services that SACC-DC provides, all of them had a coherent answer that they perceive the quality as very high. One respondent said that the quality was superior, but that more could be done: *"whether it's professional panels and certain 100% business focus stuff, or the golf event or whatever, I think are very well-run and kind of in the Swedish way, where all is put together properly and with the right focus on that people are supposed to have a good time. So I think it's pretty good. Could we to better? Always"* (4). The respondents seemed a bit more uncertain regarding how members perceive the quality. Many answers included statements such as "I think", "I would believe", might indicating that this needs to be examined further. Although, the overall message was that respondents think that the members perceive the quality as high. *"I think they perceive it as positive. That's my perception"* (6), *"probably good, I have never heard anything to the negative"* (2). The respondents pointed out that quality can only be perceived by the ones who actually engage in the events: *"I think the members perceive it very high, the ones that participate perceive the quality"* (4), *"I think its as good as you get, I mean in terms of what you put into it you're gonna* [sic] *get out of it"* (8). This was supported by another statement: *"I believe that you perceive the quality as very high at those activities you participate in"* (4). Another respondent discussed that even though members attend the events, it is important that they take initiative and network, otherwise one might feel like the event was a waste of time. One respondent also emphasized this notion when saying, *"I'm sure it's very individual* [how you perceive the quality]*"* (7). The same respondent also discussed that the quality is good considering the price you pay. *"It's ok* [the quality]*, I mean, you don't pay anything for it. If you want a big consultancy job you pay for it. Here, you can get help in an easy way, contacts and so on. And we'd love to put you in touch with others, but that's it."* (7).

5.5 CO-CREATION

We asked the interviewees about their view on co-creation and how it functioned within SACC-DC. When asked about how SACC-DC provides value to members through co-creation, one respondent answered *"it has a lot to do with that we need to have a good dialogue with the members, we must understand what it is they want out of it all"* (1). Further, the same respondent said *"we have a strategy now where we are considering what the nature is of the services that we deliver to the members. And that's something I think all member organizations must consider regularly ... think about that one really delivers value to members"* (1). Another answer we received about delivering value was that the networking opportunity itself was of value. Similarly, one respondent (3) said, *"we have a very broad network and understanding of backgrounds and potential introductions that you otherwise couldn't get ... what you're really getting is the access to a network."* Both respondents talk about the importance of the networking opportunity that is present at SACC-DC's events and explain that as the value provided to the members. One respondent (4) said *"a lot of what happens inside SACC-DC is also the Swedish community getting together and connecting",* which indicates that the social aspect is also part of the value that SACC-DC delivers to the members. This respondent also explained *"you get enough people in a room who are likeminded, and without actually agreeing to anything, they all sort of head off to the same direction. And the other big companies want SACC* [-DC] *to be successful, they want it to appear a certain way so that they behave that way, I behave that way, we all behave that way and the next thing you know that's what it is."* A similar

answer was provided by another member (8), who responded, *"if people feel that board members are engaged and are willing to dialogue with members that are new, and that can spread the word to other people, then I think that those are important opportunities for engaging new members in spreading the word in a way that is more grassroots and formal."*

When asked about the value that SACC-DC provides to the board members themselves, one respondent (1) said that *"I definitely think it is a good network that I can use in my usual work. Especially since both major U.S. companies are part of this network, and small U.S. companies in the industry where I work. I see this as very valuable."* Another respondent (8) explained *"when you have the direct interface with the other members, it's easier to get involved and to have a meaningful contribution and feel like you're getting something out of it."*

As for the value that members provide to SACC-DC, one respondent (1) said, *"you cannot have a network without members. So just that they're coming and participating in the activities that we have makes them contribute in different ways. I think that people feel that they have the opportunity to talk with the office here."* Many respondents seemed to be in agreement with the fact that the members provide value by participating in events and networking actively. Another respondent (8) stated that *"the more diverse the membership is, the more opportunities there are for everyone, so I think that the quality and the types of memberships is critical to have the opportunities you haven't thought about before in terms of different businesses that might connect with each other."*

5.6 THEMATIC NETWORK ANALYSIS

The findings presented in the chapter above allowed us to create thematic networks to be able to analyze the qualitative data. Based on our empirical findings, we derived four global themes: brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. A complete overview of the thematic networks can be found in appendix 3.

The global theme of brand identity concerns what SACC-DC is and the strengths it possesses. There was clearly a coherent view from the respondents that SACC-DC's main strength is their network. The networking was mentioned many times throughout all the interviews, and there was no doubt that this is what the board perceives as the main competitive advantage. According to Kapferer (1997, p. 99), the brand identity should be made up of an organization's unique features, and he conceptualizes the brand's strengths by the brand's physique in the identity prism. From these theories, one could conclude that SACC-DC's brand identity is based on their network, as this is their core competence. One respondent stressed the importance of validated information in such a city as Washington, D.C., and the network of the organization seems to provide such information that might be hard to find otherwise. As another respondent expressed it, Washington, D.C., is all about how many contacts you have, and SACC-DC seems to be a great place for people who want to expand their network. Though, as their strength lies with the people of the network and their competences, it is also a vulnerable competitive advantage. It is of great importance that SACC-DC continues to recruit highly achieved people and continue to keep members satisfied, in order to maintain the advantage of having a network that other people want to take part of. We believe that one of the most crucial features is to have an

updated view of how members perceive the organization, so that members who are not satisfied could be detected at an early stage. Even though dissatisfied members have not been a problem up to this date, we believe it is preferable for SACC-DC to be pro-active, so that the organization would not have to find itself in that position at all. The fact that SACC-DC's most important strength lies with the people within it can be connected to the theory by Yong (2013, p. 219), who stated that one of the most important features of service-dominant logic is that the source of competitive advantage is operant resources, i.e. people and the knowledge that they have. For SACC-DC this is truly the case, as they compete on the source of their network, which is composed of people and their knowledge.

Many respondents mentioned the social aspect of the organization, that social and fun activities are at the heart of SACC-DC, and it is through the events and socializing that business can be made and information exchanged. Though, some respondents pointed out that SACC-DC is not a social organization, and that their focus should go more towards business events. This finding might implicate that desired identity for SACC-DC among board members is slightly different. It seems SACC-DC is somewhat subject to the notion of gaps between the identity and desired identity that has been discussed by Davies et al. (2003, p. 61). We conclude that there might be room for greater alignment regarding how the board members view the desired identity. Discussions regarding the social aspect might be beneficial in order to create a coherent view of brand identity and desired identity throughout the whole board. As stated by Abratt and Kleyn (2012, p. 1059), brand identity should be established by management of an organization, and in SACC-DC they could possibly get an even stronger identity if these questions were lifted for discussion.

Board members seemed to agree that SACC-DC needs to continue its nonprofit business model, as they all devote personal time to the organization and it should stand for a fun, relaxed environment that is not too much like traditional work. The nonprofit organizational form also seems to constitute a strong part of the brand identity. Board members explained that they find personal satisfaction from contributing to SACC-DC, and that this satisfaction could be lowered if SACC-DC would be too business-focused. Therefore, we thought it was interesting when one respondent explained that he would like to see SACC-DC moving more towards being business oriented, contradicting most other responses we received. Another respondent also explained that SACC-DC had tried to offer consulting services in the past but this attempt had not been successful due to lack of resources. As stated by Balmer and Greyser (2002, p. 75), desired identity should be upheld by the organization's capabilities but that is not always the case. For SACC-DC, it seems that consulting services are not possible to conduct due to inappropriate resources. Because of these somewhat contradictory future visions of SACC-DC we believe it would be beneficial to discuss the strategic vision and mission in the board, hopefully aligning the various views and move towards a unified brand identity and desired identity for the whole group of board members. As stated by Ghodeswar (2008, p. 5), a strong and coherent brand identity can generate loyal customers as the brand is differentiated from competitors. Therefore, it would not only benefit the board internally if they created an aligned future vision, but also externally regarding how members perceive the organization. The importance of high quality was mentioned during many interviews, both for the events and of the organization itself. As explained by Spreng and Mackoy (1996, p. 202), perceived service quality depends on what the consumer expect the organization to provide. We

believe that this was supported by what the respondents discussed, as they all explained that there are various expectations depending on what membership category you belong to. In order to inform present or prospect members of what they can expect from their membership we believe it is important to be clear in communication efforts and make sure that management have the same view on the organization's offerings.

Many respondents discussed that SACC-DC has a great advantage because of its location in Washington, D.C., and we believe this could be subject to further exploitation in SACC-DC's marketing activities. As one respondent expressed it, SACC-DC has the possibility to connect members with people that they would not have access to otherwise, such as member of congress of Swedish government officials. This is one of the unique features of SACC-DC, but it might be something that prospect members do not know about. "*SACC-DC should leverage on the political and regulatory connection*" was one comment during one interview, and as explained by Ghodeswar (2005, p. 5) the brand identity should represent the unique features of the organization that implies a promise to its customers. The locational advantage of SACC-DC is definitely something that is unique, and perhaps it could be brought up even more in communication efforts that they undertake.

The overall impression that we found regarding brand identity for SACC-DC was that board members all agreed that the network is the strongest competitive advantage of the organization, but differences exist regarding how to manage this network and how it should develop in the future. We believe that SACC-DC could greatly benefit from a stronger, more coherent vision, and that this needs to be aligned internally by the board in order to communicate a united picture to the members.

Brand delivery is the second global theme that was identified from the empirical findings. This theme deals with the factors that we have detected that are related to the relationship between the board members and the members, and how the former create a satisfying environment for the latter. It also concerns how board members should align members' expectations with what SACC-DC can provide, and to find features that can satisfy all types of members regardless of category.

As can be seen in the theoretical chapter, many researchers agree that the internal and external perceptions of managers and customers need alignment in order for organizations to be successful (Roy & Banerjee, 2007, p. 142; Davies et al., 2003, p. 61; Davies & Chun, 2002, p. 146). From our interviews with the board members of SACC-DC, they seem aware that external perceptions might differ from internal ones, but no one expressed that this was a problem. Some said that differences are a result of informational gaps, and some stated that there might be differences. We believe that it would be beneficial if the board could pinpoint just what the differences are, as this could be a first step in order to align internal and external perceptions. As stated by Davies and Chun (2002, p. 146), the first step to align various views is to measure and examine them. Furthermore, there were different opinions regarding whether board members and members really know what SACC-DC does. Some thought that members are fully aware of what SACC-DC stands for and what you get from a membership with it, while some expressed that members might not be fully informed of what the organization does. We consider these disparities in awareness somewhat problematic, mostly because it seems that it has not been discussed within the

board what it means to be in SACC-DC. Though, board members also explained that they think that SACC-DC should be as broad as possible, and that they have the possibility to target everyone. We believe that it is advantageous and preferable, but the first step in this process would be to charter what the members of different categories want. One respondent expressed that he thought SACC-DC should not be narrowly targeted, in terms of reaching out to new members. He stated that it would not be advantageous to target narrowly, as this would imply disregarding the wide array of expectations from the various members today. We agree with this respondent, as the various member categories can benefit from a broader mix of members. We believe that one of the main purposes of networking would be to meet people you would not meet otherwise, wherefore it is important that SACC-DC can offer access to people from other industries, ages and occupations than the ones you usually meet, hence, the need for many membership categories. Though, the important implication from this could be to make sure that members feel that there is a good mix of people to meet. We believe it would be beneficial to keep track on how many members from each category join or quit, and allocate resources to find new members to the category that is the smallest at any given time.

The level of satisfaction can greatly affect an organization's profitability, since satisfied customers generate repeated income (Zeithaml et al., 1996, pp. 32-33). Even though SACC-DC is a nonprofit organization with non-financial goals, it is important to generate a steady flow of income. As one respondent explained, SACC-DC is like any other organization in the aspect that it has employees with salaries and bills to pay, and there are costs for events that need to be covered. We believe that the level of satisfaction of members will be affected by how well marketing is targeted towards the various categories of members, because they have different needs and wants. The second importance of satisfaction that was discussed in previous research was that it is much cheaper to have customers or members reoccurring than finding new ones, as the latter is much more expensive (Zeithaml et al., 1996, pp. 32-33). For SACC-DC, it is even more important to not have to devote too many resources to find new members, as they have limited amount of financial resources. In many of the interviews, respondents discussed that SACC-DC has a strong membership base, and that members tend to stay once they are members. One respondent said that a strong metric for knowing how the organization is doing is whether members are staying and continuing their membership each year. From the interviews, we could interpret that the fact that members overall seemed to be continuing their membership as well-known. However, we also got the impression that not many respondents knew why members who have left, did so. SACC-DC could probably benefit from examining more in depth the members who would not like to continue their membership, and understand the underlying reasons to why they do not want to continue as members. The third factor to why it is desirable to have satisfied members is that satisfied customers can generate positive word-of-mouth that can attract new customers (Zeithaml et al., 1996, pp. 32-33). Many board members expressed that this is an important tool, probably since it is much cheaper than traditional marketing campaigns, and as suggested by Walsh et al. (2009, p. 189), has a greater effect as well. Something that can be worth considering is pushing for even stronger word-of-mouth from members, for example by rewarding members who in turn recruit new, prospect members.

