A Process Perspective of Corporate Rebranding in SMEs:
A multiple case study of Restaurants and Bars in Östergötland

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Abstract

Background
In recent years, the subject of corporate rebranding has been receiving increasing attention as companies strive to develop new differentiated identities in the minds of their stakeholders. Several studies have been conducted on this subject, however, these studies have been biased towards large companies. Despite small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) being the most common type of businesses, most of the research on corporate rebranding has been focused on large corporations. Owing to the limited research studies on corporate rebranding in SMEs, this study seeks to shed more light on this subject by studying how the corporate rebranding process occurs in SMEs. By doing so, this study seeks to fill part of the research gap identified and contribute to the body of knowledge about corporate rebranding process in SMEs.

Methodology
The empirical approach involves a multiple case study of four SME companies from the restaurant and bar sector. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants from each company, through observations and also the use of secondary sources.

Results
The findings showed that the corporate rebranding process in SMEs involves few actors and is mostly owner-driven with the owner being at the centre of most of the activities and decision making. Furthermore, the findings show that the reasons for corporate rebranding in SMEs are change in ownership structure, bad reputation and change in market preferences. Based on the findings, we propose a corporate rebranding framework for SMEs that consists of the stages Assurance, Analysis, planning, Realisation and Evaluation.

Keywords: Corporate branding, Corporate rebranding, Small and medium-sized enterprises, Restaurant and bars
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Acronyms
EC European Commission
EU European Union
SME Small and Medium Enterprises
R&B Restaurant and Bar
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
In a competitive situation getting the company branding right is perhaps the most important job for management. (King, 1991, p. 49)

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one consist of the introduction of our research study, problem statement and research questions. In this part we also present the significance and a general disposition of the research study.

1.1 Introduction

Increasing market competition has made companies to strive for increased need for distinctiveness. When examining the variables that are most qualified to sustain a competitive advantage, the corporate image emerges (Kay, 2006). A good and strong corporate image can have a positive impact on workers, managers, investors, and customers’ evaluations. Due to industry restructuring and changing market dynamics, the vast majority of companies have been led to change their historical corporate names and to adopt new brand architectures in recent years (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). This kind of change can be referred to as corporate rebranding. Corporate rebranding can be distinguished from corporate branding as the former refers to a change between an initially formulated corporate brand and a new formulation (Merrilees and Miller, 2008). Corporations often rebrand in order to respond to external and/or internal factors. Firms commonly have rebranding cycles in order to stay current with the times or set themselves ahead of the competition (Tevi and Otubanjo, 2013). Corporate rebranding serves as an indication to the market that something in the company has changed and hopefully implying a more positive image. Companies that have rebranded themselves in recent years include Andersen Consulting, Philip Morris Corp., Guinness UDV, Bell Atlantic and most recently McDonald’s to mention a few examples.

When it comes to literature regarding corporate rebranding the focus is usually on large companies or multinational companies. Interestingly enough there is very little that has been
written on the subject of corporate rebranding in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Paradoxically, SMEs make up the majority of companies and contribute enormously to the economic growth of most countries (Muller et al, 2014; Razeghi et al., 2014). SMEs differ from large companies and as such it is necessary to study corporate rebranding in their context.

Most SMEs operate in the service sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, the hotel and restaurant business, communications and construction sector (OECD, 2000). This thesis focuses on the hospitality industry, particularly on the restaurant and bars (R&B) sector, as it is one of the most eminent sectors that has been practicing rebranding strategies (Holden, 2011), since more and more customers are looking for R&Bs that offer comfort and value (Borrows et al., 2012). In addition, R&Bs have features which set them apart from other service sectors such as financial, manufacturing and professional services (Jones, 1999). Peacock (1992) asserts that this sector is flexible, artisan-focused and context-dependent enough to offer a high degree of customization. Furthermore R&Bs sector is more volatile, changeable and fashion-prone (Johns and Pine, 2002). Thus we found it to be a particularly interesting sector for studying corporate rebranding.

1.2 Problem Statement

Corporate rebranding implies that a known brand changes its identity and in some cases takes on a completely new brand name (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). This is not only a costly business, but a risky one as the firm can alienate its customers and other stakeholders. We have observed that most of the literature regarding corporate rebranding is carried out in the context of larger corporations such as Coca Cola, Apple, and McDonalds etc. In fact, Ahonen (2008) indicates clearly that corporate rebranding in SMEs is a seldom studied area. Despite the fact that the vast majority of companies around the world are SMEs, corporate rebranding in SMEs has been overlooked (Berthon, Ewing, and Napoli, 2008).

Studies on corporate rebranding have been conducted on subjects such as reasons for corporate rebranding (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006), outcomes on corporate rebranding and the process of corporate rebranding in companies (Daly and Moloney, 2004; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006).
This thesis focuses on the process aspect of corporate rebranding in the SMEs context in R&Bs. The literature on corporate rebranding process has provided several frameworks on how the corporate rebranding process occurs, however, it is in the context of large companies. SMEs differ from the larger companies (Razeghi et al., 2014; Kocak, 2007), therefore they provide an interesting context within which to examine how the corporate rebranding process is carried out.

1.3 Aim and Research Question

This thesis seeks to shed light on corporate rebranding in SMEs and particularly describes the processes of corporate rebranding. By process we imply the order of stages, events or activities that are performed from the start to the end of the corporate rebranding process in SMEs. The research study involves a case study approach of R&Bs in Östergötland Sweden. The research questions are as follows:

- Why is corporate rebranding process undertaken in SMEs?
- Who are the main actors of the corporate rebranding process in SMEs?
- What are the stages of the corporate rebranding process in SMEs?

1.4 Significance

This study’s significance is twofold, for both research and practice. In terms of research, our goal is to contributing to the limited amount of studies made about corporate rebranding in an SME’s context. This study intends to contribute by filling the gaps in literature, additionally, this theoretical contribution in turn will hopefully lead to a deeper understanding of corporate rebranding process in a SME’s context. Regarding practice, this study brings new insights about the process of corporate rebranding that may be helpful for the SMEs.

1.5 Disposition

The rest of our research study will be structured as follows:
Chapter 1
- Chapter one consist of the introduction of our research study, problem statement and research questions. In this part we also present the significance and a general disposition of the research study.

Chapter 2
- Methodology
  - The methodological reasoning of the research is presented in this chapter. The approaches, methods and techniques that have been chosen and used during the research will be explained, as well.

Chapter 3
- Theoretical framework
  - The chapter focuses on the relevant theories and models for the purpose of the research study. The chapter is structure according to a funnel approach. It will explain broader theories in the beginning to give an understanding of branding and then narrow down to the actual subject or corporate rebranding. The frameworks from this chapter will be used as a basis for analysing the empirical findings.

Chapter 4
- Empirical study and Findings
  - The empirical chapter presents the relevant information gathered through primary and secondary data sources, this information is presented on a case by case basis.

Chapter 5
- Analysis and Discussions
  - In this chapter all the cases are analysed to find similarities and differences. The theories and framework in chapter two will be used to analyse the empirical findings. In the end a summarized cross case table is pre

Chapter 6
- Conclusion
  - In the conclusion the most important findings from the research study are presented and the research questions are answered. The theoretical contributions, limitations and suggestions for further research are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7
- Reference
  - The complete reference list will be include in this section.

Chapter 8
- Appendix
  - A outline of our case interview questions will be include in this section.
CHAPTER TWO

2 Methodology

The objective of this chapter is to describe the methodological approach that was used and the reasons behind it. It will start by presenting the choice of subject for our study, followed by the research approach and research strategy used. Then it will explain why we opted for the multiple case approach and how the case companies were selected. Furthermore, it will explain the data collection methods and the data analysis approach used. The chapter ends with a section on reliability and validity.

2.1 Choice of Subject

The choice of our topic for this thesis was driven by a combination of our interest and a review of the relevant literature in line with our interest. We conducted a literature review on our area of interest which was branding and SMEs. The literature review was used to find the research gap. After an extensive review on past studies, we found that there is a broad range of studies about various subjects of branding in SMEs. However we found that literature regarding corporate rebranding was almost non-existent in SMEs. A search on Google scholar found only one study on corporate rebranding by Juntunen (2014) whose study focuses on renaming process in SMEs. Due to the limited research on corporate rebranding in SMEs, we arrived at the decision to study corporate rebranding process so as to make a contribution by way of filling the gap identified. This study examines corporate rebranding process in the context of R&B sector. In this study we use the theoretical framework about corporate rebranding process for large companies since there is not yet one that is well established for SMEs.
2.2 Research Approach

Research approach is concerned with the way in which the researchers will collect data to answer their research questions (Saunder et al., 2009). In this research, we used inductive approach to answer the research questions. This is because we think it is the best approach that has a link on research methods to answer our research questions. As we were not concerned with testing a hypothesis or existing theory, we found an inductive approach appropriate for our study. Our intention was to make the most of the rich data we had access to, and sought a deeper understanding of the specific situation. However, having this in mind did not automatically rule out the deductive approach, as the inductive and deductive stances are not as unambiguous as they sometimes are presented to be (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

2.3 Research Strategies

Our strategy for this study was to use qualitative methods since qualitative research strategy emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In this study we decided that a qualitative approach would be undertaken as the type of responses sought would require some degree of explanation. With the formulation of the research questions, qualitative approach was more likely to give us detailed data in form of words than the numerical data that would be obtained from the quantitative approach.

2.4 Multiple Case Study Approach

This study used a multiple case study approach. Dayman and Holloway (2011) advises that a case study is suitable if the researcher is interested in examining an issue within a particular context of which is the case in this research study. Case studies are considered more robust and are useful approach for theory development (Cooper and Schindler, 2011.) New phenomena are often studied by way of case studies (Yin 2003) because the latter can be particularly effective in providing new insights into a phenomenon of which very little is known (Eisenhardt, 1989). This research used multiple case study that relies on several cases as opposed to a single case study. Central to theory building from multiple cases is replication logic, which is analogous to
conducting a series of related “discrete experiments that serve as replications, contrasts, and extensions to the emerging theory” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Replication logic seeks cases that predict either similar findings or contrasting results for theoretically anticipatable reasons (Yin, 2009).

Furthermore, the multiple cases provided rich, empirical descriptions of how the process of corporate rebranding is carried out based on a variety of data sources (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). We opted for a multiple case study over a single case study because the current theory of corporate rebranding in general and in small business in particular, has gaps that demand elaboration. Besides with multiple cases, each case may add something new to the understanding of the topic at hand. Our study used SMEs firms as the unit of analysis since the purpose of the study is to develop a holistic understanding of corporate rebranding process in SMEs.