Ind et al. (2013, p. 5) have suggested that co-creation takes place in social activities, such as

events, and consumers participate in co-creation as a positive result of brand communities (Schau et al., 2009, p. 41). We believe that SACC-DC, in many ways, resembles a brand community, in which board members and members interact and approach each other, and together create value due to dialogue and information. We believe that the co-creation in the brand community of SACC-DC can be connected to what many respondents brought up in the interviews: that SACC-DC should be a safe and friendly environment to interact in. As suggested by Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, p. 427), brands with a strong sense of community typically have greater value to managers than the ones with weak community. We believe that SACC-DC could enhance their sense of brand community and, in turn, co-creation and value if members feel that it is a safe forum where they feel that they are among friends. If members feel like they can interact in a safe setting, SACC-DC could enjoy the benefits of having a strong brand community discussed by Felix (2012, p. 255): a strong and distinctive positioning with consumers who relate to the brand. This strong sense of being a part of the brand community would hopefully have a positive impact on how members perceive SACC-DC and hopefully contribute to their already low turnover in membership. We believe that other benefits associated with having a strong sense of community are increased loyalty, a relaxed environment for companies and individuals to meet, increased customer and job satisfaction, for members and employees respectively.

The third global theme we identified was labeled as networking value. This theme concerns the various ways in which networking in SACC-DC provides value to both board members and members. When a customer assesses that a product or service will deliver value, they tend to adopt a continuing relationship to a brand (Dwivedi, 2014, p. 42). We discovered that board members seemed to be in strong agreement that the networking that takes place in SACC-DC is the main reason why people and companies join. They explained that the networking consists of several features that are connected to business, such as business opportunities and creating new relationships. Another interesting feature that we learned that is connected to the networking is that SACC-DC could be seen as a validated information channel. We noted several factors mentioned by the board members that could be interpreted as benefits of being associated with SACC-DC. Namely, the board members stressed the way in which corporate members, which are normally large businesses based in Washington D.C., use the SACC-DC brand as a marketing tool for themselves. When customers create value, they are engaged in various activities where they attempt to accomplish a specific goal (Payne et al., 2008, p. 86). Similarly, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 7) maintain that value is the outcome of an inherent negotiation between the consumers and organization. The mix of powerful companies and individuals that attend the meetings give members possibilities to promote their own ventures, thus thriving on the value of brand of SACC-DC.

As co-creation suggests, consumers, managers and employees of an organization can engage in the development and creation of brands, products or services together (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5), with the intention of jointly creating mutual value (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b, p. 8). Several board members pointed out that business opportunities arise at SACC-DC's events, where members of all categories have the chance to promote themselves and their eventual companies. This can be very much related to the existing literature about co-creation of value, although it might be most relevant for the corporate members that represent large companies. Payne et al. (2009, p. 383) claim that co-creation occurs within

encounters where the involved organizations and customers cooperate and conjointly co-create experiences. One respondent claimed that one of the main tasks SACC-DC has is to help members network with each other, keeping an eye on which members could have mutual interests and bring these together. We interpret this to be a concrete example of how SACC-DC creates value. According to the 6th foundational premise of Vargo and Lusch (2008, p. 7), the customer is always a co-creator of value, indicating that co-creation is innately present in SACC-DC. One could say that it is a chain of events, where SACC-DC is the initiator of co-creation by bringing common interests together, and then the role of value co-creator is passed on to the members who, in their networking, exchange information and business leads. The co-created value is then returned to SACC-DC in the shape of satisfaction and a positive spread of the reputation, assuming the networking turns out advantageous for all parties involved. As mentioned before, the co-creation of value involves the customers attempting to accomplish a specific purpose (Payne et al., 2008, p. 86). The members at SACC-DC either have similar business or social interests, whereby they are involved in the organization to fulfill their interests.

One important aspect that was detected within networking value is the use of SACC-DC as a marketing channel by the corporations that are members. For instance, one respondent mentioned that being part of SACC-DC is important for Swedish companies based in Washington D.C. to show that they are good corporate citizens. Another respondent said that SACC-DC is commonly used in brand promotions for the members' own companies. These responses are interesting, because they are insinuating that corporate members may be seeing SACC-DC as a way to show that they support Swedish-American business relationships, creating a good name for themselves. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004b, p. 7) explain that value is the result of an inherent negotiation between the consumers and organization. We interpret the use of SACC-DC as a brand promoter to be part of the value that is innately and mutually created.

As SACC-DC is a network organization where the value for members is to meet each other and to network, we think that it is of great importance that the members have a good perception of the reputation, as they themselves, are the source of value for other members. If the members do not have a positive perception of the reputation of the organization, they might not prolong their membership, which would then induce a lower value for other members of the organization. Therefore, we consider the customers to be an even more important stakeholder for SACC-DC than what it is in traditional companies. Walsh et al. (2009, p. 189) maintain that customers are prone to have a great influence on the reputation because of word-of-mouth.

Based on what was discussed above, we interpret that SACC-DC must follow up on how well it serves as a marketing platform for corporate members. The value that is co-created by SACC-DC and the members of all categories is the reputation. We can assume that marketing through SACC-DC is an inexpensive deal for the corporations that are members, and thus, we interpret that value is achieved at a low price. As Zeithaml (1988, p. 14) stated, consumers' perceived value is the general evaluation they make of the utility of a good or service. The evaluation is based on the perception of what the consumers believe that they obtain and deliver, making it like an equation of the value that is achieved minus the cost of it. In summary, we interpret that the value for the customers is the brand

promotion at a low cost, while the value for SACC-DC is the reputation and positive word-of-mouth. Depending on what an organization wants to manage in its reputation, the right stakeholder group has to be defined and approached, to make the correct decisions regarding how the organization wants to be perceived (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, pp. 1058-1059). This view can be connected to what one board member mentioned: *"everybody has to be responsible for their decisions, and if they're* [corporate members] *going to be affiliated with SACC-DC, they've got to have the confidence that their time and the money they've committed is going to something that is perceived to be of high value"* (3). This respondent later said *"if we had to make a decision where we're going to focus, it will be on activities that benefit the corporate members, because they're paying the most money and they have the least amount of time which to get the value out of the Chamber"* (3). We interpret these statements to be aligned with Abratt and Kleyn's (2010) assertion on managing reputation. SACC-DC seems to have identified their key stakeholder group, based on the fact that this group has the most power. As mentioned above where we discussed the theme of brand delivery, many respondents brought up the importance of meeting several expectations. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a misalignment between perceptions among board members of whether or not one membership category is more important than the others.

The fourth, and last, global theme we derived was mutual responsibility. The key elements in this theme are the board members' role in the maintenance of the brand and reputation, and the members' participation. Many respondents described SACC-DC as a community, and as such, something that both board members and members are responsible of taking care of and nurturing. The well being of SACC-DC's brand depends on the involvement of the people within it, in the sense that board members have a responsibility to promote SACC-DC, and members need to be involved in the various events and engage in the networking. If neither board members nor members contribute and feel responsible for how SACC-DC is doing, the organization could be affected negatively.

The board members' role in branding is an important aspect of understanding how the brand identity is maintained, and if it is through reputation and co-creating value. According to Musteen et al. (2009, p. 507), board attributes play a critical role that affect reputation, namely in terms of board size and structure, duration of outside directors and leadership composition. Our main discovery regarding the board members' role in branding was that they agreed that it was important that they did what they could to spread the word about SACC-DC in their own professional lives, but that they seem to do it unintentionally and inherently.

According to Davies and Miles (1998, cited in Davies et al., 2003, pp. 61-62), the desired identity is an important element of reputation. The desired identity is explained by Davies et al. (2003, p. 61) as how an organization would like its stakeholders to perceive the brand. We have argued earlier in this thesis that it is relevant to assess what the board members and employees wish the organization to be and analyze if this is possible with regards to the actual capabilities. This is because the desired identity should be built upon by organizational capabilities (Khan, 2009, p. 29). From our interviews, we see that there are sound organizational capabilities within the board of directors of SACC-DC. The board members possess important roles in their own companies, and have impressive

backgrounds in their respective industries and organizations. Our interpretation is that according to many board members, the fact that they are selected to be in the board based on their competences is important as it gives SACC-DC a more professional identity. This finding is in line with Van Riel and Balmer's (1997, p. 341) notion that an organization's identity and its distinct features originate from the employees, and the identity has to be strategically managed in order to build a favorable identity. We can therefore conclude that the board members' role in the brand identity building and maintenance is related to their own professional proficiencies and expertise, which is translated into the brand and thus the reputation of SACC-DC.

So far, we have discussed the board members' part of the mutual responsibility that board members and members of SACC-DC have that together allow the co-creation of value to take place. We have concluded, based on our qualitative data, that the members' responsibility is defined as participation in events. Regarding participation, it is expected that the members of all categories obtain more value by attending the various events, but also that they receive maximum value if they actively engage in networking and socialization. Many board members stated that the more the members put in to the events and activities, the more they get out of it. We interpret this finding to mean that the board members imply that the quality of the events and the value that the members receive are dependent on the members' level of commitment. This conclusion relates to Kelley's et al. (1990, p. 316; 322) statement that the members of SACC-DC, should be considered as 'organizational members' as they take part in the service delivery process, and an organization should try to make the customer aware of their participation in the service delivery, as this can lead to a greater customer satisfaction (Kelley et al., 1990, p. 322). As Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) mention, brand experiences involve special senses, opinions, perceptions, and behavioral reactions caused by brand-related incentives. We can conclude that those members who are active and put time and effort into the networking get an increased level of brand experience.

One of the respondents mentioned something we found to be important for co-creation of SACC-DC's reputation, *"you get enough people in a room who are likeminded and without actually agreeing to anything - they all head off in the same direction. And the other big companies want SACC-DC to be successful, they want it to appear a certain way, so that 'they behave that way, I behave that way, we all behave that way', and the next thing you know, that's what it is."* (4) We found this conclusion to be in alignment with the core of this theme: mutual responsibility. The respondent explains that it is the fact that members in SACC-DC are 'likeminded' and have similar interests that causes them to behave in a certain way that allows SACC-DC's brand to be what it is today.

Based on our four themes that were derived from the thematic networks, we argue that SACC-DC is subject to 'co-created reputation'. By this, we mean that the reputation is an outcome of the organization's interactions with its members, and that the reputation cannot be managed internally alone. It needs to be constructed by management and customers jointly, and that it will, through this, be even stronger than if it was created by internal efforts alone. We believe this is a unique feature of SACC-DC thanks to its nonprofit membership organizational structure, and that it can create an enhanced competitive advantage that can benefit both the organization and its members. Through our deductive

approach, we have developed a table of our qualitative findings that shows how co-created reputation can be seen in all our themes (Table 3). At the top of the table, the global themes that were developed through the thematic network analysis are shown. By connecting the theories of co-creation and reputation from previous research to each theme, we can conclude that the reputation is indeed co-created.

	Brand Identity	**Brand Delivery**	**Value**	**Mutual Responsibility**
Description of theme	The environment where individuals and companies network needs to be safe. Quality needs to be high despite limited financial means.	Any gap between internal and external perceptions should be reduced. A metric for this is membership turnover, which should be as low as possible.	The network is the value that a membership organization provides. By definition, the members constitute the network and the organization should aim to maintain successful members.	Both membership organizations and its members have a responsibility to enhance the reputation. They need to put effort into making it as good as possible.
Co-created reputation is present through...	… establishing the competitive advantage by knowing what the members want through interactions.	… the development of the satisfying environment and alignment of members expectations.	… the networking that is made among board members and members and the exchange of information.	… brand maintenance by board members and active participation by members.

TABLE 3. TABLE OF QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

6. QUANTITATIVE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the empirical findings we received from our quantitative study. We begin by presenting the demographics of the respondents, and then move on to Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics, and then the three regression analyses that we performed. All these tests allow us to analyze the data thoroughly, and to discuss our findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

6.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

The questionnaire that we designed included a number of questions about the respondents' backgrounds. These questions focused on their gender, age, membership category and other relevant background questions (appendix 4).
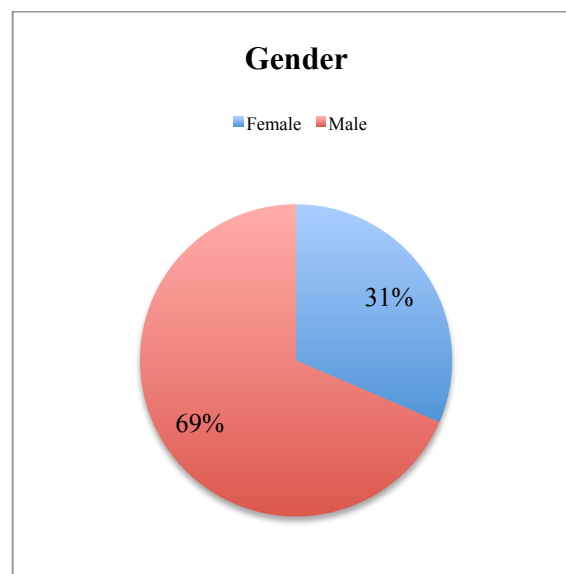
FIGURE 6. GENDER DISTRIBUTION

The first question regarding our respondents' gender is illustrated above in a pie chart. 69% of the respondents were males, while 31% of the respondents were females. This distribution is proportionate to the gender distribution of SACC-DC, where the members are composed of 74% males and 26% females (SACC-DC, 2014). Considering this variable, we can conclude that our sample is representative of the census.
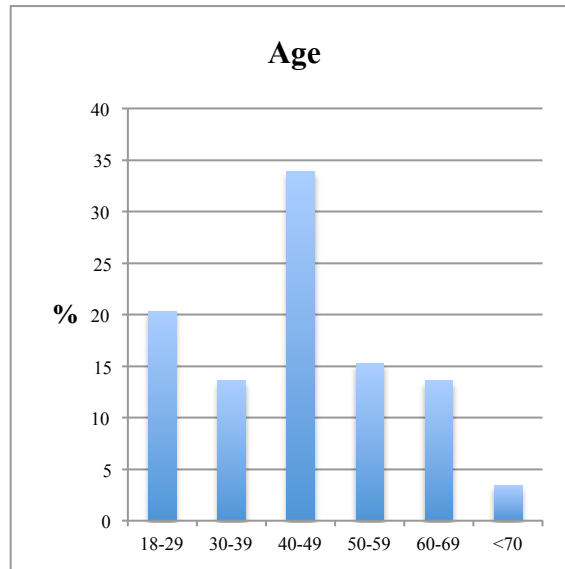
FIGURE 7. AGE DISTRIBUTION

We looked at the age distribution among the respondents to get a broader picture of the sample they represented. The age distribution is presented above in a bar graph. Figure 7 shows that the majority of the respondents were between ages 40 and 49. We assume that the reason why this age group is the largest is that the individuals that compose it are in the peak of their career, and might therefore see a higher benefit of being involved in the organization. By looking at figure 7, one can also see that there are more young members than older ones. This result can indicate that the number of members could increase over time, as it seems more and more young people join SACC-DC. We believe it could indicate that awareness among young people in Washington, D.C., is increasing for SACC-DC, it might be a trend that continues over the years.
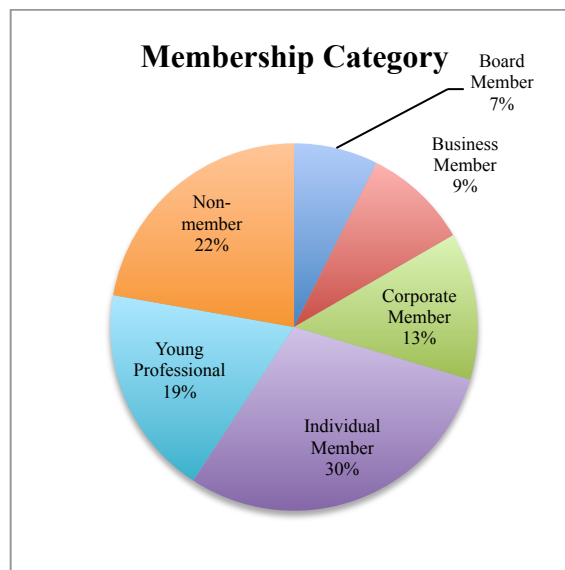
FIGURE 8. MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

The categories of membership possessed by the respondents are presented in figure 8. The individual members make up the majority of the respondents (30%), while board members

represented the lowest percentage in the pie chart (7%).

6.2 CRONBACH'S ALPHA

Cronbach's Alpha was tested to be able to assess the reliability of measures for each construct used in our quantitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 159). According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 439), constructs with an alpha above 0,8 are reliable to use when testing constructs. The results of the test can be seen in table 4, where all six constructs have values above 0,8. Therefore, we can conclude that our constructs are reliable for regression analyses.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Brand Image	0,82
Satisfation	0,88
Perceived Quality	0,97
Reputation	0,95
Brand Experience	0,93
Co-creation	0,91

TABLE 4. CRONBACH'S ALPHA

6.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Once the items used in our questionnaire were calculated into constructs, and the reliabilities were estimated, we retrieved the descriptive statistics of our key variables. Descriptive statistics are important, as they provide us with information about the distribution of the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation. The means and standard deviations are illustrated in table 5 below. We have used a 5-point Likert scale in our questionnaire. The construct with the highest mean was Brand Image, with a value of 3,96. Brand Experience obtained the lowest mean, at 3,26. As can be seen, all means have values close to an average point (3) of the 5-point Likert scale. The standard deviations indicate the spread around the means, and vary between 0,60 for Brand Experience and 0,87 for Satisfaction. Knowing the values of the standard deviation, we can determine that the replies on the questionnaire were rather close to each other, as the amounts of the standards deviations are quite low.

Based on the means, we can compare perceptions of respondents about brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, reputation, brand experience, and co-creation. For instance, the fact that Brand Image received the highest mean, we can conclude that the respondents have the most positive perception about this construct, and the least positive perception of the Brand Experience. Overall, we can conclude that respondents have positive perceptions about SACC-DC, as all mean values are above 3, which is the middle point in the scale. However, the constructs still showed means that are rather low, possibly indicating that there is room for improvement or clarification in the activities of SACC-DC.

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation
Brand Image	3,96	0,68
Satisfaction	3,64	0,87
Perceived Quality	3,71	0,85
Reputation	3,69	0,62
Brand Experience	3,26	0,60
Co-Creation	3,75	0,73

TABLE 5. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

As we detected that the means were quite similar we decided to take a closer look upon how the various membership categories answered. From our cross tabulation (Table 6) we could detect that the category 'board member' had the highest means in all constructs. All their answers (except from brand experience), had means above 4 on the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that they have positive perceptions of SACC-DC. Neither individual members nor non-members had any means above 3, possibly indicating that they are most neutral to the activities of SACC-DC. Corporate members seem to have a positive view on brand image, reputation and co-creation, possibly because they get the most value from their membership.

	Membership Category					
	Board Member	**Business Member**	**Corporate Member**	**Individual Member**	**Young Professional**	**Non-Member**
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Brand Image	4,63	4,05	4,42	3,89	4,08	3,55
Satisfaction	4,13	3,80	3,92	3,43	3,65	3,53
Perceived Quality	4,25	3,70	3,83	3,61	3,70	3,63
Reputation	4,38	3,72	4,07	3,56	3,75	3,43
Brand Experience	3,83	3,14	3,25	3,19	3,37	3,17
Co-creation	4,54	3,53	4,22	3,67	4,08	3,28

TABLE 6. CROSS-TABULATION TABLE

All the constructs were positively related to each other and statistically significant at a p < 0,01 significance level, which is depicted in table 7 below. The lowest correlation was between Co-creation and Perceived Quality (0,502), and the highest between Satisfaction and Perceived Quality (0,825). Based on this finding, it could be beneficial to improve Satisfaction or Perceived Quality because they were highly correlated. The Pearson correlation table can also be used to determine which factors have the weaker and the strongest relationships. The weakest relationship is between brand image and brand experience (0.575), but this can still be considered quite strong. The strongest relationship is between co-creation and reputation (0.776).

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Brand Image **(1)**	1					
Satisfaction **(2)**	0,639**	1				
Perceived Quality **(3)**	0,604**	0,825**	1			
Reputation **(4)**	0,799**	0,741**	0,744**	1		
Brand Experience **(5)**	0,575**	0,629**	0,580**	0,691**	1	
Co-creation **(6)**	0,637**	0,592**	0,502**	0,776**	0,676**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

TABLE 7. PEARSON CORRELATION

6.4 REGRESSION 1: REPUTATION AND ITS PREDICTORS

As part of our quantitative study, we performed three multiple regression analyses in order to measure the effects of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality and brand experience on reputation and co-creation, respectively. The 'enter' method was utilized when performing all regressions. In this section, we will present the first regression, where reputation was used as the dependent variable. Overall, the regression was significant ($F = 43,38$; $p < 0,05$). The table shows that the adjusted R-square of this regression analysis was 0,762, which indicates that the independent variables were responsible for 76,2% of the variance in reputation. The high value of the R-square suggests that this model is strong. The minimum criterion for the significance value was 0,05 for our study. Table 8 shows that three independent variables had significant positive effects on reputation; brand image ($\beta = 0,413$, $p < 0,05$), perceived quality ($\beta = 0,194$, $p < 0,05$), and brand experience ($\beta = 0,222$, $p < 0,05$). According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 523), low significance values suggest that the constructs are improbable to have occurred by chance alone. Further, the unstandardized coefficient, beta or β, lets us contrast the independent variables with the dependent variable, and the extent to which the dependent variable is influenced by the independent variables (Shiu et al., 2009, p. 584).

Coefficients[a]							
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	,361	,270		1,338	,187		
Brand Image	,413	,084	,453	4,919	,000	,531	1,883
Satisfaction	,069	,092	,097	,752	,456	,270	3,697
Perceived Quality	,194	,088	,265	2,192	,033	,306	3,264
Brand Experience	,222	,093	,216	2,385	,021	,549	1,821
a. Dependent Variable: Reputation							

TABLE 8. REGRESSION 1 - REPUTATION AND ITS PREDICTORS

6.5 REGRESSION 2: CO-CREATION AND ITS PREDICTORS

In our second regression, we used the same independent variables as in our first regression, but changed our dependent variable to co-creation. Our regression analysis showed that the model was significant (F = 15,703; p < 0,05), and the adjusted R-square showed that the model explains 52.6% of the variation in the dependent variable. Our model shows that brand image and brand experience had positive significant effects on co-creation. Table 9 shows that two independent variables had significant positive effects on co-creation; brand image (β = 0,356, p < 0,05), and brand experience (β = 0,509, p < 0,05). Both brand image and brand experience showed positive effects on co-creation, but as brand experience had a higher beta (β), it indicates that it affects co-creation more than brand image. The interpretation of β is that if the independent variable changes by one unit, the dependent variable changes by the level of the beta (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 463).

Coefficients[a]							
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	,397	,449		,885	,381		
Brand Image	,356	,140	,330	2,544	,014	,531	1,883
Satisfaction	,179	,153	,213	1,171	,247	,270	3,697
Perceived Quality	-,100	,147	-,116	-,676	,502	,306	3,264
Brand Experience	,509	,155	,419	3,285	,002	,549	1,821
a. Dependent Variable: Co-creation							

TABLE 9. REGRESSION 2 - CO-CREATION AND ITS PREDICTORS

6.6 REGRESSION 3: REPUTATION AND CO-CREATION

In the final regression analysis, we tested a model where co-creation was the independent variable and reputation was the dependent variable, to see if there was a significant effect between the two factors. Overall, we could see that this regression was significant (F = 78,58, p < 0,05). Further the adjusted R-square of 0,594 showed that co-creation is responsible for 59,4% of the variance in reputation. The findings from this regression analysis also shows that co-creation has a significant positive effect on reputation, where β = 0,657, p < 0,05. Table 10 shows the coefficients for this regression.

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1,228	,283		4,337	,000		
	Co-creation	,657	,074	,776	8,864	,000	1,000	1,000
a. Dependent Variable: Reputation								

TABLE 10. REGRESSION 3 - REPUTATION AND CO-CREATION

6.7 REVISED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The first two regression analyses presented above were tested in order to find if brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience had significant effects on reputation and co-creation, respectively. The third regression tested if co-creation had a positive significant effect of reputation. We created a conceptual model presenting the hypothesized effects, which is displayed at the end of the theoretical framework, that we can now revise and interpret these results in combination with the qualitative findings.

Respectively, brand image, perceived quality, and brand experience provided significance levels of $p < 0,001$, $p < 0,005$, $p < 0,05$, when reputation was the dependent variable. When co-creation was the dependent variable, the significance levels were $p < 0,05$ and $p < 0,001$, for brand image and brand experience respectively. Satisfaction was found to have insignificant effects in both regressions, and perceived quality had no significant effect on co-creation. Based on this result, we can conclude that six out of nine hypotheses are supported. These results provide good inputs to the discussion when combined with the findings of qualitative analysis.

The three multiple regression analyses provided empirical evidence regarding our predicted hypotheses. The results are shown in table 11:

Abbreviation	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1	Brand Image has a positive effect on reputation	Supported
H2	Satisfaction has a positive effect on reputation	Not supported
H3	Perceived quality has a positive effect on reputation	Supported
H4	Brand experience has a positive effect on reputation	Supported
H5	Brand image has a positive effect on co-creation	Supported
H6	Satisfaction has a positive effect on co-creation	Not supported
H7	Perceived quality has a positive effect on co-creation	Not supported
H8	Brand experience has a positive effect on co-creation	Supported
H9	Co-creation has a positive effect on reputation	Supported

TABLE 11. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

Figure 9 shows the revised conceptual model and the effects on reputation and co-creation.
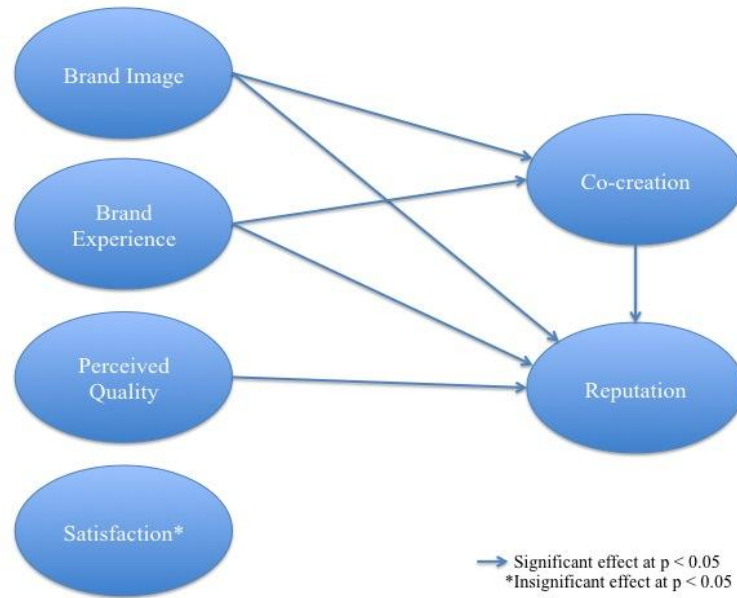
FIGURE 9. REVISED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

6.8 QUANTITATIVE DISCUSSION

Although the regression analyses provided interesting results, we believe that the means of the constructs, presented in the empirical findings, show relevant matters for SACC-DC. Brand image provided the highest mean of 3,96, while brand experience had a mean of 3,26. Although the difference between the means is small, this fact is still of relevance in the analysis. Interestingly, the constructs with the highest and lowest means are the same constructs that showed significant positive effects on both reputation and co-creation. Therefore, SACC-DC should pay careful attention to these, and perhaps look further into what would enhance the brand experience and increase the brand image of members. As we could see from the model of Davies and Miles (cited in Davies et al., 2003, p. 61), brand image is a key element of reputation, and therefore SACC-DC should engage in trying to improve the perception of the brand image, as it will affect the reputation. Moreover, we could see that brand experience is relevant for co-creation, and in order to improve co-creation and in turn word-of-mouth, it is relevant to examine what could be improved in the brand experience for members.