2.5 Case Selection

This study employed a combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling when it came to the case selection. Case selection was purposeful designed to achieve the widest possible variation of cases (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). By variation, we mean the cases involved are those that have rebranded for different reasons. We wanted to get explanations regarding our research questions from different category of respondents. That is the heterogeneous nature of purposive sampling technique (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, convenience sampling for this study means that geographical location was be taken into consideration. Since we are currently residing in Östergötland, we wanted to work with cases that are within our proximity. However we are aware that this will have consequences on our generalisability.

The case selection process is divided in choosing the cases and also choosing the informants or participants (Dayman and Holloway, 2011). When it comes to the number of cases in a qualitative case study there should not be too many cases, as this will reduce the depth of each case and the overall analysis may be diluted. It is not usual to study more than four cases in a case study (ibid). Due to the nature of our topic (corporate rebranding), it was not easy to identify
straight away the companies that have rebranded themselves before. From the onset we had decided that our study should involve case companies from the R&B sector as we found this sector interesting and different from others as mentioned in the previous chapter. We managed to identify the case companies through searching for potential cases around the city where a couple of R&Bs are located. Then through our search we were able to identify one company that met our study requirements and through this first contact we were led to the other companies that have also experienced corporate rebranding. At the end of the search, we identified seven potential case companies for our study. After efforts to obtain access to all, we managed to get access to only five case companies. However after a thorough review of all our cases during the study, one company was dropped as it did not convince us enough that it was a case of corporate rebranding. Therefore in the end we remained with four case companies. All the cases have had either a change of name, logo, aesthetics or the combination and thus qualify to be used in our study. We opted to select key informants from each case being those that understood our subject and also participated in the corporate rebranding process. The informants and their respective companies that participated in this research study have retained the right to have their identities kept confidential. To maintain anonymity all references to individuals and their respective R&Bs have been replaced with pseudonyms. The cases involved are four in total and are referred to as case A, B, C, and D and are presented in this order in the empirical findings chapter.

2.6 Data Collection Methods

The data collected comprised of both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to original material and information such as interviews, and observation. Secondary data attribute to material and information that was documented by others (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

2.6.1 Primary Data

Our primary source of data came from in-depth interviews with the owners and managers of the SMEs case companies. From each case company we interviewed a key representative of
management. We conducted face to face interviews with two managers and two owners from the respective cases. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit the SME managers’ or owners’ narratives of how they rebranded their companies. “A narrative offers only one version of the truth, interpreted and told by somebody from a specific point of view, and it is, therefore, always possible to narrate the same events in a different way.” (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008: 223). In the narrative interviews, each interviewee provided their own description of the process of corporate rebranding of their company. The interviews were approximately an hour each and were conducted at the interviewee’s premises for their convenience owing to their busy schedules.

The theoretical framework helped us formulate an interview guide. Once the interview guide was ready, we contacted the key people in the case companies for an interview. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were employed for primary data collection. All interviews were recorded with the interviewee’s permission. The advantages of recording interviews was that it allowed us to repeat the interviewee’s answer and helped us to correct the natural limitations of our memories and of the intuitive glosses that we might place on what respondent said in interviews (Bryman and Bell, 2011). During the interviews it was also necessary to take notes in order to recall our own reflections on what was being said. Afterwards we made a transcription of each interview and used this information, along with the secondary sources collected to write the empirical section (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The collection of primary data also included observation of the appearance, decoration and logo of each case R&B so as to compare the difference before and after the rebranding process. For each R&B, we were granted the permission to look around the premises so as to observe the evidence of rebranding process.

2.6.2 Secondary Data

To achieve triangulation in order to enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the primary data was complemented with observations, document analysis and literature as secondary data. Yin (2007) explains that when conducting case studies documents confirm, elaborate and strengthen data collected from other resources. The secondary data included the company’s websites and additional material from the local newspapers about our case companies.
Furthermore, in order to gather the theoretical material, Linköping library database was used to search for the relevant academic articles for this study.

2.7 Data Analysis

The analysis of our qualitative data involved examining, categorizing, tabulating and recombining the empirical evidence in order to generate answers to research questions (Yin, 2003). As earlier mentioned the data generated from interviews was recorded and then transcribed. This data was reviewed with significant sentences and words highlighted to help generate themes for coding. Coding the first few interviews made it easier to identify emergent themes during subsequent interviews. According to Harwood and Garry (2003), coding helps researchers to generate comprehensive understanding of social interactions, relationships. In the end, important themes were extracted and compared and they were organized and presented in our analysis. The data analysis made use of the analytical technique called pattern matching, where the process observed from each case was compared with those from others and those predicted by the theoretical model (Yin, 2003). With this approach we were able to identify similarities and differences between the cases and compared them to the theoretical framework.

2.8 Reliability and Validity of Study

Reliability and validity are important issues in the collection and analysis of data as the credibility of qualitative data depends not only on the reliability of the data and methods, but also on the validity of the findings.

As regards reliability, we ensured that all respondents understood the questions in the same way so that the answers could be coded without the chance of uncertainty (Silverman, 2006). In order to ensure that questions were understood by all respondents in the same way, questions were formulated as easy as possible while avoiding ambiguity and leading questions. Furthermore, the questions were explained or rephrased if needed and definitions for “complex” terms was provided (e.g. corporate rebranding). Another aspect of reliability that guided us was
conformability. Conformability means that although we understood that complete objectivity was impossible, it was important for us to act in good faith and ensure that our personal values did not affect the execution of the study or its findings (Bryman, 2002). In addition, the transcription was detailed to make sure that the empirical data consisted of what the respondents really said, this was done to make sure that no subjective information was presented.

Triangulation helped us to achieve validity through comparing different kinds of data to validate the information provided by the respondents (Silverman, 2006). The external validity is related to the generalisability of the results from the research (Saunders et al., 2007). The study involved only four cases and all from one industry and therefore compromises external validity as findings may only be most applicable only to the particular industry studied. However, the use of multiple cases can be considered a strength in our study as we have gained insight into the phenomenon being studied.
CHAPTER THREE

3 Theoretical Framework
This chapter focuses on the relevant theories and models for the purpose of our research study. The chapter is structured in a funnel approach. Initially, it will present the broader theories to give an understanding of branding and conclude by narrowing down to the actual subject of corporate rebranding. As mentioned before, this study focuses on corporate rebranding in the SMEs context, however, the theories used on corporate rebranding are those in relation to large companies. After searching on previous studies about corporate rebranding in SMEs in Google scholar, the result showed that there is hardly anything written on this subject matter. We only found one article by Juntune (2014) which emphasizes on the renaming aspect of corporate rebranding in SMEs. Consequently in this study we will use corporate rebranding theories about large companies.

The first source of our theoretical understanding is taken from the literature on branding and corporate branding because we consider these fields to be the roots of our main subject which is corporate rebranding. Built on this literature, the chapter continues with corporate rebranding where the definitions, reasons for corporate rebranding, types of corporate rebranding and the rebranding framework are presented. In addition we will also review literature on SMEs where we present the detailed definition of SMEs, their characteristics and also literature on branding in SMEs. An understanding of what SMEs are and a review of relevant literature is important to us because this is the context of our study.

The last part of this chapter gives a description of the R&B sector. This is the sector where our case companies for this study have been taken from. It was important for us to have an understanding of this study context by looking at its features so that we could have a better analysis and understanding of the empirics that would be later collected.
3.1 Branding

The concept of the branding can be traced back to product marketing where the role of branding and brand management has been primarily to create differentiation and preference for a product or service in the mind of the customer (Alizadeh et al., 2014). According to Alizadeh et al. (2014) a brand is a statement, an image, a message, which is packed and delivered to the customer, so that they know what the company stands for. Kotler and Keller (2008) views a brand as a name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them intended to identify goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. In accounting, a brand is defined as an intangible asset and is often the most valuable asset on a corporation's balance sheet (Wood, 2000). Brand owners manage their brands carefully to create shareholder value, and brand valuation is an important management technique that ascribes a monetary value to a brand, and allows marketing investment to be managed to maximize shareholder value (Goyal and Sharma, 2014).

Originally, brands were used as the means for differentiating the products by craftsmen and claiming the ownership of animals by cattle owners (de Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Kapferer, 2004). Nowadays, companies use brands not only with an aim to differentiate the company's marketing offerings from the ones of competitors, but also to reach the minds and hearts of their customers and create special emotional connections with them (Biedenbach, 2012). Companies in a variety of industries attempt to develop strong brands and to use them for achieving success in the competitive marketing environment (ibid).

3.2 Corporate Branding

The subject of corporate branding has received considerable attention in recent years (Balmer, 2001a; Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Ind, 1997; Schultz and de Chernatony, 2002; Schultz and Hatch, 2003). Corporate branding started off in the 1990s when it was explicitly used (Balmer and Gray, 2003). It has been promoted as a tool to meet the multiple challenges of the firm today and also the need for increased differentiation in increasingly commoditized markets (Ind, 1997). According to Jones (2010), the impact of corporate branding is often argued as being twofold,
firstly that through successful nurturing corporate identity can form the basis of a sustainable and unique differential advantage and secondly that a strong corporate identity enables, motivates and harmonizes the workforce around the corporate brand and, most importantly leads to consistency in the firm/customer service interaction.

Jones (2010) asserts that corporate branding has three main goals: Firstly, it seeks to bring the organization together internally. A major focus of corporate communication today is internal; at motivating employees and building positive organizational cultures that increase loyalty and productivity. Secondly, it seeks to harmonize internal and external communication. Under the challenges of greater transparency (to the media, to investors and to other stakeholders) creating consistent messages reduces the chances of conflict and increases the profile of the organization. Thirdly, integrated communication aims to enforce a core, enduring and distinctive identity for the organization. It is this element that seeks to use the corporate brand as a differential variable in an over communicated market.

3.2.1 Corporate Branding Vs Product Branding

In principle it is possible to speak of three basic brand hierarchies in the companies, namely corporate-dominant, product-dominant, and mixed branding (Laforet and Saunders 2005). Product branding can be seen as consisting of a set of perceptions which serve to differentiate the product from the competition (Alizadeh et al, 2014). Whereas product branding builds separate brand identities for different products, corporate branding refers to the strategy in which brand and corporate name are the same (de Chernatony, 1997).

The traditional view of branding was oriented towards products only (Alizadeh et al., 2014). As customers became aware of the brand communities, businesses evolved their focus from product branding to corporate branding in order to be part of a community (Hatch and Schultz, 2003). Among the changes that businesses make as they move toward globalisation is a shift in marketing emphasis from product branding to corporate branding (ibid). This is usually ascribed to the difficulties of maintaining credible product differentiation in the face of imitation and homogenisation of products and services, and the fragmentation of traditional market segments that occurs as customers become more sophisticated and markets more complex (ibid).
Even though corporate branding is sometimes seen to be similar to product branding, there are several differences that can be highlighted. To begin with, corporate branding pushes the scope of brand thinking beyond the product. Accordingly, the values and emotions symbolised by the organisation become key elements of differentiation strategies, and the corporation itself moves center stage (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). The corporate brand defines the firm that will deliver and stand behind the offering that the customer will buy and use (Aaker, 2004). Academic and professional interests in corporate branding are based on the premise that a well-managed corporate brand differentiates the organisation from its competitors (Harris and de Chernatony 2001).

Corporate branding involves all stakeholders, (Balmer and Grey, 2003). Among organisational researchers in particular, a corporate brand was long seen as an explicit covenant, a promise, made between an organisation and its key stakeholder groups (Balmer, 2001a). Stakeholders are defined as “a group or individual who can have an effect on or be affected by the actions of an organisation” (Freeman 1984: 46) and these may include for example, employees, customers, investors, suppliers, partners, regulators, special interests and local communities (Hatch and Schultz 2003). From this perspective the covenant was promoted via multiple channels of communication to the stakeholders and the stakeholders experienced the corporate brand through the organisation’s products, services and staff behaviour. While product brands mainly targets consumers or customers, corporate brands also contribute to the images formed and held by organisational and community members, investors, partners, suppliers and other interested parties (Balmer and Grey, 2003).

It is argued that there is a growing awareness that corporate branding can increase the company’s visibility, recognition and reputation in ways not fully appreciated by product-brand thinking (Balmer and Greyser, 2002). The corporate brand contributes not only to customer-based images of the organisation, but to the images formed and held by all its stakeholders that may include customers, employees, suppliers and local community. A strong corporate brand acts as a focal point for the attention, interest and activity stakeholders bring to a corporation (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). When corporate branding works, it is because it expresses the values and/or sources of desire that attract key stakeholders to the organisation and encourage them to feel a sense of belonging to it (Hatch and Schultz, 2001).
Balmer and Grey (2003) argues that corporate branding requires much more complicated and sophisticated organisational practices than product branding. Whereas product branding could be handled within the marketing department of a company, corporate branding requires organisation-wide support. The whole organisation from top to bottom and across functional units is involved in realising the corporate brand, along with the audiences the brand is meant to attract and engage (ibid).

Even though the strength of corporate branding as a tool for improving brand performance is widely accepted in theory (Balmer, 2001a; Ind, 1997; Jones, 2010) the actual practice has perhaps been more problematic as there is evidence that implementation of corporate brand is associated with difficulties for the organization (Ind, 1997). Keller (1999) reveals that many companies are unsure of why they develop a corporate branding strategy whilst others do not adequately consider the development of the brand in relation to the organization’s various stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

3.2.2 Corporate Branding Framework

Hatch and Schultz (2001) propose a framework for corporate branding and describe three elements that form the foundation for corporate branding. The writers argue that corporate branding is developed by the interplay of three fundamental elements which include the following:

- **Strategic vision** - the central idea behind the company that embodies and expresses top management’s aspiration for what the company will achieve in the future.
- **Organisational culture** - the internal values, beliefs and basic assumptions that embody the heritage of the company and communicate its meanings to its members; culture manifests itself in the ways employees all through the ranks feel about the company they are working for.
- **Corporate images** - views of the organisation developed by its stakeholders; the outside world’s overall impression of the company including the views of customers, shareholders, the media, the general public, and so on.
According to their findings, successful corporate branding rests on a foundation of interplay between strategic vision, organizational culture and corporate image. They propose a cross-functional approach that integrates the whole corporation. They also argue that the involvement of multiple stakeholders and the different interfaces of corporate brands highlight the relational nature of corporate branding.

### 3.3 Corporate Rebranding

#### 3.3.1 Definition of Corporate Rebranding

Rebranding corresponds to the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders and competitors (Borges and Branca, 2010). Literature gives a wide variety of what corporate rebranding is. In the current literature corporate rebranding is mostly associated with name change (Kaikati, 2003; Muzellec et al., 2003). Muzellec et al. (2003) defines corporate re-branding as the practice of building anew a name representative of a differentiated position in the mind frame of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors. Juntunen et al. (2009) provides a broader definition of corporate re-branding by stating that it is a systematically planned and implemented process of planning, creating and
maintaining a new favourable image and consequently a favourable reputation for the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism in order to pro act or react to change. The authors explain that corporate rebranding can be seen as a twofold area. First, it is related to corporate visual identity change, including e.g. corporate name and logo change, and second, it is also related to the corporate internal processes, including e.g. corporate values change.

In this study we have adopted a broad definition of corporate rebranding that does not only involve name, logo change but also changes in aesthetics or their combination (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006)

3.3.2 Reasons for Corporate Rebranding

The main causes for corporate rebranding are decisions, events or processes causing a change in a company’s structure, strategy or performance of sufficient magnitude to suggest the need for a fundamental redefinition of its identity (Juntunen et al, 2009)

There are several reasons for corporate re-branding in companies and these may include:

- Change in ownership structure such as mergers and acquisitions, spin-offs, private to public ownership, sponsorship
- Change in corporate strategy such as diversification and divestment, internationalization and localization
- Change in competitive position. This include factors such as erosion of market position, outdated position and reputational problems.
- Change in external environment such as legal obligation, major crises or catastrophes.

From the driver of change in ownership, the rebranding is presented as an administrative necessity following a corporate strategic decision of non-marketing nature (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). In other words, structural factors such as mergers and acquisitions typically cause a fundamental redefinition of the company’s business and require a major change in organisation culture and identity (ibid). Thus, the change in ownership may lead to restructuring
in the definition of the company because the new shareholder brings their concept and strategy to organization (ibid).

3.3.3 Actors in Corporate Rebranding Process
Literature reveals that corporate rebranding requires the participation of several actors both inside and outside the organization (Juntunen et al, 2009). Hatch and Schultz (2003) assert that corporate re-branding necessitates synergy between marketing, human resource management and strategy. The context determines the involvement of different stakeholder groups in the process. Staff, customer and communications agency involvement at varying levels are found. Often the process is more complex and time-consuming than the companies anticipate. (Lomax and Mador, 2006.) It is argued that corporate rebranding is a holistic, complex and multilevel issue in which several perspectives, processes, actions and actors need to be taken into account (Juntunen et al, 2009).

3.3.4 Types of Corporate Rebranding
Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) views rebranding as a continuum where it can be characterised as evolutionary or revolutionary. The authors argue that rebranding is described according to the degree of change in the marketing aesthetics and in the brand positioning. Evolutionary rebranding describes a fairly minor development in the company’s positioning and aesthetics that is so gradual that it is hardly perceptible to outside observers. On the other hand revolutionary rebranding describes a major identifiable change in positioning and aesthetics that fundamentally redefines the company. This is the change that is usually symbolised by a change of name and so this variable is used as an identifier for cases of revolutionary rebranding (ibid).

Keller (2000) has also contributed to the rebranding literature by categorising rebranding according to the level in the corporate hierarchy where it occurs. He argues that rebranding can occur at any of the three levels namely the corporate level, business unit level and product level. However, he says that in other cases rebranding may filter down from corporate level down to business unit level. The figure below illustrates the different levels at which rebranding may occur.
3.3.5 Corporate Rebranding Process

In the previous literature, descriptions regarding the corporate rebranding process have been provided (Daly and Moloney, 2004; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006, and Ahonen, 2008). Daly and Moloney (2004) have proposed a corporate rebranding framework based on their research with the management, the personnel and the customers of companies that rebranded themselves. The writers propose this framework to help companies manage their process of corporate rebranding. The framework includes three main stages consisting of analysis, planning and evaluation. The key elements of the framework are situation analysis, the renaming strategy, communication and training strategies and the rebranding marketing plan.
Analysis: The first step in the rebranding process is the analysis stage. Daly and Moloney (2004) explain that all aspects of marketing planning should be anchored in, and be developed from, a situation or market analysis. Generally the analysis should examine quantitative and qualitative issues such as: market size and potential; market attitudes and preferences; and competitor strengths and weaknesses. In addition, brand audit is important at this stage. Brand audits should provide the market's perspective on the brands involved in rebranding, showing their strengths and weaknesses and those of competing brands. After the brand audit, the new brand decision is
made, which is formed as a result from the identification of the brand elements that need to be
maintained permanently and those brand elements that need to be retained only temporarily.
After their identification the company can distinguish brand elements that have to be removed in
the process of rebranding.

**Planning:** The next step of the rebranding process is planning the communication strategies for
targeting the external and internal customers (Daly and Moloney, 2004). After analysing the
attitudes of the employees the company will need to develop training programs and
communication strategies for the internal customer. In this way the employees will support the
process of rebranding, will be more committed to it and will be trained in the acquiring
company's policies and procedures (ibid). The communication strategy for the external customers
involves development of the renaming strategy and rebranding marketing plan. According to
Ahonen (2008) planning is seen a wide phase including several decisions and consisting of
several sub-processes of re-positioning, renaming, restructuring and re-designing the company
before the new corporate brand is launched.

**Evaluation:** The last step in the rebranding process is the evaluation of the previous stages and
campaigns in terms of the goals and objectives that have been set in the process. The evaluation
allows any aspect of a plan to be altered as the need for such change becomes evident. Daly and
Moloney (2004) advise that a review or overall evaluation should be held at the end to take a
more holistic view of the planning process. Evaluation also includes measuring the success or
failure of the process (Ahonen, 2008). Measuring is difficult, and therefore it is suggested that
corporate re-branding should be evaluated with regards of its initial goals (Stuart and Muzellec,
2004).

An additional stage added by Ahonen (2008) is implementation stage. The author proposes that
the implementation stage is after the planning stage and includes the re-launching of the new
corporate brand planned before. Launching the new brand is a twofold area including launching
first for internal stakeholders and after that for external stakeholders. Internally, the brand can be
introduced through newspapers, annual meetings, workshops, intranet (Daly and Moloney 2003),
team meetings or training and education. To external stakeholders the new brand can be
communicated through press releases, advertising brochures and in routine communications (Juntunen et al, 2009). It is argued that the stages of the corporate rebranding might be intertwined and/or overlapping, and do not necessarily follow each other in this order (ibid).