The fact that the means are all quite low, around three on a scale from one to five, might indicate that members have a neutral attitude towards brand image, brand experience, satisfaction, quality, co-creation and reputation. The means of the various constructs differ with only 0,70, and could pose challenges in detecting the prioritized areas for improvement. We think that the fact that members have a neutral attitude towards SACC-DC, presents an interesting foundation for the discussion of the different perceptions of internal and external stakeholders.

In the first regression, the coefficient table showed that brand image, perceived quality, and brand experience had significant positive effects on reputation, which was the dependent variable. The relationship between brand image and reputation has been widely discussed in the theoretical framework. We interpret that reputation and brand image are correlated,

yet separate concepts, as various stakeholders can have different perceptions of the same organization, and reputation and image can therefore not be considered to be identical measures. Similarly, Davies et al. (2003, p. 61) assert that the most imperative characteristics of reputation are the image and identity concepts, as these two are the views held by these stakeholders. Chun (2005, p. 96) explains that the main difference between reputation and brand image is that reputation is built up over time and therefore denotes an accrued view of an organization, while the brand image is like a snapshot at a certain point in time, and can vary over time. Although it is evident that the two concepts are separate, we interpret that there is a clear relationship between them. Our quantitative results showed that brand image indeed does affect reputation, and that the relationship between brand image and reputation was the strongest out of the three constructs that had significant effects. This finding implies that the members of SACC-DC perceive the brand image as the most important indicator of reputation. Taking Kapferer's (1997, p. 94) explanation of brand image into account as the result of the management's efforts in communicating their strategy to consumers, the relationship between brand image and reputation indicates that the management's attempts will be translated into the reputation perceived by customers. For SACC-DC, this means that the board members bear the responsibility to successfully communicate the essence of the organization's brand as the members view it as important with regards to the reputation.

Satisfacton was the second construct that was included in the first regression analysis. This was the only construct that did not have a significant effect on reputation. Helm et al. (2009, p. 73) found in their study that satisfaction indeed does affect reputation. Our results do not support the finding of these authors, as satisfaction was characterized by an insignificant effect, but still made a relevant input to the discussion. For SACC-DC, our results can indicate that the members do not consider their satisfaction to be important with regards to how they perceive the reputation of the organization. It can also be the case that other factors are more important than satisfaction in what impacts their perception of the reputation. As Helm et al. (2009, p. 73) stated, "*investing in, and maintaining, high quality in products and services is one important cornerstone of reputation management as it is a prerequisite to achieve consumer satisfaction*". Keeping this in mind, we can move to the perceived quality construct, which did have a positive significant effect on reputation. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, p. 6), quality depends on the opportunity for organizations and consumers to collaborate, where the organization must have the capacity to generate an array of experiences. We consider this statement to be in line with our findings and the context of our study. With regards to reputation, we can explain that perceived quality had an impact on reputation because the nature of SACC-DC permits the employees and members to actively create experiences. In our opinion, the created experiences are then translated into the perceived quality, which is reflected in the reputation.

The final construct in the first regression was brand experience, which had a significant positive effect on reputation. Brakus et al. (2009, p. 53) explain that brand experiences involve special senses, opinions, perceptions, and behavioral reactions caused by brand-related incentives. Based on our finding, we can conclude that those feelings that are activated when the members of SACC-DC interact with a brand impact the reputation of the organization in the sense that the more positive the experience, the more members will

spread a positive word-of-mouth.

In the second regression analysis, brand image showed a significant, positive effect on co-creation. According to Hatch and Schultz (1997, p. 359), brand image is influenced by the interaction of organizational members and the customers. As co-creation is developed as a result of various encounters between customers and organizations (Payne, 2009, p. 383), we believe that brand experience can influence co-creation. Brand image and co-creation are both outcomes of interactions between customers and organizations. We consider the positive relationship between the variables, as a stronger brand image will generate more active customers in the way that they engage even further in the process of co-creation. The items of brand image in our survey regarded factors such as how familiar one consider oneself to be with the organization at hand, and whether it has a clear and strong image. Due to the fact that brand image showed significant effect, we consider it important that SACC-DC clearly states what they stand for, and what you get from a membership. If members and prospect members know what they can expect from SACC-DC, they would be more likely to engage in co-creation according to our findings.

Brand experience also had a positive, significant effect on co-creation. Prior research has shown that customers are not buying merely goods or services, but rather an experience (Pullman & Gross, 2004, p. 551), which involves senses, opinions and perceptions that are caused by brand-related incentives (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 53). Our findings support the argument of Prahalad (2004c, p. 23) who states that brand experience plays a significant role in co-creation. In our second regression analysis, brand experience showed the highest β of 0,509, meaning that one unit change in brand experience would increase co-creation by 0,509. Compared to brand image, which also showed significant effect, brand experience had almost twice as much impact on the independent variable, indicating that it is of importance to make sure that members of SACC-DC has a positive brand experience as this factor will impact their level of co-creation.

Brand experience is said to take place at any point in time when the customer is in direct or indirect contact with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 54), and therefore we believe it is important to see the whole experience as a unit, from when the invitation to the event is sent out, until the point when the event is over and possibly evaluated. If any of the time is left to chance it is possible that the member have a lower brand experience, indicating that they would not engage in as much co-creation which is one of SACC-DC's most important tools in their marketing as it can lead to better word-of-mouth and consequently reputation. Brand experience also involves providing a brand promise and offer consistent action (Riley & de Chernatony, 2000, p. 148), implying that it is important for SACC-DC to live up to the promises that they make, for instance on their website or through their communication with members. It seems if they indicate things that are not lived up to, expectations will differ too much and induce a lower feeling of brand experience of the members.

To our knowledge, there has not been a study that has examined the effect of satisfaction on co-creation before, but according to our regression analysis, satisfaction did not show significant effect on co-creation. Our assumption was that satisfaction would impact co-creation, in the sense that if you are happy with the services of the organization, you are

more willing to co-create the brand. Also, previous research confirms this assumption, by showing that satisfaction has an effect on behavioral outcomes such as purchase intentions (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p. 65), which we believe can be connected to outcomes of co-creation. Though, we could not detect any relationship amongst the two variables, and perhaps this could indicate that you still engage in co-creation even though you are not satisfied with the organization or its services or products. And, it can be needed in case of a membership organization as SACC-DC, since the key activity is the networking by members. Moreover, as Kotler and Keller (2009, p. 164) explain, satisfaction is a consumer's pleasure or disappointment from comparing their perceived experience with their beforehand expectations. In other words, satisfaction occurs *after* something is experienced, while co-creation is an on-going process that evolves over time (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5). This observation could perhaps be the reason why satisfaction did not show a significant effect on co-creation.

Our seventh hypothesis was not supported, in which we assumed that perceived quality had a positive effect on co-creation. Perceived quality is said to be shaped by comparing ideals and perceptions of performance with regards to quality dimensions (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996, p. 204). Our assumption was that a higher perceived quality would make members even more engaged in co-creation activities, such as recommending the brand or improving activities. Though, we could not detect any significant positive effect of perceived quality on co-creation, the explanation might be that co-creation occurs even though members do not perceive the quality as good. We believe that the explanation could be that even though members might network and create business opportunities through SACC-DC's events, they might not assess the quality of SACC-DC to be higher. Members might not reflect on the fact that the contact happened through SACC-DC's event. It might be that just the initial contact was made during a SACC-DC event, but the relationship is developed further through other encounters and therefore their perception of the quality of SACC-DC does not affect co-creation. Moreover, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, p. 6) argues that collaboration between organizations and consumers will impact quality, and considering that co-creation takes place in these interactions, it could be possible that co-creation would have had an effect on quality instead.

Through our ninth hypothesis, we could conclude that co-creation had a significant, positive effect on reputation. There has not been any study examining these two constructs together before, but considering Abratt & Kleyn's (2010, p. 1050) theory that reputation stems from the views of many stakeholders, we believe that co-creation should be considered an impact on reputation as well. As co-creation is a process of bringing managers, customers and other groups together to create the brand (Ind et al., 2013, p. 5), we believe that this process can affect the way the reputation is perceived.

To conclude, our quantitative findings confirm the relevance of considering brand image, brand experience and perceived quality and their effects on co-creation and reputation.

7. GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the empirical findings and analyses from the qualitative and quantitative studies are combined to be discussed with regard to the purpose of the study. The main intention with this chapter is to develop the triangulation of results from our mixed-method study.

7.1 PERCEPTIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VIEWS

Because we have chosen a mixed-method study, we would like to discuss the results of two different groups that we examined, and assess whether differences in the perceptions of board members and members exist. Respondents from our qualitative interviews, board members of SACC-DC, had a very positive perception of SACC-DC in general, while respondents from our quantitative survey, members if SACC-DC, seem to have a more neutral perception. We argue that these differences in perceptions poses a problem, especially considering to the theory of Davies et al. (2003, p. 62), stating that internal brand identity, desired identity and external brand image should be aligned in order to create a favorable reputation of an organization.

We will discuss the key findings by comparing the results of qualitative and quantitative studies. From our descriptive statistics (table 5), we could see that perceived quality had a mean of 3,71 on a Likert-scale ranging from 1 to 5. Though, from the interviews and in our thematic network of brand identity, we found that board members perceive the quality as very high, and this finding was also supported in table 6 where survey respondents' means were shown depending on what category they belonged to. To assess differences, we calculated means across all variables for all groups of members. It might be the case that board members and members evaluate the quality differently because they have different pre-understandings and expectations of what SACC-DC should and could do. One board member explained that they have a more extensive view of any problems that might arise internally. Roy and Banerjee (2007, p. 144) explain that the best way to prevent gaps in perceptions is to match offered benefits with expectations, indicating that SACC-DC needs to find out even further what various members want from their membership. It could be the case that board members are more understanding if something does not go as planned, or that they have different expectations on what a membership means and what it includes. The questions measuring the quality construct regarded general quality, consistency and reliability, and we believe that someone's evaluation of these measures will depend on what expectations they have from the beginning. As stated by Davies et al. (2003, p. 12), perceived quality is assessed depending on expectations, and maybe the perceived quality would be increased if members knew even better what SACC-DC does and how it works. This knowledge might fill the gap of possible informational differences. Though, as discussed earlier, the mean lies above 3, indicating that people are not dissatisfied with the quality, but instead leaning towards the more positive side, but if it would be increased it could have a positive effect on the reputation as we could see from our regression analysis that quality has a significant positive effect on reputation.

In our qualitative interviews, reputation was perceived by board members as good, especially since other chambers of commerce had turned to SACC-DC for advice on how to

work. Furthermore, in our quantitative study, we saw that the reputation had a mean of 3,69 and that it was the highest among the corporate members. As reputation stems from many stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2010, p. 1050), it might be the case that other chambers of commerce have an even better perception of the reputation of SACC-DC than their own members. It is said that external brand image should be the result of internal brand identity, and that the image will be strong and coherent if the brand identity is (Kapferer, 1997, p. 94). In order to improve the measure of brand image among members, we believe it is of great importance that the brand identity is brought up to discussion internally among board members, as this will have effects of how members perceive the brand image. Furthermore, we think that the most important question to consider is what services SACC-DC really provides. From our qualitative study we could conclude that board members perceive the network as the service that SACC-DC provides, but the members might perceive that the service are the events and that networking should be considered an outcome instead. One respondent explained in her interview that it is important that SACC-DC helps members to network in the way that they introduce people to each other, and as we perceive it this will be done in their main service – the events. We believe that the establishment of what services SACC-DC provides will help form a strong, and even more coherent brand identity, and in turn increase the brand image and reputation. One respondent explained that in a city such as Washington, D.C., peoples' time is precious and scarce, and to present clearer what SACC-DC is could probably benefit those who might be interested in joining, in the sense that they know what they are signing up for and can expect from their membership.