When it comes to renaming of the corporate names, Kapferer (1992) proposes four approaches to renaming a corporate. In some cases, interim approach is used where the interim arrangement before the new name replace the old name or legacy brand. The prefix approach is more appropriate when two or more brands merge, but none of the existing brands is used as the new brand. Substitution approaches involves substituting or switching from the old to the new name, or indeed to a completely different name. The last approach, brand amalgamation, is typically suited where two strong brands merge. Amalgamating the names brings the strength and values of the two brands together and the resulting equity may be greater than the sum of the parts.

### 3.4 Small and Medium Enterprises

#### 3.4.1 Definition

The definition of SMEs may be different according to different countries and regions. Generally, indicators like capital, earnings, turnover, balance sheet total, numbers of employees etc. are used to define SMEs. SMEs have been defined as non-subsidiary, independent firms which employ less than a given number of employees; and this number differs across national statistical systems (OECD, 2000).

According to EC (2015), SMEs are companies with less than 250 employees and which have turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. Additionally, independence is one of the basic criterions for an enterprise to become a SME. An SME can be said to be independent if it is not more than 25% owned or controlled by another enterprise or jointly by several enterprises which are not themselves SMEs. EC (2015) groups SMEs into three categories as follows:

- Micro Enterprises: The firms with less than 10 employees, annual turnover not more than 2 million EUR, and/or balance sheet assets total not exceeding 2 million EUR.
- Small Enterprises: The firms with employees less than 50 persons, annual turnover not more than 10 million EUR, and/or balance sheet assets total not exceeding 10 million EUR.
- Medium Enterprises: The firms with less than 250 employees, annual turnover not more than 50 million EUR, and/or annual balance sheet assets total not exceeding 43 million EUR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise Category</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>or</th>
<th>Balance Sheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium-sized</td>
<td>&lt; 250</td>
<td>≤ € 50 million</td>
<td></td>
<td>≤ € 43 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-sized</td>
<td>&lt; 50</td>
<td>≤ € 10 million</td>
<td></td>
<td>≤ € 10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-sized</td>
<td>&lt; 10</td>
<td>≤ € 2 million</td>
<td></td>
<td>≤ € 2 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission, 2015

3.4.2 Characteristics of SMEs

Knowing that SMEs differ from large companies provides an interest perspective to study and understand how corporate rebranding practices are performed in SMEs. SMEs can be differentiated from large companies by their characteristics. One of the differences pertains to size. As we have mentioned before our working definition for SMEs is that an SME is an enterprise which has a headcount less than 250 people. In addition to the staff headcount ceiling, an enterprise qualifies as an SME if either the turnover does not exceed 50 million euro, and/or the balance sheet does not exceed 43 million euro (EC, 2015).

Special attention can be paid to the role of the owners in SME as he or she is seen to be omnipresent in every function of the small firm. The small business owner is a generalist who has to have a vision of where the business is going and at the same time to take care of the operational details carried out in the firm (Hogarth-Scott 1996). The decision making processes with SMEs is focused on the owner’s influences and scarce resources. This has meant that the SME’s entire key business processes such as recruitment, finance, networking, and market understanding etc. revolve around the owner (Culkin and Smith, 2000; Bhutta et al., 2008).
may imply that each SME may require its own leadership and management style with unique personality (Culkin and Smith, 2000; Gilmore et al., 1999).

Given the relative freedom of leadership within SMEs it is not surprising to see the flourishing entrepreneurial culture, flexibility, and innovativeness, which makes them more responsive to customer needs (Gilmore et al., 1999; Cohn and Lindberg, 1972). SMEs are able to live within the client markets and using their simple organization structure they are able to obtain market knowledge and quickly customize, or add value to their products and organization service (Gilmore et al., 1999). McCartan-Quinn and Carson (2003) echoes similar views by saying that small firms are seen to operate close to their customers, to be flexible and to respond quickly to the changing needs of customers. Some SMEs place strong emphasis on customer care, concern for employees’ welfare and reliance on intuition and awareness of the environment in their marketing (Blankson et al., 2006). Krake (2005) argues that these inherent characteristics of the SMEs allows them to achieve benefits that large companies can acquire only by spending huge costs and energy to revive them.

3.4.3 Branding Issues in SMEs

In order to understand corporate rebranding in SMEs and to review on what subjects have been studied about branding in SMEs, we have taken a look at branding literature in general on SMEs since not much has been written on our particular subject of interest that is corporate rebranding. As we have already mentioned numerous researches and academic works have been conducted on the various subjects on branding. Research regarding branding among SMEs was almost non-existent before 2005 (Ahonen, 2008) and researchers have explained that the subject of branding in SMEs is still in its infancy stage (Krake, 2005; Merrilees, 2007). However over the years, studies on branding related subjects in SMEs have been slowing increasing. When we searched using the keywords such as SME branding, SME corporate branding etc., we found a vast amount of articles with branding related topics on SMEs. However, in this section we only present a few selected articles to show the common branding subjects on SMEs.
Currently the studies about branding in SMEs range from Brand management, corporate branding and name changing (Ahonen, 2008; Razeghi, 2014; Juntunen, 2014). The studies on SME appear to concentrate more corporate branding, rather than product branding. However, it was noticed that theoretical backgrounds still utilized the knowledge of product branding rather than purely corporate branding (Ahonen, 2008). Corporate branding can be an important and appropriate method of introducing and differentiating SMEs (Razeghi et al., 2014). The differentiation and brand identity can allow them to get maximum return on their resources (Bergström et al., 2010). SMEs have potentially beneficial resources like assets, organizational culture, customer care, position and performance of the company which could help the stakeholders distinguish and prefer their brand. Corporate brand building based on special advantages of SMEs, can bring them differentiation and consistency of image with reality. However there is a risk in SMEs that brand credibility may get dependent on the entrepreneur (Razeghi et al., 2014).

It is a widely accepted fact that SMEs lack the resources that large companies have. The lack of adequate resources may be one of the reasons why branding in SMEs is not a favourite activity (Ahonen, 2008). Opoku et al (2007) echoes similar sentiments by stating that compared to large companies SMEs usually lack financial resources and brand management is not given the priority it needs for creating a strong brand image. Also Krake (2005) explains that branding is often considered expensive, and brand management often receives little or no attention in the daily run of affairs in SMEs.

However, several researchers suggest that branding is important in SMEs as well (Ahonen, 2008). Berthon et al. (2008) argues that SME marketers can creatively manage and leverage the full potential of their brands even with constrained budgets. Additionally, Opoku et al. (2007, p. 362) argues that “Brands are symbols around which social actors, including firms, suppliers, supplementary organizations, the public, and customers construct identities. Branding is a critical issue in the SME sector because brands allow actors, such as organizations, to say things about themselves in ways that every-day language cannot convey.” Juntuen (2014) is one of the latest addition on the SME branding literature. Her contribution is on the corporate rebranding subject. In her research she focuses on the renaming process which is a part of corporate rebranding. The
author suggest that SMEs should actively involve stakeholders in the renaming process as it was found that the process is management centric.

From our review of branding literature in general about branding related subjects in SMEs, we observed that branding in SMEs involve a wide range of perspectives and has touched on areas such as brand management and corporate branding. However, almost nothing on corporate rebranding in SMEs has been studied. We found that studies on corporate rebranding in SMEs have been under represented and thus this is the area we would like to make a contribution on by studying corporate rebranding processes in SMEs.

3.5 Description of Context: Restaurant and Bars

In this section, we highlight the features of the R&B sector since our case companies belong to this sector.

Generally, restaurant sector and bar sector belong to the hospitality industry which means a business that provides reception and entertainment to guests, visitors or strangers with liberality and good will (Barrows et al., 2012). Restaurants sector is situated within the commercial hospitality industry sector and provides food and beverages to customers (Ninemeier, 2010). It also can be defined as a ‘for profit food’ service operation whose primary business involves the sale of food/beverage products to guests (Schmidgall et al., 2002).

According to the research of Parsa et al. (2005), restaurants can be divided into three types based on ownership structures, they are chain restaurants, franchised restaurants and independent restaurants. Chain restaurants and franchised restaurants usually have a central management system that handles most of the needs of the restaurants (Chen, 2014). On the other hand, an independent restaurant is defined as one owned by an individual and is not part of chain or franchised operation (ibid). An independent restaurant has several features:
**Difficulty in duplication:** Individual restaurant is owned by an individual, family or a private group, where the restaurant concept, menu and experience are hard to replicate by other competitors within the industry (Budhwar, 2004).

**Importance of owner:** Walker (2007) further explains that the independent restaurant owner is often the employer who decides on the restaurant location, recruitment and management issues. Similarly, he describes independent restaurants as typically owned and run by locals where the owner is usually working in the restaurant either as the host, chef or in other positions.

**Freedom in operation:** Owning and operating an independent restaurant provides freedom as far as the operation is concerned. Litz and Stewart (1998) explain that the cost of opening an independent restaurant is lower as the owner decides on most operational factors, such as location, purchasing and ordering, hiring and training staff, price and quality of products, marketing and financial control. However, studies suggest that the low barrier of entry and operational freedom also increases the failure rate for independent restaurants (Budhwar, 2004; English et al., 1996; Parsa et al., 2005).

**Word of mouth:** When it comes to marketing, many independent restaurants spend relatively little on paid advertising relying instead on personal relationships, their reputation as well as word of mouth. (Barrow et al, 2012). In addition the proprietor of the independent R&B plays an important role as regards marketing. Often the owner is well known and involved in community affairs, and establishes strong ties of friendship with many of their customers. One of the keys to recognition in is the personality of the owner (ibid).

Regarding the definition of bars, there are two different ideas. Katsigris and Thomas (2007) define bars as an establishment or business that primarily offer beverages, food and sometimes entertainment and other services to its customers. However, Barrow et al. (2012) consider the bars segment to be a part of restaurants. According to the definitions of restaurant and bar, we found that they serve the same products, although restaurants focus on food while bars put emphasis on beverage. Besides, both of them provide a combination of two kinds of products: one is food & beverage, the other is service component such as passing dishes, helping customers...
to order food. According to Vargo and Lusch (2008), service can be differentiated from goods as former represents the intangible products whilst the latter represents the tangible products. Thus, in our thesis, the R&B means a combination of restaurant and bar where provides food, beverage and service in the same institution.

For purposes of this thesis, our target case companies are the independent R&Bs. As bars can be viewed as a segment of restaurants, and bars provide similar product to customers as restaurants (Barrow et al., 2006), the independent R&B also enjoys the four feature as independent restaurant.

3.6 Summary
In this chapter theories regarding corporate branding and corporate rebranding have been presented. The chapter started by explaining what branding is and then moved on to look at corporate branding where the importance of corporate branding and the difference between product and corporate branding was highlighted. The branding and corporate branding literature provided the background for the understanding of corporate rebranding. Later on, the chapter presented theories of corporate rebranding on the definition, reasons for corporate rebranding and types of corporate rebranding. The corporate rebranding framework which shows the main stages and actors of the process is also given. Furthermore, the chapter presented literature about SMEs since this is the context for our study. This is where the definition of SMEs, their characteristics and general branding literature is highlighted. This chapter ends with section on the description of the R&B sector which is also our study context.
CHAPTER FOUR

4 Empirical Data and Findings

In this empirical chapter the relevant primary and secondary information that was collected is presented. The chapter is structured in a case by case basis where the empirical data is presented under each case. In each case we present our findings on the interviewee’s profile, case backgrounds, reasons for rebranding, the actors involved in the rebranding process and finally the stages of the rebranding process which is given in the form of a narrative. For simplicity’s sake, throughout this chapter and the next chapter corporate rebranding will just be referred to as rebranding. Also, for each case, the respective R&Bs are presented as R&B(A), R&B(B), R&B(C) and R&B(D). This is because we are no able to mention the actual names of the R&Bs for confidentiality purposes.

4.1 Case A

4.1.1 Interviewee’s Profile and Case Background

Akim is both the brand manager and the bar manager for R&B(A) and has been working for two years now. Before he joined R&B(A), he co-owned an advertising company. He joined the R&B as a club DJ and was later promoted to brand manager and bar manager. R&B(A) has been in existence for approximately 16 years. The owner has 30 years of experience in the R&B business. This R&B is of medium size and has two floors. In terms of the number of employees, R&B(A) has a total of 55 employees, however only about 25 are permanent employees who work every week and the others are on a temporal basis.

4.1.2 Reason for Rebranding

R&B(A) is currently undergoing rebranding. It is rebranding because of its change in market preferences. It is now changing its target group of customers from the previous 18 years plus
customers to a more mature target group who are in the late twenties. The R&B had maintained the same appearance and style of operation since its inception, however, plans are now underway to change some aspect of the company such as the physical appearance, the logo and the menu.

4.1.3 Actors in the Rebranding Process

According to Akim the actors that are active in the rebranding process which the R&B is currently undertaking are the brand manager (himself) and the owner. Akim explains that he was hired as brand manager mainly to assist with the rebranding of the R&B. He explains that he has faced challenges in terms of differences of opinion with the owner as the owner has the final say on most of the decisions. “It is an interesting discussion because I have a talk with my owner since last year, the previous manager did this for five years, and there is a different opinions about it. The owner promise them to reconstruct for five or six years...” In addition to the manager and the owner, the R&B had also sought the services of a designer and architect from Netherlands to help with design work.

4.1.4 Stages of the Rebranding Process

One of the factors that triggered the rebranding process is that the owner and Akim found a problem in their target customers and they wanted to change the situation. According to Akim the customers that frequently visited R&B(A) on the Pub street belonged to a different age group than before. Ten years ago there were much older people that went out to the clubs and now the generation comprising of students and other younger people go out more often. 10 years ago the younger people did not go out and today there are the largest target groups frequenting the premises as hanging out became a trend among young adults. However, according to Akim this target group comes with its own problems. Akim expressed his dissatisfaction that with a lot of young people around the premises, there is normally a lot of throwing up and breaking things. He said that, “it’s pretty much the young people that do this kind of stuff, it costs more money and also the time for the staff. When one night it is full of 18-20 year olds, we need to clean it one hour more in the night.” Akim further said that the R&B was now targeting middle aged customers as he considers them better than the current age group that they have. He said that they
have observed that at the moment more and more of middle aged people are going out to eat and have fun which is an opportunity they would want to tap into.

Since the aim of the rebranding is to change the target group to the middle aged and to achieve that the R&B is making several changes. The owner and Akim have been thinking about getting a more serious look to attract the new target market. Akim explained that they now want to establish a more serious and somewhat luxurious brand to attract their desired target customers. They have so far also changed the colour of their signboard to blue as before the manager said there was no any serious form of branding. Before Akim was employed no one thought about design or did anything about branding. “When R&B(A) was exposing itself on social media, it was unserious.” He explained that he started by getting a profile and communicating in a serious way and ensuring that the communication was done in a uniform manner with the same font for example everywhere including the menu cards. Furthermore, Akim is working with an advertising company he once co-owned to develop a new brand image for the R&B(A). The new brand is about creating a new logotype and creating a serious Facebook page. He said the previous logo and image was a mess. The current logo and image is a luxurious and minimalist one. It is also simplistic.

According to Akim, for R&B(A) to achieve it intended target market, one of its approaches is in also making adjustments to the current age group of its employees. He explained that two years ago, most of the employees at the R&B were 18 plus workers and thus it mostly attracted a lot of 18 plus as customers too. “The people who work in the restaurant are the mirror to those that go there, so if you have 25 plus aged employees, then you attract older customers.” Therefore, currently the R&B (A) is making changes to its employees and is now preferring to have middle aged workers to match with the intended target customers. Changing the age limit means the R&B also changes its services. With the younger customers, the restaurants only provided two different beers, now they have to broaden the offer as people from the middle age prefer a variety. This means they also have to increase the prices. The R&B has a new menu right now which was upgraded recently to add larger variety of food and more alcohol types to their previous line of beers and whiskies. Before, the R&B only had pizza, pasta and burgers and this was more ideal
for the young customers but now they have a larger menu that includes fine dining. The R&B before was more focused on the restaurant than the bar section but now the focus was more on the bar than the restaurant.

In terms of redesigning the place, Akim expresses how challenging it is because the ultimate decision lies with the owner of the restaurant. He would like for the R&B(A) to change its physical appears as he explained “Because right now, it’s tacky, its old the furniture is broken, and if you want people to come there like 34, you want quality. And that is the thing am working on to get the owner to do, because he has the money and he is the only one who can do that, it’s a discussion between me and the owner”. The manager explains that the owner was afraid that with the physical changes in the R&B, it would mean closure of the place for two months and that the place is popular and customers love it that way, hence if they decide to change he is was sure if the customers would love it. The manager explained that they have tried to consult with a designer from Netherlands to help with the new design of the restaurant. Currently R&B(A) is in the process of changing the physical appearance of the premises and since they are targeting a different group of customers they need to change the appearance so as to create a quality perception mind-set in the new target group.

In terms of marketing activities, Akim explained that R&B(A) uses social media. “Today we almost market everything on social media, it’s risky but it’s also good. We can see that we are targeting more people. Social media is the largest platform now.” In terms of the outcome of the rebranding, Akim explained that the outcome is about the business performance and also on social perspective. He said that it is important for business to make money and also have a good social atmosphere. With their desired target customers, they would be less fights and less breaking of things. He said that it cost more money to have the younger generation as the R&B has to spend more money to clean up the place. From the experience so far people remember the current logo and image of the R&B(A) than the previous one. We asked the manager what the vision of the R&B was especially now that they were rebranding and he told us after a short pause that they did not have one established yet but that they have been talking about it.
4.2 Case B

4.2.1 Interviewee’s Profile & Case Background

Ben is the partial owner of R&B(B) and has been working in the R&B industry for several years now. He is of Indian descent and he has been living in Sweden for more than a decade. He was inspired to join this industry by his family which owns more than 20 R&Bs in Sweden. R&B(B) is one of the restaurants located around the city center. It has been in existence for more than 10 years now. It was previously known by another name and was specialized in Indian foods. The R&B has two floors and is of medium size. R&B(B) has 10 employees but during the summer peak time the number of employees normally increases to 32 approximately.

4.2.2 Reasons for Rebranding

The shareholders of this R&B can be seen as comprising of two parts, one is the relatives from the Indian family of which most of them are the elderly members and the other part consists of the operator of R&B who is also normally a family member but has acquired enough shares to run the R&B. Initially one of the family members owned a significant share of the R&B and was the one in charge for many years until the R&B started experiencing challenges in its operations. Anyone from this Indian family could apply to be the operational owner of the R&B and he or she needed pay for the other part of the shares. Ben who is part of the family considered this as an opportunity and came to Pub Street to run the R&B. He still believed that Indian food had a potential market in Östergötland and thus his interest. After he took charge of the R&B, he decided to rebrand it and use his own concept to run it.

4.2.3 Actors in the Rebranding Process

When it come to the rebranding process of the R&B(B), Ben was in charge of most of the activities. He had his own concept of how he wanted everything to be. He told us “you need to build a concept and make it work.” He made decisions such as what type of food to serve, recruitment of the new employees and the new arrangement of the place. He involved his sister to help him with the designing work. Ben explained that he has strong family relations and thus trusted his sister to work with his idea. He did not want to involve an independent design agent as he said that some designers can be difficult and may have suggestions that are out of his hands.
4.2.4 Stages of the Rebranding Process

According to Ben the rebranding process started with introspection. He thought about himself and what he really wanted to have for his restaurant. In his words he argued that “The first step of rebranding is to become an owner with positive attitude and understand which kind of restaurant I really want, and what kind of life I really want to be myself.” He stressed the importance of pursuing the true passion as the starting point in the process. “So just do what you can do.” He said in the beginning that he thought about the concept and how he would make it work.

Ben had known the previous R&B for a long time before he became the new owner. From his assessment he understood where the previous R&B had gone wrong. He explained that its failure could have been due to the poor strategy that was being used. Ben explained that the previous R&B was run like an Indian fast food restaurant and made bad food that did not taste like original Indian food even though it claimed to be offering Indian food. As such he wanted to make changes on a lot of things.

According to Ben, he developed a plan after the thoughts about what kind of R&B he wanted. He planned to start afresh and thought of employing new staff. When he acquired the R&B, he decided to hire new employees. He told us, “Old staff might also be the reason why the previous R&B didn’t work so well, staff is part of the relationships, the people, the environment, maybe the quality of food, the service, and the whole package”. He strongly emphasized how important it was to start afresh so as to avoid old habits.

Ben also changed the appearance of the R&B completely. The R&B main colour now is green and black. The setup of the R&B in terms of the furniture has been designed in a traditional Indian appearance inside and outside. This was done to make the customers have an Indian experience. Even though Ben maintained the Indian style that the previous R&B had, he explained that his approach was different. He said that R&B(B) makes original Indian food exactly like ‘home’. His concept is mainly about building a piece of his hometown here and serve the food that has his hometown taste. It took six months to finish all the works of rebranding process.
According to Ben, R&B(B) does not focus on heavy marketing or advertising despite the rebranding that took place. He said, “It is the word of mouth that we use. You don’t advertise, the people know by someone eating here.” In addition he said the R&B(B) has a Facebook page that they use to communicating to customers. After the rebranding, Ben explained that he is satisfied with the performance of the restaurant, the financial performance is really well compared to before. He explained that the R&B now has a more clear and stronger concept that the one before. In addition he has a good balance of his business and family life. When asked what the R&B’s vision was, he explained hesitantly that the vision was about making money and getting a comfortable living.