Based on the results of the regression analyses, we could conclude that satisfaction did not show a direct significant effect on neither reputation nor co-creation. In other words, increased satisfaction will not induce higher reputation or co-creation. We believe that this finding can be explained by the fact that although members of SACC-DC perceive the reputation as good, they might not be fully satisfied with how SACC-DC has met their expectations at for example a particular event. We argue that satisfaction could have an indirect effect on co-creation and reputation through the brand image. If we had conducted a regression analysis without using brand image as a construct, satisfaction might have had an effect on the dependent factors. It might be the case that SACC-DC has a strong reputation thanks to the well-established brand, their location in Washington, D.C., and their collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden, and that people would not consider quitting their membership even though they were not completely satisfied with a certain event. We believe that members are positive about being associated with SACC-DC, as it holds certain qualities by being a chamber of commerce. Both individual members and larger companies find pleasure in being associated with SACC-DC due to their position of being tied to a country that all members have a connection with.

From SACC-DC's website one can read: "*the main purpose of our chamber is networking and exchange of trade information. In order to fulfill this we regularly organize luncheons, business clubs, as well as other activities*". We believe that SACC-DC might benefit even more from creating separate statements of mission and vision, clearly outlining what the organization does (events), and what the purpose of being a member is (networking). As we could see from the qualitative interviews, board members know that there are different expectations from different membership categories on what they want from the

organization, and what could be seen from our quantitative study in the cross-tabulation of means from the various categories was that the lowest means (for all constructs) was among the individual members. SACC-DC sometimes has events targeted towards certain groups of members, and the fact that individual members do not get specialized targeting might cause this problem of neutral feelings. A suggestion might be to increase the knowledge regarding what each membership group value and sometimes hold events that are only targeted towards that specific group. In this way, hopefully members' perception of quality can be increased, as well as brand image, and reputation.

In the interviews, board members explained that SACC-DC has certain events that return each year and are much appreciated by the members. These events can be considered the 'physique' of SACC-DC, which Kapferer (1997, p. 99) explains as the core of the brand that it would not exist without. These events seem to be well-established in the members' mind, and we believe that they should be kept and integrated even further into the strategic planning. They are well attended and popular and can strengthen the brand identity. Though, we think these events can be developed further in order to raise the result of members' brand experience, which showed only moderate results in the questionnaire. If the events are constantly developed, and perhaps include a new feature or experience each year, the brand experience would probably be even better. This would be preferable, as we could see from the regression analyses that brand experience had a significant positive effect on both reputation and co-creation.

7.2 CO-CREATED REPUTATION OF SACC-DC

Moving on from the general discussion about the main disparities between the perceptions of the board members and members of our chosen organization SACC-DC, we would like to discuss one of the key findings. This finding was addressed in our analysis, the co-created reputation. The theoretical framework of this thesis provided an extensive overview of what co-creation and reputation entail and how they have been studied separately. The empirical evidence of our mixed-method study, consisting of both multiple and simple regression analyses and thematic networks, has allowed us to discover a new joint dimension in co-creation and reputation, which is co-created reputation.

We derived four thematic networks from our qualitative interviews, from which four global themes could be identified. The global themes were; brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. These are all related to co-created reputation in the sense that all themes require board members and members to jointly create and uphold a successful reputation for SACC-DC to survive the competitive environment in Washington D.C. According to Walsh et al., (2009, p. 188), the *reputation* is the result of customers' interactions with an organization. Payne et al. (2009, p. 383) hold that *co-creation* between customers and organizations develop as an outcome of various encounters. Two important statements about co-created reputation were highlighted in the interviews; 1) the fact that SACC-DC is affected by the reputation of its members, and 2) the value members receive from being a part of SACC-DC is equivalent to how much effort they put into it. We interpret both of these statements to be important in understanding how co-created reputation works within SACC-DC. The first statement implies that because they have world-known Swedish corporations, such as Volvo, Skanska, and Ericsson, as corporate members, SACC-DC enjoys the benefit of being associated with them in the Washington,

D.C. area. We conclude that as long as these types of corporate members have positive reputations, SACC-DC's reputation is positive too. Likewise, we discovered in the mutual responsibility theme that the corporate members enjoy the use of SACC-DC as a marketing channel within the Swedish community in Washington, D.C. Therefore, we can see that the reputation enhancement is mutual and applies for both parties, implying that co-created reputation is present between SACC-DC and its members. The second statement that was made by many board members indicates that both members and SACC-DC have certain expectations on the other party. The members expect to broaden their professional or personal networks, and acquire business opportunities and relationships, while SACC-DC expect their members to actively engage in these activities. We consider this finding to mean that the board members expect the members to participate as much as they can in the events, thus creating their own experiences, and co-creating value. Value, in the context of co-creation, has been defined as the outcome of an inherent negotiation between the consumers and organization (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b, p. 7).

The regression analyses provided empirical verification that brand image and brand experience are relevant determinants of co-creation and reputation. For this reason, we conclude that brand image and brand experience are factors that should be in focus and worked at in order to enhance the co-created reputation at SACC-DC. As mentioned before, the identity and the unique characteristics of an organization stems from the employees of the organization, and should be strategically managed to maintain or build a favorable identity (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997, p. 341). In the case of SACC-DC, the empirical findings show that neither board members nor members have a clear picture of what the brand stands for. Without a clear perception, both internally and externally, we believe that a co-created reputation is difficult to achieve. In order to jointly sustain and develop a successful reputation, all relevant stakeholders (in this case board members and members) ought to understand the message that SACC-DC communicates with its brand to be able to know how to spread the reputation through word-of-mouth. As for brand experience, we mentioned earlier that we have identified that SACC-DC expects its members to actively participate in the events to create their own positive experiences. Brand experiences take place whenever the customer has a direct or indirect contact with the brand (Brakus et al., 2009, p. 54). Riley and de Chernatony (2000, p. 148) state that brand experiences are concerned with offering a brand promise and delivering consistent action. The regressions showed that brand experience had a significant positive effect on both co-creation and reputation. In our opinions, this result means that the more positive their experience, the more co-created reputation will be of benefit for the members and SACC-DC. We agree with the board members that maximum value is achieved through commitment and involvement, since SACC-DC is an organization where individuals are involved in the network. However, the responsibility does not merely lie on the members. As mentioned before, SACC-DC needs to show more clarity in its notions of what the service and outcome of the service provided are. If this ambiguity is eliminated and SACC-DC manages to clearly state what service it provides and what the results of the service will be, members might be able to accomplish positive brand experiences.

Our qualitative and quantitative studies have allowed us to conclude that there are several advantages with co-created reputation. Being a nonprofit organization, SACC-DC cannot enhance its brand and reputation based on financial performance. Additionally, the

organization has limited resources, which limits any marketing campaigns, which could have been recommended to a traditional company. Therefore, we must highlight the importance of measuring value in something other than financial means. We believe that the value for SACC-DC lays in the co-created reputation, which can enable this organization to build a strong network of members. As previously mentioned, SACC-DC has the advantage of having relationships with well-regarded Swedish corporations. These relationships mean that both parties can take advantage of each other brands at a relatively low cost. This advantage is therefore not only relevant for SACC-DC, but for other nonprofit organizations. Another advantage of co-created reputation is that the service provided by SACC-DC becomes more customized through co-created reputation. Because co-created reputation allows the members to be a part of the creation of the reputation, there are more opportunities to communicate one's own expectations and ideas. These opportunities, of course, imply that the brand image and brand identity must co-exist without any uncertainties of what the brand stands for, as mentioned above. One might think that it is difficult to move towards customization through co-created reputation, but we assert that because SACC-DC members have mutual interests and goals, they have a common ground to stand on where co-created reputation becomes very relevant.

We have discussed the qualitative and quantitative studies separately and in combination to one another. Triangulation of the results of this mixed-method study enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of how reputation and co-creation are managed internally. The results also allowed us to look at the effects of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience on co-creation and reputation. Detailed practical recommendations for SACC-DC will be developed in the concluding chapter of this degree project.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, we answer our research question that has guided our work and address the purpose of this thesis. The chapter explains the theoretical contributions from both of our studies. Moreover, we will provide recommendations, for managers of nonprofit organizations in general, but also practical recommendations for SACC-DC in particular, regarding how they can co-create their reputation. In this chapter, we also address the limitations that we encountered in our study, and present suggestions for future research that we have identified.

8.1 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to gain a deeper understanding of how reputation and co-creation are managed internally in a nonprofit membership organization, and to investigate the impact of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality and brand experience on co-creation and reputation. In order to fulfill this purpose, we have conducted a qualitative study with board members of SACC-DC, where we explored how they work with co-creation and reputation, and if they actively work with the brand identity and quality of the service that SACC-DC provides. Furthermore, we have conducted a quantitative survey of the members of SACC-DC, in order to investigate what effects brand image, perceived quality, satisfaction and brand experience have on co-creation and reputation. By conducting a mixed-method study we have been able to gain an extensive understanding of our subjects from two perspectives, and answered our research question, which was:

How are reputation and co-creation managed internally, and what effects do customers' external perceptions of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience have on those concepts?

The findings from our qualitative interviews showed that board members perceive the quality and reputation of SACC-DC as very good. We also found that brand identity and reputation are not actively managed, but rather happen by accident. We believe that this is the case as board members already perceive the reputation as good, and because they all work voluntarily and do not want SACC-DC to be too much work-like. Through thematic networks we could derive four global themes that served as a basis for our analysis. The four themes were labeled brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. The themes served as the basis for our theoretical model, which displays how the reputation is co-created in SACC-DC. We found that reputation is built and maintained through a symbiotic relationship between the organization and its members, and that the four global themes serve as the building blocks of the co-created reputation. Because it is a nonprofit organization with networking as its main purpose, the value for both the organization and its members is the reputation, as there are no financial measurements to be employed as to how successful the organization is. Therefore, we argue that co-created reputation should be the overall goal for SACC-DC, and that it will be achieved by the joint effort of members and the organization together.

For our quantitative study, we developed a conceptual model by combining constructs regarding satisfaction, brand image, perceived quality, brand experience, co-creation and

reputation. We could show that brand image and brand experience had significant, positive effect on co-creation and reputation. We could also see that perceived quality had significant, positive effect on reputation. Because brand image and brand experience showed effects on both co-creation and reputation, we can conclude that these results support our qualitative findings on the relevance of co-created reputation for SACC-DC, and they need to be managed internally. As brand image is an outcome of brand identity, we argue that brand identity needs more attention and alignment internally than it has today, and that co-created reputation can be even better by coherent internal strategies.

What we could detect through combining the findings of our two studies is that perceptions between board members and members differ. We could see in our descriptive statistics that members in general have a neutral, though somewhat leaning towards positive, perception of SACC-DC, while board members have a very positive view of the organization. We believe that this should be examined even further by SACC-DC, as according to theories regarding reputation (see e.g. Roy & Banerjee, 2007, p. 142) it is not desirable to have gaps between external and internal perceptions.

8.2 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Dickinson-Delaporte et al. (2010) used qualitative interviews in order to understand how various stakeholders impact reputation of organizations. Through our qualitative study, we have been able to explore how co-creation is present in the management of the reputation of a nonprofit organization, something that has not been studied before. Moreover, previous research has used quantitative scales to measure reputation amongst nonprofit organizations (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010), but we could see a lack of research trying to gain a deeper understanding of how the reputation is managed in that context. Through our semi-structured interviews, we have contributed with an advanced understanding in the field of reputation in a nonprofit membership organization, and gained knowledge of how the reputation is co-created together with the members.

Previous researchers have examined co-creation in traditional for-profit companies (see e.g. Boyle, 2007; Ind et al., 2013), and in nonprofit organizations (Juntunen et al., 2013). Though, no study has examined co-creation in relation to reputation before, and through our quantitative study we have contributed with an understanding of how these concepts are related. Through our conceptual model, we have been able to show that brand experience and brand image have significant effects on co-creation and reputation, and that perceived quality has a significant effect on reputation. We could also conclude that co-creation has a significant effect on reputation. Previous studies have shown that satisfaction has a significant, positive effect on reputation (Helm et al., 2009, p. 73), but our model did not support this relationship. The explanation might be that we have studied a different context than Helm's et al. study. Through our conceptual model, we have contributed to existing knowledge by testing variables that have not been examined together before. We argue that our model can be subject to further examination within the fields of reputation and co-creation.

By combining our qualitative and quantitative studies, we have been able to compare the different views of two groups of stakeholders of a nonprofit membership organization, board members and members. To our knowledge, a mixed-method of reputation and co-

creation has not been conducted in this context before, wherefore our findings have contributed to a deeper understanding of how these two groups affect each other in the upholding and co-creation of the reputation.

8.3 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to gain a deeper understanding of how managers work internally with co-creation and reputation, and to see what effects customers' external perceptions of brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality and brand experience have on the same concepts. In addition to our theoretical contributions, we are able to provide recommendations to managers of nonprofit organizations in general in order to strengthen their effort in managing reputation and to improve their marketing communications. Organizations that compete on the basis on their membership services need to attract members even though financial resources might be scarce, as is the case with nonprofit organizations. Based on our findings, we argue that a preferable way for organizations, both nonprofit and traditional, to manage their reputation is to co-create it together with their customers.

Based on the empirical evidence that our study has produced, we suggest that managers in nonprofit settings focus on brand image and brand experience, as these had significant positive effects on co-created reputation. As explained above, the co-created reputation has four driving forces; brand identity, brand delivery, value, and mutual responsibility. We believe that managers need to understand the importance of aligning the driving forces and affecting factors of co-created reputation. In order for customers to understand the message that is communicated, it needs to be defined on the basis of the desired identity and the perceived quality. If managers are able to define and understand the brand identity, customers will have clear idea of the brand image. Therefore, it is crucial that management not only becomes familiar with what the organization is, but also how they can communicate it in a successful way. Because of this finding, we claim that aiming towards co-creating reputation is an effective way of developing and spreading the word-of-mouth. We believe that co-creating the reputation also increases the customers' brand experience, as they feel they are doing something meaningful to themselves if they take part in developing the brand.