4. 3 Case C

4.3.1 Interviewee’s Profile & Case Background

Charlie is the manager for R&B(C). He is in his late thirties and comes from Slovenian. He has been living in Sweden for many years now. Charlie has been working in this R&B for some time now having been there both before and after the rebranding of the place. He has lots of experience in this business having had worked for many years when he started off just as a mere employee.

This R&B is situated in the city centre. It is owned by a family from the Middle East and has been in operation since the 1990s. It was initially called by another name and was focused mainly on the bar segment then. Now since the rebranding, it has taken a different direction and now focuses more on the restaurant than the bar. The R&B is relatively small in size even though it has two floors. It has a total of 15 employees however the number goes up during summer time when the demand for services is higher.

4.3.2 Reasons for Rebranding

The decision to rebrand was started when the owner wanted to change its target group of customers. Before the rebranding, most of its customers were around 18 years old plus but later
on they wanted more of a mature audience, to achieve that the R&B had to rebrand itself. The desire to change the target customers coincided with the desire to develop the place.

“From the beginning this place had been a place for 18 year olds, more of a nightclub but we still had a restaurant. But people think the pub is not good for the restaurant. We want to change the direction of the company, from the 18 years olds to more mature customers. We also wanted to develop the place, we had few beers, the timing was right. We wanted a new start.” (Charlie, Manager)

Furthermore, the former R&B also had a bad reputation which management wanted to change. However, this is one challenge that they are still working on. Charlie said changing the reputation would take a bit some of time.

### 4.3.3 Actors in the Rebranding Process

The owner and the R&B manager were the ones mainly involved in the rebranding process. The owner was focused more on how the new environment and the whole picture should be while the Charlie as the manager was more concerned with the how to make the R&B more attractive, the number of staff, the menu and the service to be provided. Discussions would be held between the manager and the owner, however the owner made the final decisions. For the rebranding process, the owner and Charlie had the design concept but they still employed the services of the professional design company that helped with the design of the R&B.

### 4.3.4 Stages of the Rebranding Process

At the beginning of the rebranding process, Charlie said they had to figure out what kind of customers and staff they wanted, they thought about what kind of direction they should take. They made an analysis of the situation. They looked at similar restaurants around the town and also outside in terms of what services the other restaurants offered, what type of food etc. They
found out that sports bar was the most popular service and so they made a decision to add it to the new R&B.

As the decision to rebrand was mainly directed towards attracting older customers, management had to change the menu and set up of the place. Before the rebranding, the R&B had a small range of beers and the menu was mostly pub menu as the pub segment was the greater part of the R&B. The previous R&B’s type of menu was mostly Mediterranean. The current menu is different now. Charlie explained that, “Now for a couple of months we have changed the kitchen menu, we took away the classic Swedish starters and replace them with tapas with a low price so that can attract customers.” According to Charlie the plan is to make the place comfortable for the customers so they can gather and have a nice time. The bar is now a lesser part of the restaurant. With the new R&B, they have now extended the beers to 50 and whiskies to 40 from the previous 10 whiskies.

The R&B also introduced live music for Friday nights which they believe would be a source of attraction for their intended audience. In terms of appearance, they changed the colour on the ground floor to something reddish in the interiors and plans are still underway to change the colour and the furniture on the top floor. Formerly, the stairs from the upper flow to the ground floor was just a straight one but now it has been changed into a curve like thing so as to separate the two different sections and to give it a better appearance. The rebranding of the R&B took place within a week. Within a week, the name was changed and so was the menu and the beers and the aesthetics. As regards marketing of the R&B, Charlie explained that R&B(C) prefers to use social media as opposed to advertising in the paper.

According to Charlie, since the rebranding, the sales have been increasing steadily for the restaurant. In this third year which is next year, the expectations are that the sales will double up. The customer base has also increased as well from what they used to have before. When asked about what the vision of the R&B was, he said they want the R&B to be a place for everybody where people can gather and have a now time
4.4 Case D

4.4.1 Interviewee’s Profile & Case Background

David is the owner of R&B(D). He moved to Sweden around 10 years ago. Besides the R&B, he owns more than 10 other companies. He has rich experience in both dining and sports bar which he obtained from working as an owner of a franchise of two units in a big chain R&B and also working at the headquarters where he held a management position in that R&B in Stockholm. However, he left to start his own R&B because he did not like the concept of his franchise despite it being successful.

R&B(D) is located in the city centre. It is one of the most successful R&Bs as it is normally booked roughly 4 days in a week. It is big in size having three floors and with about 55 employees of which only 18 are permanent. The previous R&B identified itself mostly as a sports R&B. It had a masculine design with dark wood and the inner decoration and furniture were all in black. It served burgers and grills which it called “Junk Food” in the menu. The previous R&B believed that its profile could attract male customers who love sports. However, the current R&B changed almost everything about it ranging from the name, design and menu.

4.4.2 Reasons for Rebranding

This R&B rebranded as a result of the change in ownership structures. Before the rebranding, the R&B’s performance was not stable and it was going through several challenges. It was at this point that David was approached with a suggestion to acquire the R&B owing to his massive experience in this type of business and his good track record of management and performance. David became interested and subsequently acquired this R&B with all its assets and liabilities. At the time of the interview, David explained that the debts incurred by the previous R&B before he became the new owner were still outstanding and the R&B was still in the process of settling them. After the change in ownership, David sort to change most aspects of the restaurants as he did not believe in the previous R&B way of operations.
4.4.3 Actors in the rebranding process

In rebranding of the R&B, David did most of the work in design and management. It was mainly his ideas as he had the clear concept himself of what he wanted and how he wanted it. He made it step by step as he told us, “I came every night and sat in the basement for hours and look at the wall thinking what can I do with it.” David made all most of the decisions regarding the design of the place, the décor in the R&B and the type of food to be offered. On some occasions his long-term partner helped him with minor activities and decisions for instance about the welfare of employees. However, David had the overall responsibility about the entire R&B.

4.4.4 Stages of the Rebranding Process

David’s concept all started with a visit to United States of America (USA), which he considers as the centre of the world. His concept had been mostly inspired by the trip he had taken to metropolis. He recalled as he explained to us “…then it began, I went to USA, my idea was traveling around several times, just to get some inspiration….. I fell in love with this place, the different culture, you only can find it here… when I came back, I considered that…”

His visit to USA was to get inspiration from the American R&B culture mainly in the casual dining and sports bar. After his visit, the planning, ideas and thoughts on what concept he wanted began to take shape. When obtained this R&B in the city centre, David had a seemingly clear concept of what he wanted to make out of it.

When David acquired R&B(D), he had little information about the place and the city at large. He wanted to know what the problems were there. To get the information he needed, David asked the local people around the area what they knew about the place and the whole area. Since he did not like the previous style of operations he decided to change most aspects of the R&B. It took about two and half months to rebuild the place to what it is. The previous R&B had an Asian concept. However, David adopted the American concept. A check on the R&B’s website
confirmed that the R&B embodies the American culture as could be seen from the images displayed and the words written on some sections of the website. He also changed the setting and the physical appearance to suit the new ‘Culture’ concept that he wanted. He changed the main colours of the R&B to something lighter as the previous colours were dark. He explained to us that “it was all black furniture, but I like light colour, because people feel delightful about light colour.” Inside the R&B, one can see wallpapers stuck on the wall and he gave us an explanation to say the images on the wall papers correspond with the new name of the R&B. After some thinking of what name to give the place, he finally changed the name which is inspired by one of the cities he visited in the USA.

David also changed the type of food offered in the R&B. The previous R&B menu was mostly junk food. The current concept’s style is casual dining and there is constantly a red thread in the food. He maintained the sports bar idea, however he adjusted it to make it a premium sports bar. The rebranding of the R&B also led to change of staff. When it comes to marketing, David explained that word of mouth is what R&B(D) uses as it is more effective for advertising than using newspapers. He complained of one incidence where he was forced to advertise in the newspapers and paid a huge amount of money. David prefers to invest more in the services and getting a good chef so as to get a bigger reward.

According to David, the performance of the R&B is good after three years of operation. They now have a turnover of almost 30 million SEK and they are almost fully booked for almost 4 days each week. David explained to us saying “this is a mental picture of how I wanted it to be built. I like it after three years.” The R&B’s vision is to be a natural meeting place that fits everyone one, family, family, friends, colleagues and others.

4.5 Summary of Empirics

The information about the number of employees and annual turnover was collected to confirm the size of these four case companies. Because of the secrecy required by some interviewees, the exact information is not be presented here. In the four cases, the full time employees number ranges from 10 to 25, the annual turnover in 2013 range from 10 million to 22 million SEK,
approximately equal to 1 to 2.2 million EUR. All the cases meet requirements that SMEs are companies with less than 250 employees and which have turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million (EC, 2014).

The table below is a summary of some empirical information on the case restaurants regarding the rebranding process.

Table 2. General Information from the cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Reason for rebranding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Owner and Brand Manager</td>
<td>Design Agent</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Change of target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Owner and Family(sister)</td>
<td>Sister and Owner</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Change in ownership structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Owner and R&amp;B Manager</td>
<td>Design Agent, Owner and Manager</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>Change of target group, bad reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Owner and partner</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>2.5 months</td>
<td>Change in ownership structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE

5. Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will provide an analysis and discussion of the literature and theoretical framework with the empirical findings. This analysis and discussion is based on the previous chapter and is divided into two parts. The first part is an analysis and discussion of the nature of the corporate brand and corporate rebranding as revealed in the empirical findings in comparison with the theoretical frameworks in figure 1 and figure 2 respectively. The second part is an analysis of the corporate rebranding process according the empirical findings. This part will discuss the reasons for corporate rebranding, the actors for corporate rebranding where the role of the owner will be highlighted. It will then analyse the corporate rebranding process in SMEs (R&B context) as revealed by the empirical findings in comparison with the theoretical framework (figure 3). Lastly a corporate rebranding model will be proposed by us.

5.1 Corporate Rebranding in SMEs

This section discusses the nature of corporate brands in SMEs and also the relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding in SMEs with particular interest to R&Bs context. Even though our main topic for this study is the corporate rebranding process, understanding the corporate brand in SMEs in our study context provided us with a basis for understanding our main topic. The second part of this section is the relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding. Our focus of the study was corporate rebranding but our empirical findings revealed an interesting relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding which we would like to reveal.
5.1.1 Corporate Brand in SMEs

According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), corporate brands have three components namely culture, vision and image (figure 1). It was important for us to begin by analysing the corporate brand because corporate rebranding entails changes in either one or all the three components.

Our empirical findings revealed that whilst the culture and image aspect was explicit in all the cases the vision component was not. Most of our interviewees had no clear response as to what their vision was and a check on their websites did not provide an explanation of what their visions were either. Compared to the large companies that have clear visions and have their vision statements explicitly laid out, we found that SMEs do pay so much attention to what company vision is but rather the owners have some vague description of what their vision could be.

As regards culture the findings show that corporate culture in SMEs is influenced by either by the ethnic culture of origin of the owner or the personal beliefs and values of the owner. From our cases we observed that there was a correlation between the corporate culture and the cultural origin of the owner. For example, in case B the R&B portrays an Indian culture and the owner is Indian. Case D has adopted an American kind of culture and the owner explained how he had been very much inspired by the American lifestyle. Our empirics thus concur with previous research that says that founders in SMEs are instrumental in shaping brand culture (Krake, 2005).

Furthermore, we found that in R&Bs particularly the culture can be reflected by the products offered. According to the interview, the respondents put more emphasis on the meals offered and therefore we decided to use the example of meals in this study to represent the main product provided by the case studies. According to our empirical findings, the culture of the R&Bs was evident in the type of meals served. This was clearly observed in two case companies. For example, case B which is an Indian R&B is synonymous with the Indian food. Case D which has an American culture offers meals that are more related to the American style. Therefore we concluded that culture in this kind of sector can be observed by the meals provided. We also found that the meals can also represent the image of the R&Bs. Image being the views of the
outside world (Hatch and Schultz, 2003), the service can provide a platform against which stakeholders perceive the R&Bs. For instance, the impression of the R&B can be established by taste of food and when it is well accepted by customers, the impression converts into a reputation and become the reason why the customers visit again to have the same service. Furthermore, the meals being provided can be used by the R&Bs to showcase what they would like to be associated with or stand for. Therefore for R&Bs we found that there is a close link between the culture and image as the meals offered can be linked to both culture and image as explained above. The meals can be a reflection of the culture as well as guide the stakeholders as to what type of R&B one is.

For SMEs, we conclude that the culture and image component of the corporate brand are more explicit than the vision component. Also we conclude that the culture and the image components have a close relationship, however, this could be truer in the R&B sector and thus similar research in other sectors would good for comparison purposes.

5.1.2 The Relationship between Corporate Rebranding and Product Rebranding in R&Bs

In this study, our focus was rebranding process at the corporate level (figure 2). This meant that we choose to focus only on corporate rebranding and excluded product rebranding. R&B have products that are tangible and intangible (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The service being the intangible product and the physical meals being the tangible products. Therefore it can be argued that R&Bs can also carry out product rebranding on account that they have products. Literature explains that rebranding can occur at different levels of the hierarchy being product, unit and corporate level (Lambkin and Muzellec, 2006), in comparison with our empirical findings for R&Bs we found that there is a close relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding.
As the case companies undertook corporate rebranding so did their products change. For example, the meals representing the tangible products enjoy an important status in R&Bs sector and they are more likely to take a main role in showing the outcome of rebranding in R&Bs. In all the cases, the rebranding did not just involve change of name and aesthetics but went further to change of the meals offered. Therefore, the corporate rebranding also encompasses product rebranding to a greater extent. By this we would like to argue that in R&Bs specifically, corporate rebranding is more likely to affect products thus igniting product rebranding. In the figure below, we show the relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding in R&B context.

Figure 4. The relationship between Corporate Rebranding and Product Rebranding

In the diagram above, the corporate brand is shown by the three elements of culture, image and vision. A change in all or part of the elements implies rebranding. In our case companies, the vision component was not very emphasised compared to the culture and image. From the empirical findings, the culture and image are reflected in the products offered by the R&Bs. The change of the culture and image therefore led to the change of the products offering. As mentioned in the previous section, the products offered in the case companies can be linked to both the image and the culture component of the R&B’s corporate brand. Corporate rebranding involved the changing of the image and culture which in turn led to the changes in the
products. Thus we find that corporate rebranding ultimately affects products leading to product rebranding.

As a conclusion, in SMEs the corporate rebranding may involve product rebranding as well. However, we observe that this finding may be more applicable to the R&B due to the nature of the industry.

5.2 Corporate Rebranding Process

This section discusses our main topic corporate rebranding process and starts by looking at the reasons for rebranding in SMEs, the actors involved in the process where the role of the owner will be highlighted. Afterwards the stages of the process will be discussed. The section will end with a rebranding process model suggested by the authors.

5.2.1 Reason for Corporate Rebranding

From our empirical findings, we found that the most common reason for rebranding in SMEs is change in ownership structure and change in market preferences. The cases that were affected by changes in ownership structures were two and these are case B and D. The other reasons for the rebranding was due to bad reputation. Case A rebranded due to change in customer preferences and case C also changed due to change in market preferences and reputation. Our findings are similar with past research studies for the reasons provided that lead to corporate rebranding (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). According to our observations, we found that the new owners come with their own concepts different from the previous ones and thus change several aspects of the company. This was true for case B and D. These cases changed many aspects of the company ranging from name, logo, employees and the type of food offered. However, case A and case C which rebranded due to change of market preference have made minor changes compared to the others. Therefore, our empirical findings are similar to previous literature that states that structural factors may typically cause a fundamental redefinition of the company’s business and require a major change in organisation identity (ibid).
5.2.2 Actors in the Rebranding Process - The Role of the Owner

In each case, the role of owner in the corporate rebranding process was visibly enormous. In case B and D, the owners were at the centre of all the rebranding activities. The owners made the crucial decisions mostly single-handedly about such matters as what type of food and service to offer, new name, marketing understanding, recruitment and physical appearance of the places. It was only occasional when they had to seek help mostly from close family members as revealed in the case of B. As for case A and C which are the only cases that had managers, we found that even though the managers also played roles in the rebranding process, the final decisions was actually made by the owners. In case A, the manager expressed his dissatisfaction about the fact that it was difficult to make progress because the owner was hesitant about whether to undertake the rebranding process initially. Also the manager for case C hinted on the same situation of the owner having the overall say in everything. In a few cases, the services of the design agent were employed to assist with the designing. In comparison to theory which explains that there are several actors both within and outside the company in the rebranding process (Daly and Moloney, 2004; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006; Ahonen, 2008) the empirical findings reveal that the corporate rebranding process in SMEs revolves more around the owner. The empirical findings also concur with previous SME literature (Hogarth-Scott, 1996; Culkin and Smith, 2000; Bhutta et al., 2008; Litz and Stewart, 1998) that found that owners in SMEs have an omnipresent function and are in charge of the entire key business processes such as decision making in marketing and recruitment. We conclude that just as literature reveals that owners take up the centre stage of activities in their business so is the case when it comes to corporate rebranding process in SME.

5.2.3 Stages of the Corporate Rebranding Process

In the theoretical framework (figure 3) it is suggested that there are three major stages of the corporate rebranding process namely analysis, planning and Evaluation (Daly and Moloney, 2004) and Ahonen (2008) has proposed an additional step of implementation that he suggests should be after the planning stage and before the evaluation step. Our empirical findings reveal the existence of the three stages as suggested by the theoretical framework (Daly and Moloney,
2004). In each of the cases, the findings revealed that the R&B's all have elements of the analysis, planning and evaluation stages as will be elaborated below.

**Analysis**

In the theoretical framework the analysis stage involves examination of qualitative and quantitative issues such as market size and potential, market preferences and attitudes and competitor strengths and weaknesses (Daly and Moloney, 2004; Ahonen, 2008). The empirical findings show that the R&Bs carried out some form of analysis at the initial stages of the rebranding process. In case A and case C, the R&Bs indicated that they assessed the market situation at the time of rebranding. Case C said they at the beginning they looked around the other restaurants in and outside of town to assess what services and menus other R&Bs were offering. Case A analysed the market where they detected the changing customer behaviours and case C also had a similar analysis. The analysis stage is also revealed in case D where the owner sought to obtain information about the area where the R&B was located as he was new in the area and had little information about the surrounding. In case B, the analysis stage involved a review of the previous R&B strategy so as to figure out how best to provide better services. The empirical findings thus reveal that indeed SMEs also carry out analysis in their rebranding process. However, we found that the analysis does not appear as detailed, formal and intensive compared with the literature.

According to the empirical findings the analysis stage from the case companies border around investigating what menus, services or target groups to cater for. The analysis stage does not involve any brand audit or standard marketing research or surveys as explained by Daly and Moloney (2004). Compared to large companies, SMEs have limited resources and therefore they may not be able to carry out extensive market analysis (Krake, 2005). From the empirical findings, we found out that none of cases companies had any marketing functions as maybe the case in large companies and that they rarely engage in marketing related activities. Apart from case A which has a brand manager, the rest of the cases do not have anyone specific in charge of the marketing programs who can assist with such activities as analysing. This could explain why the analysis stage is not strongly emphasised in SMEs. Furthermore, the fact that SMEs have limited resources could explain why analysis is not performed in depth. In most of the case
companies, only one individual i.e. the owner is spearheading all the activities, therefore they are limited in terms of how much information they can get and understand compared to large companies who have may have a team of professionals involved in the process.

**Planning**
The theoretical framework describes the planning stage as involving both external and internal communication. The empirical findings shows that during the rebranding process SMEs do not carry out any deliberate communication programs for both the internal employees and external stakeholders. In the cases that rebranded due to changes in ownership structures i.e. case Band D, the R&Bs hired new employees as part of the rebranding process and the new employees started working right away without any training or communication concerning the rebranding. In case A and case C that rebranded due to changes in market preferences, even though the R&B maintained some of their employees, there was no specific program aimed at communicating, training or gaining support or commitment of the employees in the rebranding process. From our findings it can be observed that the case companies that rebranded due to changes in ownership structures preferred to hire new employees as opposed to those that changed due to market preferences. However, regardless of what triggered the rebranding process in the case companies, there was no deliberate plan to cater for both the internal and external stakeholders. This finding is not similar with what is presented in the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework explains that companies develop deliberate communication and training programs directed at the internal employees and external stakeholders to gain their support and commitment during and after the rebranding process (Daly and Moloney, 2004).