8.4 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SACC-DC

We have been writing on commission for SACC-DC, and based on the findings from our mixed-method study, we have provided practical recommendations for this organization. We have already touched upon practical recommendations throughout our discussion of qualitative and quantitative findings, but we provide more general recommendations in this section. We believe that these recommendations can improve the performance of SACC-DC, and make it an even more attractive organization that can engage more members. In our discussion, we explained the two main joined findings that we could conclude from our qualitative and quantitative studies. The first one was that perceptions of the brand of SACC-DC differ between board members and members. The second finding was that the reputation of SACC-DC is co-created together with members, and our key recommendations will be grounded in this finding, as we believe that co-created reputation is a strong phenomenon of the organization that should be embraced even further.

Our first recommendation to SACC-DC is to establish and clarify its brand identity. As we could see from the theoretical framework, a clear and coherent brand identity is positive for any organization (Ghodeswar, 2008, p. 5), and we believe that it is particularly important for SACC-DC, because of the highly competitive environment of Washington, D.C. It is vital that they continue attracting new members as their network is made up of the people within it. The brand identity is what will be perceived as the brand image by the members, and based on our findings we could conclude that this is an important concept for both co-creation and reputation. Furthermore, we think that the membership categories could benefit from being communicated even clearer than what they are currently, by efficiently communicating the benefits of each category to existing and prospective members, i.e. the individuals that receive the newsletter. In order to maintain an updated view of how members perceive SACC-DC, one suggestion is to appoint one person to each category of members as 'category representative', who will have the mission to talk with other members and exchange ideas and suggestions. This recommendation could let SACC-DC to find members who are not completely satisfied, or get valuable inputs on what the members would like SACC-DC to do, in terms of events or other services. We do not find that SACC-DC should engage in other ventures. This is because the networking that takes place between the members themselves, and the members and SACC-DC is much too valuable, and focus should not be directed elsewhere.

Furthermore, we could see from the descriptive statistics that the brand experience is an aspect that SACC-DC could improve. The construct had the lowest mean value was this construct. We find that there are several ways that SACC-DC could improve the services they provide in order for the experiences to create more value and be more desirable in the future. Apart from having the 'category representatives', our suggestion is that SACC-DC defines how they want the members to experience the events. All members and categories will of course experience the events and SACC-DC's brand in different ways. However, we believe that if SACC-DC specifies how each membership category should experience the brand, the members would be able to have a more specific attitude towards the brand image and inherently engage in co-created reputation.

8.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One limitation that we encountered was the fact that we could not acquire a deep understanding of SACC-DC's members' perceptions of the co-created reputation, as we studied their perceptions by using the quantitative survey. Performing interviews with two or three members from each membership category could have presented a more solid foundation for comparing attitudes and perceptions between board members and members. This would also provide knowledge about why the members' attitudes were neutral, as our quantitative results showed. Therefore, we suggest that future researchers should conduct qualitative interviews with both parties. Another limitation that we detected with our study was that we focused on only two groups of stakeholders and did not examine the remaining stakeholders involved in SACC-DC. To address this limitation, future research could consider studying other relevant stakeholders, such as executives from the Embassy of Sweden, board members from chambers of commerce from other countries, and other Swedish-American chambers of commerce in the United States. As we have focused our quantitative study on one membership organization, our findings may not be generalizable to other chambers of commerce in the United States or other nonprofit organizations.

Because of this, we suggest future researchers to examine our conceptual model and test the effects between the constructs in a wider range of industries. Finally, we noticed during the interviews that many board members brought up cultural differences between Swedes and Americans when doing business. Therefore, we suggest future research to study how cross-cultural communication could affect the reputation and co-creation in the same setting. We also think a longitudinal study could be interesting to perform, to see how perceptions of SACC-DC's co-created reputation changes over time. Finally, we propose future research to perform a study where the corporate members are in focus to understand how B2B branding works between nonprofit organizations and traditional companies co-create the reputation.

9. TRUTH CRITERIA

We find that it is vital to determine and evaluate the quality of our research. In this chapter, we discuss the truth criteria in order to show that we have met the demands for quality. We start by evaluating the truth criteria for our qualitative study, and then continue with the quantitative study. The truth criteria aid us in evaluating quality of our qualitative and quantitative research.

9.1 TRUTH CRITERIA FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Reliability and validity are two criteria for establishing the quality of research (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 394). Reliability concerns the replicability of research, while validity concerns the accuracy of findings (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32). LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 31) argue that reliability and validity are important for any kind of scientific study, and discuss four measures in which to assess the quality of research: external and internal reliability, and external and internal validity. We will now discuss each of these four criteria by focusing on the qualitative part of our study.

External reliability concerns the degree to which a study can be replicated (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 395). The goal of qualitative research is usually not replicability as each research is unique because of the study at hand (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 408). We agree with this statement, as the aim with the qualitative study in this thesis has been to gain a deeper understanding of a subject, rather than to be able to replicate it in another setting. However, we have addressed the five recommendations of LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 37), in order to increase the external reliability. The first way of doing this is to consider the role and position as researchers in the group that is being studied (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38). We have tried to minimize this impact by evaluating our role in the interviews, and tried to understand how our external presence affects the study that we have conducted. The second action to enhance external replication is to share as much information as possible regarding the people in the study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38). We have taken this measure into account, but as we wished to keep our respondents anonymous, we have omitted information that could harm their anonymity. Third, social situations and conditions should be taken into account (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38). The context where the data was collected can have an impact on the findings, and by describing the environment, structure and surroundings of the study, replicability could be facilitated (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 38). We have provided information about the organization and surrounding factors that might impact our study, and argue that the context has been described as much as possible. It is important that qualitative researchers clearly define how they perceive concepts that are being studied, as well as what assumptions underlie the choice of theories (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 39). It should also be clear why the choice of data collection was employed and why a certain type of analysis was employed (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 40). We argue that we have tried to enhance the external reliability by clearly explaining in our methodology our perceptions of the chosen theories and concepts, and made an explicit explanation of how we have analyzed the qualitative data.

Internal reliability concerns whether multiple researchers in a study agree to what is seen and heard (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 41). Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 158) argue that

this can be compared to inter-observer consistency, meaning that it is of importance that researchers can agree on decisions regarding interviews and data categorization, among other matters. Because we have maintained an open dialogue throughout the writing process of our degree project and always discussed issues that required special attention, we argue that we have maximized our internal reliability.

For qualitative studies, LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 43) suggest two measures of validity: internal and external. Internal validity concerns whether researchers actually measure what they intend to measure (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 43), and according to the same study, internal validity is generally high in qualitative research. We assess our internal validity as high, mainly because of our semi-structured interviews. Through this technique, the researcher has the possibility to ask follow-up questions depending on the answer, and we argue that this allowed us to measure what we wanted. We could clarify concepts and ask more questions to the respondents if they talked about some themes that we did not focus on in our research. Qualitative findings are typically not generalizable in settings other than the one that was studied, indicating that external validity is low (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 395). As the purpose of this thesis is not to generalize findings from the qualitative study, we do not consider external validity as problematic matter for our thesis.

9.2 TRUTH CRITERIA FOR A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

It is important to assess the quality of our quantitative study, as we argue that future researchers can replicate our conceptual model. The reliability is used to evaluate how consistent the findings used in quantitative research are, in the case that they were to be tested in another circumstance or repeated (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192). To validate that the measures used in our questionnaires were reliable, the Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted, where we computed an alpha for each construct that was used in the regression analyses. This allowed us to determine that all the items were internally reliable, as all constructs had values above 0,8 (Saunders et al., p. 430), which was used as the rule of thumb in our study. The construct with the lowest value of Cronbach's Alpha was at 0,82. We claim that since we utilized previously tested items in our questionnaire, we can secure their reliability in our study. Items were pretested before conducting the actual study, which further strengthens the reliability of our questionnaire. Also, the empirical findings collected from our quantitative research were tested through statistical measures, which minimize the subjectivity of our research.

Generalization implies that the results can be applied outside the boundaries of the specific context where the study was performed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 163). In other words, generalization denotes how researchers can produce a representative sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 164). Biases are likely to happen when the researcher picks the sample (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 291), and we have eliminated this risk by using census. We believe that, as our respondents represent the whole census, our results are generalizable for our entire population of SACC-DC, but not other populations. According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 165), generalization is feasible, but the researcher should be careful with this conclusion. Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 165) state that if the members of a population from which a sample is taken are all members of an organization, we can generalize only to the members of the organization. For these reasons, researchers ought to be alert not to make interpretations beyond the population from which the sample was chosen (Bryman & Bell,

2011, p. 165).

According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 163), causality concerns researchers wanting to examine causes, as opposed to describing how things are. For the quantitative part of our study, we aimed to establish the causal relationships between brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, and brand experience, and co-creation and reputation. Our empirical findings show that brand image and brand experience have significant positive effects on co-creation and reputation, and according to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 193), these results confirm internal validity.

Furthermore, replicability is concerned with the extent to which research can be replicated in other studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 165). To reduce the researcher's bias, the study should be produced in a way that allows other researchers to study the same phenomenon. One could question the replicability of a study if a researcher who repeated an existing study did not produce the same findings, according to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 165). Also, the scales that were included in our questionnaire were taken from various previous studies. For these reasons, we believe that our quantitative study can be re-tested in other chambers of commerce in the United States. Because we want our study to be as replicable as possible, we have described our research process in detail and with comprehensibility. The methods used have been explained and argued for so that other researchers can perform the study again. It is important to once again clarify that we consider the replicability as high for our quantitative study, and do we not conclude replicability to be higher for the qualitative part of our degree project, which can be explained by its nature.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Aaker, D. A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. New York: The Free Press.

Aaker, D. A. & Joachimsthaler, E. (2000). *Brand Leadership*. New York: The Free Press.

Abratt, R., & Kleyn, N. (2010). Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding and Corporate Reputations - Reconciliation and Integration. *European Journal of Marketing,* 46 (⅞), 1048-1063.

Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U.M. & Herrmann, A. (2005). The social influence of brand community: evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of Marketing*, 69 (3), 19-34.

Andreasen, A. R. & Kotler, P. (2003). *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*. 6th edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). "Thematic Network: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research", *Qualitative Research*, 1 (3), 385-405.

Balaji, M. S. (2011). Building Strong Service Brands: The Hierarchical Relationship Between Brand Equity Dimensions. *IUP Journal Of Brand Management*, 8 (3), 7-24.

Banerjee, S. (2008). Strategic Brand-Culture Fit: A conceptual framework for brand management. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 15 (5), 312-321.

Barnett, M. L., Jermier, J.M., & Lafferty, B.A. (2006). Corporate Reputation: The Definitional Landscape. *Corporate Reputation Review,* 9 (8), 26-38.

Barney, J. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management,* 17 (1), 99-120.

Balmer, J. T., & Greyser, S. A. (2006). Integrating corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 40 (⅞), 730-741.

Balmer, J. T., & Greyser, S. A. (2002). Managing the Multiple Identities of the Corporation. *California Management Review*, 44 (3), 72-86.

Berry, L. L., Carbone, L. P., & Haeckel, S. H. (2002). Managing the Total Customer Experience. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 43 (3), 85-89.

Blackston, M. (1992). Observations: Building Brand Equity by Managing the Brand's Relationships. *Journal Of Advertising Research*, 32 (3), 79-83.

Boyle E. (2007). A process model of brand cocreation: brand management and research implications. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 12 (2), 79–93.

Brady, M. K., & Robertson, C. J. (2001). Searching for a consensus on the antecedent role

of service quality and satisfaction: an exploratory cross-national study. *Journal Of Business Research*, 51 (1), 53-60.

Brakus, J., Schmitt, B., & Zarantonello, L. (2009). Brand Experience: What Is It? How Is It Measured? Does It Affect Loyalty? *Journal Of Marketing*, 73 (3), 52-68.

Brodie, R. J., Whittome, J. M., & Brush, G. J. (2009). Investigating the service brand: A customer value perspective. *Journal Of Business Research*, 62 (3), 345-355.

Brown, S., Sherry Jr., J. F., & Kozinets, R. V. (2003). Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning. *Journal Of Marketing*, 67 (3), 19-33.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011). *Business research methods*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chun, R. (2005). Corporate reputation: Meaning and measurement. *International Journal Of Management Reviews*, 7 (2), 91-109.

Churchill, G.A. & Iacobucci, D. (2005). *Marketing research: methodological foundations*. 9th edition. Mason, Ohio: Thomson/South-Western.

Clarkson, M.B.E. (1995). A stakeholder framework for analyzing and evaluating corporate performance. *Academy of Management Review,* 20 (1), 92-117.

Coupland, J. (2005). Invisible Brands: An Ethnography of Households and the Brands in Their Kitchen Pantries. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, 32 (1), 106-118.

Cronin, J. J., Jr. and Taylor, S. R. (1992). Measuring Service Quality: A Reexamination and Extension. *Joumal of Marketing,* 56, 55-68.

de Chernatony, L. (1999). Brand Management Through Narrowing the Gap Between Brand Identity and Brand Reputation. *Journal Of Marketing Management*, 15 (1-3), 157-179.

Davies, G., & Chun, R. (2002). Gaps between the internal and external perceptions of the corporate brand. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 5 (2-3), 144-158.

Davies, G., Chun, R., Vinhas da Silva, R., & Roper, S. (2003). *Corporate Reputation and Competitiveness*. London: Routledge.

Day, G. S. (1994). The capabilities of market-driven organizations. *Journal Of Marketing*, 58 (4), 37.

Denegri-Knott, J., Zwick, D., & Schroeder, J. E. (2006). Mapping consumer power: an integrative framework for marketing and consumer research. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 40 (9/10), 950-971.

Dickinson-Delaporte, S., Beverland, M., & Lindgreen, A. (2010). Building corporate reputation with stakeholders: Exploring the role of message ambiguity for social marketers.

European Journal Of Marketing, 44 (11-12), 1856-1874.

Diener, E. & Crandall, R. (1978). *Ethics in Social and Behavioural Research.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Dolnicar, S. & Lazarevski, K. (2009). Marketing in non-profit organizations: An international perspective. *International Marketing Review*, 26 (3), 275-291.

Dowling, G. R. (2004). Corporate Reputations: Should you compete on yours? *California Management Review,* 46 (3), 19-36.

Dwivedi, A. (2014). Self-Brand Connection With Service Brands: Examining Relationships With Performance Satisfaction, Perceived Value, and Brand Relationship Quality. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 35 (1), 37-53.

Ettenson, R., & Knowles, J. (2008). Don't Confuse Reputation with Brand. *MIT Sloan Management Review,* 49 (2), 19-21.

Ejvegård, R. (2003). *Vetenskaplig metod.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Ewing, M. T. & Napoli, J. (2005). Developing and validating a multidimensional nonprofit brand orientation scale. *Journal Of Business Research*, 58 (6), 841-853.

Felix, R. (2012). Brand communities for mainstream brands: the example of the Yamaha R1 brand community. *Journal Of Consumer Marketing*, 29 (3), 225-232.

Firestein, P. J. (2006). Building and Protecting Corporate Reputation. *Strategy & Leadership,* 34 (4), 25-31.

Fombrun, C. (1996). *Reputation: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Fombrun, C. & Van Riel, C. (1997). The Reputational Landscape. *Corporate Reputation Review,* 1 (1&2), 5-13.

Frow, P., & Payne, A. (2007). Towards the 'perfect' customer experience. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 15 (2), 89-101.

Gardberg, N. A., & Fombrun, C. J. (2002). The Global Reputation Quotient Project: First Steps towards a Cross-Nationally Valid Measure of Corporate Reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 4 (4), 303.

Ghodeswar, B. M. (2008). Building brand identity in competitive markets: a conceptual model. *Journal Of Product & Brand Management*, 17 (1), 4-12.

Gilje, N. & Grimen, H. (2007). *Samhällsvetenskapernas förutsättningar*. (3rd edition) Göteborg: Daidalos.

Goerke, J. (2003). Taking the quantum leap: Nonprofits are now in business. An Australian Perspective. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector,* 8 (4), 317-327.

Gonzalez, L., Vijande, M., & Casielles, R. (2002). The market orientation concept in the private nonprofit organisation domain. *International Journal Of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 7 (1), 55.

Gotsi, M., & Wilson, A. M. (2001). Corporate Reputation: Seeking a Definition. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal,* 6 (1), 24-30.

Gouillart, F. J. (2014). The race to implement co-creation of value with stakeholders: five approaches to competitive advantage. *Strategy & Leadership*, 42 (1).

Gray, E. R., & Balmer, M. T. (1998). Managing Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation. *Long Range Planning,* 31 (5), 695-702.

Hall, R. (1992). The Strategic Analysis of Intangible Resources. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13 (2), 135-144.

Harris, F., & de, Chernatony, L. (2001). Corporate branding and corporate brand performance. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 35 (3/4), 441-456.

Hartman, J. (2004). *Vetenskapligt tänkande - från kunskapsteori till metodteori.* 2nd edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Hatch, M., & Schultz, M. (1997). Relations between organizational culture, identity and image. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 31 (5/6), 356.

Hatch, M., & Schultz, M. (2010). Toward a theory of brand co-creation with implications for brand governance. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 17 (8), 590-604.

Herbig, P., & Milewicz, J. (1995). The Relationship of Reputation and Credibility to brand success. *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* 12 (4), 5-10.

Helm, S., Garnefeld, I., & Tolsdorf, J. (2009). Perceived corporate reputation and consumer satisfaction - An experimental exploration of causal relationship. *Australasian Marketing Journal,* 17, 69-74.

Helm, C., & Jones, R. (2010). Extending the value chain – A conceptual framework for managing the governance of co-created brand equity. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 17 (8), 579-589.

Highhouse, S., Broadfoot, A., Yugo, J. E., & Devendorf, S. A. (2009). Examining Corporate Reputation Judgments with Generalizability Theory. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 94 (3), 782-789.

Iglesias, O., Singh, J., & Batista-Foguet, J. (2011). The role of brand experience and affective commitment in determining brand loyalty. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 18 (8),

570-582.

Ind, N., Iglesias, O., & Schultz, M. (2013). Building Brands Together: Emergence and outcomes of co-creation. *California Management Review*, 55(3), 5-26.

Jick, T. D. (1979). Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24 (4), 602-611.

Johnson, R., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come. *Educational Researcher*, 33 (7), 14-26.

Juntunen, M., Juntunen, J., & Autere, V. (2013). Co-creating nonprofit brand equity. *International Journal Of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 18 (2), 122-132.

Kapferer, J. (1997). *Strategic brand management: creating and sustaining brand equity long term*. 2nd edition. London: Kogan Page.

Kara, A., Spillan, J. E., & DeShields, J. W. (2004). An empirical investigation of the link between market orientation and business performance in nonprofit service providers. *Journal Of Marketing Theory & Practice*, 12 (2), 59-72.

Kelley, S. W., Donnelly Jr., J. H., & Skinner, S. J. (1990). Customer Participation in Service Production and Delivery. *Journal Of Retailing*, 66 (3), 315.

Kennedy, S. H. (1977). Nurturing Corporate Images. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 11 (3), 119-164.

Khan, B. (2009). Corporate brand management: past, present and future. *Pranjana: The Journal Of Management Awareness*, 12 (1), 21-39.

Kotler, P., & Keller, K.L. (2009). *Marketing Management*. 13th edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Kotler, P., & Levy, S. J. (1969). Broadening the Concept of Marketing. *Journal Of Marketing*, 33 (1), 10-15.

Laidler-Kylander, N., & Simonin, B. L. (2009). How international nonprofits build brand equity. *International Journal Of Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 14 (1), 57-69.

Laidler-Kylander, N., Quelch, J. A., & Simonin, B. L. (2007). Building and valuing global brands in the nonprofit sector. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 17 (3), 253-277.

LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. (1982). Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research. *Review Of Educational Research*, 52 (1), 31-60.

Lohmeyer, A. (2013). *Discussion about SACC-DC*. [phone call] (personal communication, December 19, 2013)
Lohmeyer, A. (2014). *Discussion about SACC-DC*. [phone call] (personal communication,

January 30, 2014)

Lopez-Fernandez, O., & Molina-Azorin, J. (2011). The use of mixed methods research in the field of behavioural sciences. *Quality & Quantity*, 45 (6), 1459-1472.

Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. L., & Malter, A. J. (2006). Marketing as Service-Exchange:: Taking a Leadership Role in Global Marketing Management. *Organizational Dynamics*, 35 (3), 264-278.

Macedo, I., & Pinho, J. (2006). The relationship between resource dependence and market orientation. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 40 (5/6), 533-553.

Martenson, R. (2007). Corporate brand image, satisfaction and store loyalty: A study of the store as a brand, store brands and manufacturer brands. *International Journal Of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35 (7), 544-555.

Money, K., & Gardiner, L. (2005). Reputational management: ignore at your own peril. *Handbook of Business Strategy*, 6 (1), 43-46.

Morgan, G., & Smircich, L. (1980). The Case for Qualitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 5 (4), 491-500.

Morrison, S., & Crane, F. G. (2007). Building the service brand by creating and managing an emotional brand experience. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 14 (5), 410-421.

Muñiz, A.M., & O'Guinn, T.C. (2001). Brand Community. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, 27 (4), 412-432.

Muñiz, A. M., & Hamer, L. O. (2001). Us Versus Them: Oppositional Brand Loyalty and the Cola Wars. *Advances In Consumer Research*, 28 (1), 355-361.

Musteen, M., Datta, D. K., & Kemmerer, B. (2010). Corporate Reputation: Do Board Characteristics Matter? *British Journal Of Management*, 21 (2), 498-510.

M'zungu, S. M., Merrilees, B., & Miller, D. (2010). Brand management to protect brand equity: A conceptual model. *Journal Of Brand Management*, 17 (8), 605-617.

Nandan, S. (2005). An exploration of the brand identity-brand image linkage: A communications perspective. *Brand Management,* 12 (4), 264-278.

Niglas, K. (2010). The Multidimensional Model of Research Methodology: An integrated Set of Continua. In Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C., 2nd edition. *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications. pp. 215-236.

Olorunniwo, F., Hsu, M.K., & Udo, G.J. (2006). Service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in the service factory. *Journal Of Services Marketing*, 20 (1), 59-72.

Padanyi, P. & Gainer, B. (2004). Market Orientation in the Nonprofit Sector: Taking Multiple Constituencies into Consideration. *Journal Of Marketing Theory & Practice*, 12 (2), 43-58.

Parasuraman, A. A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal Of Retailing*, 64 (1), 12-40.

Patel, R., & Davidson, B. (2011). Forskningsmetodikens grunder: att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning. 4th edition. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Payne, A.F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal Of The Academy Of Marketing Science*, 36 (1), 83-96.

Payne, A., Storbacka, K., Frow, P., & Knox, S. (2009). Co-creating brands: Diagnosing and designing the relationship experience. *Journal Of Business Research*, 62 (3).

Ponnam, A. (2007). Comprehending the Strategic Brand Building Framework of Kingfisher in the Context of Brand Identity Prism. *ICFAI Journal Of Brand Management*, 4 (4), 63-71.

Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004a). Co-creating unique value with customers. *Strategy & Leadership*, 32 (3), 4-9.

Prahalad, C.K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004b). Co-Creation Experiences: The Next Practice In Value Creation. *Journal Of Interactive Marketing*. 18 (3). 5-14.

Prahalad, C. K. (2004c) The co-creation of value. *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (1), 23.

Pullman, M. E., & Gross, M. A. (2004). Ability of Experience Design Elements to Elicit Emotions and Loyalty Behaviors. *Decision Sciences*, 35 (3), 551-578.

Reichheld, F. F., & Sasser Jr., W. (1990). Zero defections: Quality comes to services. *Harvard Business Review*, 68 (5), 105-111.

Reilly, J.F., Hull, C.C., & Braig Allen, B.A. (2003). *IRC 501(c)(6) Organizations*. [published document]. Cincinnati: Internal Revenue Service.

Riley, F., & de Chernatony, L. (2000). The Service Brand as Relationships Builder. *British Journal Of Management*, 11 (2), 137-150.

Roy, D., & Banerjee, S. (2007). CARE-ing strategy for integration of brand identity with brand image. *International Journal Of Commerce & Management*, 17 (1/2), 140-148.

SACC-DC (2014). About SACC-DC, *The Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce of Washington, D.C., Inc*. http://sacc-usa.org/beta/dc/about-us/about-sacc-dc/ [Retrived 11 February, 2014].

SACC-DC (2014). Membership Options, *The Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce of Washington, D.C., Inc.* http://sacc-usa.org/beta/dc/membership/membershipoptions/,

[Retrived 11 February, 2014].

SACC-DC (2014). Membership Directory 2013/2014, *The Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce of Washington, D.C., Inc.* http://sacc-usa.org/beta/dc/membership/membership-directory/membership-directory-2013-and-2014/, [Retrived 18 April, 2014].

Sargeant, A., Foreman, S., & Liao, M. (2002). Operationalizing the Marketing Concept in the Nonprofit Sector. *Journal Of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 10 (2), 41.

Sarstedt, M., & Schloderer, M.P. (2010). Developing a measurement approach for reputation of non-profit organizations. *International Journal och Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing,* 15, 276-299.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P & Thornhill, A., (2012). *Research Methods For Business Students.* 6th edition. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Schau, H.J., Muñiz, A.M. Jr and Arnould, E.J. (2009), How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (5), 30-51.

Sherry, J. (1998), "The soul of the company store: Niketown Chicago and the emplaced brandscape", in Sherry, J. ed. *The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets.* Lincolnwood: NTC Business Books. pp. 109-146.

Shiu, E., Hair, J., Bush, R. & Ortinau, D. (2009). *Marketing Research*. 1st edition. Berkshire: McGraw- Hill Education.

Shultz, M., & de Chernatony, L. (2002). Introduction The Challenges of Corporate Branding. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 5 (2/3), 105.

Slatten, L. D., Guidry, B. N., & Austin, W. (2011). Accreditation and certification in the non-profit sector: organizational and economic implications. *Organization Management Journal*, 8 (2), 112-127.

Spreng, R.A., & Mackoy, R.D. (1996). An Empirical Examination of a Model of Perceived Service Quality and Satisfaction. *Journal Of Retailing*, 72 (2), 201-214.

Srivastava, R.K. (2011). Understanding Brand Identity Confusion. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning,* 29 (4), 340-352.

van Riel, C. M., & Balmer, J. T. (1997). Corporate identity: The concept, its measurement and management. *European Journal Of Marketing*, 31 (5/6), 340.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing. *Journal Of Marketing*, 68 (1), 1-17.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal Of The Academy Of Marketing Science*, 36 (1), 1-10.

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S.A., & Bala, H. (2013). Bridging The Qualitative-Quantitative Divide: Guidelines For Conducting Mixed Methods Research In Information Systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 37 (1), 21-54.

Verčič, A., & Verčič, D. (2007). Reputation as matching identities and images: Extending Davies and Chun's (2002) research on gaps between the internal and external perceptions of the corporate brand. *Journal Of Marketing Communications*, 13 (4), 277-290.

Walker, K. (2010). A systematic Review of the Corporate Reputation Literature: Definition, Measurement, and Theory. *Corporate Reputation Review,* 12 (4), 357-387.

Walsh, G., Mitchell, V., Jackson, P. R., & Beatty, S. E. (2009). Examining the Antecedents and Consequences of Corporate Reputation: A Customer Perspective. *British Journal Of Management*, 20 (2).

Wu, C. (2011). A re-examination of the antecedents and impact of customer participation in service. *Service Industries Journal*, 31 (6), 863-876.

Yi, Y., & Gong, T. (2013). Customer value co-creation behavior: Scale development and validation. *Journal Of Business Research*, 66 (9), 1279-1284.

Yong, N., Kunio, S., & Michitaka, K. (2013). Value Co-creation Oriented Leadership for Promoting Service-Centric Business. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *22*(1), 216-228.

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. A. (1996). The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality. *Journal Of Marketing*, 60 (2), 31-46.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence. *Journal Of Marketing,* 52 (3), 2-22.

APPENDIX 1, VARGO AND LUSCH'S (2008) FOUNDATIONAL PREMISES

Foundational Premise	Original Statement from Vargo and Lusch's article	Own explanation
FP1	"Service is the fundamental basis of exchange"	The application of specialized skills and knowledge is the fundamental unit of exchange. People have different skills and competences, and therefore, it is fundamental that we specialize in different things, as this is most effective for the society.
FP2	"Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange"	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental unit of exchange. Economic trade is usually embedded in complex transactions, and therefore it can sometimes be difficult to see the service basis of exchange, even though it is exists in every transaction.
FP3	"Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision"	Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision. According to Vargo and Lusch, goods are not the common denominator for exchange, instead, services are always what is being traded. Even if a firm offers tangible goods, it is always the service "attached" to it that is exchanged, and, therefore, consumed.
FP4	"Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage"	Knowledge is a fundamental source of competitive advantage. Knowledge is an operant resource, and compared to operand resources (which are tangible), organizations should focus on developing and stress their operant resources.
FP5	"All economies are service economies"	All economies are service economies. As specialization and the exchange of knowledge and skills are increasing, all economies should be considered service-economies.
FP6	"The customer is always a co- creator of value"	The customer is always a co-producer. In the light of service-dominant logic, the customer should always be considered a co-producer of

		value. Even in the production of tangible goods, the consumer will be involved in the value-creation process as a user of the product, and this continuous process should be highlighted.
FP7	"The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions"	The enterprise can only make value propositions. Organizations provide value propositions, but it is the customer who must be the creator of value. The focal focus of organizations should be to provide value propositions that is better than the ones of competitors.
FP8	"A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational"	A service-centered view is customer oriented and relational. As the service-dominant logic is defined with the customer in center, and consider the customer as a co-creator of value, it is per se customer oriented and relational.
FP9	"All social and economic actors are resource integrators"	Organizations exist to integrate and transform micro specialized competences into complex services that are demanded in the marketplace.
FP10	"Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary"	The beneficiary always uniquely and phenomenologically determines value.

APPENDIX 2, INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background Questions:
- What position do you have in SACC-DC?
- How long have you been a member of SACC-DC?
- How long have you been a board member at SACC-DC?

Theme: Brand Identity
- Please tell us what SACC-DC stands for, for you?
- What do you think attracts potential members to join SACC-DC?
- What role do you think board members have in creating the brand identity?

Theme: Desired Identity
- What do should SACC-DC stand for?
- Do you think the members perceive the brand in the same way as you do?
- Where do you think SACC-DC will be in five years?

Theme: Reputation
- Please tell us how you perceive the reputation of SACC-DC.
- How do you think that the members of SACC-DC perceive the reputation? (Former members? Potential member?)
- How do you think that word-of-mouth among members affect the reputation of SACC-DC?
- How do you work internally and externally to maintain a good reputation?

Theme: Quality
- What services does SACC-DC provide to its members?
- How do you perceive the quality of these services?
- How do you think the members perceive the quality of the events they attend?

Theme: Co-creation
- How does SACC-DC provide value to the members?
- What value does SACC-DC provide to you?
- How do the members of SACC-DC provide value?

APPENDIX 3, THEMATIC NETWORK ANALYSIS

Global Theme - Brand Identity

Organizational Theme - Success and Strengths
Basic Theme:
- Events are SACC-DC's most important tool to recruit members
- It's a very strong brand
- SACC-DC is a successful chamber
- SACC-DC should be strong where they are, which is on the networking side
- SACC-DC should leverage on the political and regulatory connection

Organizational Theme - Non-Profit Setting
Basic Theme:
- Powerful members and high quality achievements with very few resources
- Sacrifice personal and professional time to contribute to different events or different goals
- Membership organizations have to constantly think about how to deliver value to the members
- Not sure if SACC-DC should be business oriented
- SACC-DC has low membership fees and you get what you pay for

Organizational Theme - High quality
Basic Theme:
- A direct effect on the brand if events are not successful
- The activities needs to be professionally done
- An organization of high quality
- An event by SACC-DC is going to be as first-class as possible

Organizational Theme - Social environment
Basic Theme:
- Through socializing you are doing lots of business and making contacts
- It's a fun place to be
- SACC-DC is not a social organization
- Trying to go more towards business events

Global Theme - Brand Delivery

Organizational Theme - Alignment between board members' and members' perceptions
Basic Theme:
- Everybody has a basic understanding of what SACC is and what they're signing up for
- People recognize what SACC-DC is
- It's not entirely clear to all the members what SACC is
- Potential members don't know what SACC-DC is
- Members and Board members are not equally involved, therefore, perceptions differ
- There is an information gap if perceptions differ

Organizational Theme - Meeting expectations
Basic Theme:
- There are different reasons to join
- SACC-DC tries to meet everyone's expectations
- It's possible to target everyone
- The events should be as broad as possible

Organizational Theme - Safe environment
Basic Theme:
- Get together in a protected forum
- Interact in a non-threatening area
- Should be a safe, social environment

Organizational Theme - Membership turnover
Basic Theme:
- Once people are members they tend to stay
- Low membership turnover is a measure of success
- SACC-DC has a strong membership base

Global Theme - Networking Value

Organizational Theme: Business Opportunities
Basic Theme:
- Promoting business between Sweden and DC
- Give each other business leads
- Connections through SACC-DC has lead to business deals
- SACC-DC can have a direct long term impact on members' business

Organizational Theme - Business Relationships
Basic Theme:
- A group of people and companies getting together to work on common interests
- Meet highly achieved Swedes and highly achieved Americans to interact
- The more diverse the membership is the more the opportunities there are for everyone

Organizational Theme - Networking
Basic Theme:
- Everything is about networking
- Should continue to be a networking organization
- SACC-DC helps their members to network

Organizational Theme - Information Channel
Basic Theme:
- Exchange business contacts
- SACC-DC used to teach people about Sweden
- SACC-DC is a transmission belt for information
- SACC-DC works with well-vetted, validated information

Organizing theme - Marketing Channel
Basic Theme:
- For corporations it's part of their lobbying efforts and maintaining their identity
- Large Swedish companies want to show that they are good citizens
- Brand promotion for their own companies

Global Theme - Responsibility

Organizational Theme: Board members' role in branding

Basic Theme:

- People talk about SACC-DC (members eller BM)
- Board members' communication is important
- Word-of-mouth is the most important way to attract new members
- Picking good people for the board protects the reputation
- Board members have a big role in their own companies promoting SACC-DC
- Board members have a great part in promoting SACC-DC at their workplace

Organizational Theme - Participation

Basic Theme:

- Members contribute by attending activities
- Member perceive the quality of the events they attend
- Members get more out of it the more they put into the activities
- In terms of what you put in, that is what you get

Organizational Theme - Managing reputation

Basic Theme:

- Like-minded people head off to the same direction and reputation is maintained
- SACC-DC can always do better

Organizational Theme - Sense of community

Basic Theme:

- SACC-DC embraces the Swedish brand
- Maintaining an open dialogue with members
- The social aspect gives a sense of community

APPENDIX 4, SURVEY QUESTIONS

We are Sophie Holmberg (a former SACC-DC intern) and Denise Ampuero, two candidates for master of business administration degrees from Umeå University in Umeå, Sweden. As you might have read in an earlier informational email, we are writing our master's thesis on the business aspects of SACC-DC. The goal of our thesis is to investigate the factors that influence SACC-DC's reputation and co-creation among current and former members. The results from the survey will serve as the basis to understand the eternal views of SACC-DC's reputation and its brand. We would therefore appreciate if you could take 8 minutes to answer the few questions of our survey. The survey is divided into seven categories: background information, brand image, satisfaction, perceived quality, reputation, brand experience, and co-creation.

This survey will be sent to current and former members of SACC-DC and also those receiving the newsletter. Your responses will be kept anonymous. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please do not hesitate to contact us using the contact information below. We will be in Washington, D.C. from March 21 until March 28 should you happen to have any questions.

We both sincerely extend our appreciation to you for your participation!

Kind regards,

Sophie Holmberg and Denise Ampuero

soho0017@student.umu.se, +46 70 530 75 56

dena0004@student.umu.se, +46 76 279 94 65

Background information:
The first seven questions will concern
1. Gender:
Male
Female

2. Age:
< 18
18-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60-69
> 70

3. Are you a member of SACC-DC? *If you are not a member, please go directly to Question 6.*
Yes
No
No, but I have been in the past

4. If you replied 'Yes' to Question 3, how long have you been a member?
< 1 year
1-3 years

4-6
7-9
> 10 years

5. If you replied 'Yes' to Question 3, which membership category do you belong to?
If you are a board member of SACC-DC, please choose 'Board Member' as your option
Corporate Membership ($1200/year)
Business Member ($600/year)
Individual Member ($95/year)
Young Professional Member ($35/year)
Board Member

6. What is your main connection to Sweden?
If more than one option applies, please choose the one you consider to be the strongest.
Swedish ancestry
Swedish spouse/partner
Professional interest
Personal Interest
Swedish citizen
Other:_____

7. Please indicate which of the following events you have attended in 2013-2014:
You can choose more than one option
Crayfish Party
Swedish Embassy Open (Golf Tournament)
Christmas Party
Young Professionals Happy Hour
Happy Hour
Luncheons
Annual Meeting
Breakfast Seminars
Other:_____

***Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5,
where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree***

Satisfaction
8. I feel satisfied with SACC-DC's overall performance
9. SACC-DC performance has met my expectation
Brand Image
10. SACC-DC is familiar to me
11. SACC-DC has a strong image
12. Overtime, SACC-DC has been very consistent in what it stands for
13. SACC-DC has a clean image

Perceived Quality
14. SACC-DC offers good quality service
15. SACC-DC offers very reliable service

16. Quality of services provided by SACC-DC are consistent
17. The likely quality of SACC-DC is extremely high

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

18. I am very familiar with the services of the organization.
19. I have seen or heard about SACC-DC lately.
20. I know many people who work for SACC-DC
21. SACC-DC is well-managed.
22. SACC-DC has highly skilled employees.
23. SACC-DC is efficient and productive.
24. SACC-DC is an innovative organization.
25. The services of SACC-DC are fairly priced.
26. SACC-DC provides excellent value to the customer.
27. SACC-DC is very powerful.
28. SACC-DC seems to be very strong to me.
29. SACC-DC has something unique to offer.
30. SACC-DC is very distinctive in the way it does things.
31. I really identify with SACC-DC.
32. I have a good feeling about SACC-DC.
33. I usually believe what SACC-DC says.
34. From what I know, SACC-DC lives up to its promises.
35. SACC-DC is an organization I can trust.
36. SACC-DC is honest and straightforward in its communications with the public.
37. SACC-DC is an organization that really cares about its employees.
38. SACC-DC contributes a lot to the communities in which it operates.
39. SACC-DC is an environmentally responsible organization.

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Brand Experience
40. SACC-DC makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.
41. I find SACC-DC interesting in a sensory way.
42. SACC-DC appeals to my senses.
43. SACC-DC induces feelings and sentiments.
44. I have strong emotions for SACC-DC.
45. SACC-DC is an emotional brand.
46. SACC-DC is action oriented.
47. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter SACC-DC.
48. SACC-DC makes me think.
49. SACC-DC stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.

Co-creation
50. If I have a useful idea on how to improve service, I let SACC-DC know.
51. When I receive good service from SACC-DC, I comment about it.

52. When I experience a problem, I let SACC-DC know about it.
53. I say positive things about SACC-DC to others.
54. I recommended SACC-DC to others.
55. I encourage friends and relatives to join SACC-DC.