Apart from the communication component, the planning stage also consists of sub process namely remaining, repositioning, restructuring and redesigning (Ahonen, 2008). On the renaming aspect, theory has suggested four approaches (Daly and Moloney, 2004). The empiric findings indicate that the common approach across the cases was the substitution approach. According to our findings only case A is not changing the name during the rebranding process. The rest of the case companies changed their corporate names, the previous names were simply substituted with a completely different name within a short period of time. Therefore we found that in SMEs renaming strategy, the mostly likely approach of remaining is substitution. The aspect of
repositioning does not come out strongly in all the cases since it relates more to marketing tactics and marketing is rarely a huge concern for the case companies. Restructuring is evident in all the cases. One clear restructuring involves change of employees. In case B and D, the restructuring involved a complete change of employees. In case A, as the R&B is rebranding, it is also making changes to its employees so as to suit its new market preferences. Change of employees seems to be common among the R&Bs in the rebranding process especially in the case companies that rebranded due to change in ownership structure compared to those that changed due to change in market preferences. This highlights an interesting insight that could request for further scrutiny regarding how the drivers of corporate rebranding could affect the rebranding process. The redesigning decisions did not involve many actors as the findings revealed that it was mostly the owners spearheading the redesigning. Other actors involved were either family members or the managers in the case of A and D. Case A and D also used design agents in the redesigning. Interestingly these are the only cases that also have the managers helping with the running of the R&Bs. It could mean that R&Bs that have managers apart from the owners tend to think ‘outside the box’ rather than restricting everything to just within the company. According to the empirical findings the redesigning component implied massive changes in aesthetics. All the R&Bs redesigned the physical appearance of the places to a larger extent. As a matter of fact apart from the evident name change excluding case A, one of the most obvious outcomes of the rebranding process was the changes in aesthetics. The R&Bs changed the colours and the set up arrangement in the premises. Our empirical findings suggest that when it comes to rebranding process SMEs place more emphasis on the redesigning aspect.

Ahonen (2008) has added another stage after the Planning stage which is called implementation which entails both internal and external communication. Re-launching is about communication the new brand to the stakeholders. In all the cases, the aspect of launching whether internal or external was not revealed. The empirical findings showed that both internal and external launching were not considered in the rebranding process. Internal launching which is intensive communication with employees was not evident and external launching which involves communicating with the external stakeholders like customers did not seem like a factor in the rebranding process. Literature suggest that the new brand can be communicated to external stakeholders through newspapers and press releases (ibid). While this may be applicable to large
companies it is not the same with SMEs. According to the empirical findings, the most common form of marketing that the SMEs rely on is the word of mouth just as suggested by literature (Barrow et al., 2012). As mentioned before this could be due to the fact that SMEs lack resources to perform marketing activities aggressively compared to large companies (Ahonen, 2008; Opoku et al, 2007).

**Evaluation**

In all the cases the evaluation stage in the rebranding process was evident. The empirical findings shows that all cases were interested in evaluating their performance during and after the rebranding process. The evaluation in most cases involved assessment of the number and type of customers patronising the R&Bs and also through the sales per particular period. In case A for example the outcome of the rebranding process was evaluated by checking if there was an improvement in the social behaviour of their customers in terms having less fights and having a cleaner environment. The outcome of the rebranding process from our case companies involved change of corporate name, company colour, aesthetics, and the products provided. Our findings showed that all the cases companies are satisfied with the rebranding process as it yielded positive results in terms of number of customers and turnover.

The carrying out of the evaluation is similar to what the theoretical framework and the literature suggest (Daly and Moloney, 2004; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006; Ahonen, 2008). The case companies evaluated the rebranding process in terms of success or failure (Ahonen, 2008). Furthermore the case companies also evaluated the rebranding process with regards to its initial goals. (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004).
5.2.4 Suggested Model for Corporate rebranding Process in SMEs (R&Bs)

Based on our empirical findings and analysis, we propose a model for corporate rebranding in SMEs. This model is based on the case studies from the R&B sector and thus may be more applicable to this sector and the hospitality industry as a whole. This section has two parts, firstly we describe the simplicity of the model and then present the model itself.

5.2.4.1 Simplicity of the Model

The empirical findings revealed that the rebranding process in the cases was less formal and not elaborate compared with the theoretical frame. In all the cases the decision making is mostly restricted to one individual where the owner is in charge of all the decision making. In two case companies where there was a manager besides the owner, the manager was also engaged in the decision making although to a less extent as still the owner had the final say. The rebranding process as revealed by empirical data was mostly carried out by few actors being the managers, owners or family related members which seems typical for small companies but differs from is what typical for large companies , at least according to the theoretical framework (Daly and Moloney). The rebranding process as found in the cases all took place within a range of one week to six months, except for case A which is still in the process of rebranding. Therefore we found that the rebranding process in SMEs is simplistic and less complex and this is different with view that the rebranding process is complex and time consuming (Lomax and Mador, 2006 and Juntunen et al, 2006). In addition the empirics confirm that the stages of analysis, planning and evaluation may be intertwined or overlap (Juntunen et al, 2006; Ahonen, 2008).

5.2.4.2 The Model

In the theoretical framework it was explained that the corporate rebranding process comprised of three major stages. Our empirical data confirmed the existence of three stages. However, we observed from the empirical findings that the rebranding process actually begun before the
analysis stage. Therefore for SMEs we suggest a new stage before the analysis stage and another stage within the model. Even though the suggested model has five stages, it is simplistic as the analysis and planning stages are not as complex as the theoretical framework. The additional two stages depicts what we find is missing in literature but evident from our findings. Our suggested model has the following stages:

Assurance

The empirical findings revealed an interesting discovery. According to the findings, the rebranding process is also triggered after the owner has done a personal analysis of what he wants and has the assurance to start the rebranding process. From the empirical findings, it was revealed that even before the rebranding started, the owners first took time to assess themselves and discover what they really wanted. Intentions for rebranding process only commenced after they had done self-awareness. For example in case B and D, before the rebranding process the owners took some time to break off from their normal activities and after the break, they got the inspiration of how they wanted to work and this inspired the rebranding process. In case A, we saw some similar behaviour. The rebranding process only begun after the owner was convinced that it was necessary, before that despite the suggestions from the manager that the R&B needed to rebrand, the owner had been resisting. We conclude that in case A, the owner approved the commencement of rebranding process after he was satisfied that it was what he really wanted. However we see this behaviour as resulting from the nature of the industry. We want to refer to this stage as assurance stage since assurance means having a feeling that something is certain and true (The Macmillan Online Dictionary, 2015) and thus gives the owner the confidence of what they should do. As we mentioned before, the type of R&B is influenced by the owner's values and beliefs. The type of R&Bs could be a reflection of the personality of the owner and if rebranding takes place, it also affects the owner’s personality or point of view. This could explain why rebranding is more likely to start when the owner feels the need to. Therefore we conclude that the rebranding process for SMEs starts with the owners that is why it is mostly owner-driven.
Analysis and Planning
This is another new stage that we have added to the theoretical framework which we found depicts the emphasis of the rebranding in SMEs. Realisation is the one of the most important stages in the rebranding process in SMEs. For SMEs the focus is less on the communication and marketing strategies but more on the actual transformation of the company. We also put the redesigning aspect in this stage because it one of the core activities of the rebranding process for the case companies. The redesigning encompasses such issues as change in aesthetics such as the colour, logo and physical structure and also change in services offered. From our empirical findings, we found that the rebranding process in R&Bs is more revolutionary than evolutionary (Keller, 2000). The R&Bs rebranding process describes major, identifiable changes in aesthetics and services that fundamentally redefines the company (Ahonen, 2008). This was true especially for the cases companies that rebranded due to changes in ownership structure.

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Evaluation
The evaluation stage involves the assessment of the company performance to see if it is achieving its intended goals. It is a point of measuring success or failure. This can be done through a check in the company turn over or the number of customers that visit the company.
The figure below illustrates the suggested model of how corporate rebranding process flows in SMEs with special interest to the R&B context.

Figure 5. The Suggested Process Model of Corporate Rebranding

By the authors of this thesis
CHAPTER SIX

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

In this chapter the final conclusions from the analysis are presented. The chapter also includes theoretical contributions, limitations and suggestions for further research.

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the corporate rebranding process in SMEs. This study was conducted using case study approach involving four R& Bs. All the cases in the study were those that have experience with corporate rebranding and thus deemed suitable for our study. Data was collected through in-depth semi structured interviews with the owners or managers of the case companies, through observations and secondary sources.

From a comparison of the findings and the literature on corporate branding and corporate rebranding we made the conclusions:

When it comes to corporate branding in SMEs, the image and the culture is more explicit than the vision component. From our observations during the study, we found that most of the case companies did not really know what their vision was and a check on their websites or social media could not provide this information except for one case company. Unlike large companies whose visions are clear and explicit, SMEs pay less attention to this aspect. However, the image and culture component could be clearly noticed. Also we found that for R&B particularly, there exist a close relation between image and the culture. This is because we found that in R&B the services provided can reflect both the culture of the company and the image as well.

Another finding was that for R&B there is a close relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding. This was evidenced from our case companies who apart from changing their
names, logos, aesthetics, they also changed some aspects of their products. This resulted in product rebranding too. Therefore we concluded that for R&Bs, corporate rebranding may also incorporate product rebranding.

A summary of our main findings based on the three research questions is as follows;

**Why is corporate rebranding undertaken in SMEs?**
From the findings there were two main reasons that explained why corporate rebranding process occurs in SMEs. In two cases, it was as a result of change in ownership structures and in the other two cases it was as a result of change in market preferences. Bad reputation was also revealed in one case as part of the reason for rebranding. From the cases which rebranded due to change in ownership structure, it was found that the new owners prefer to use their own concepts of running the companies and thus made major changes than those than rebranded due to change in market preferences and reputation. The rebranding that occurs as a result of change in ownership structure is revolutionary meaning the change is massive while the rebranding from change of market preferences is somewhat evolutionary.

**Who are the main actors of the corporate rebranding process in SMEs?**
From our findings we found that the main actors in the corporate rebranding process in SMEs are the owners. The role of the owner is emphasised and activities gravitate towards the owners. Out of the four cases, only two case companies had managers besides the owners of the companies. In the cases that had the managers, it was revealed that indeed the managers also played roles in the rebranding process. However, it was also revealed that still ultimately the process was in the hands of the owners who had the final say as to how they wanted the process to unfold. Overall, what was evident from the findings was that the whole rebranding process is owner-driven. It starts and ends with the owner. Our findings were different with the theoretical framework and literature that suggest that there were several actors involving both external and internal stakeholders.
What are the stages of the corporate rebranding process in SMEs?

Our empirical findings revealed the existence of the three stages namely analysis, planning and evaluation as suggested by the theoretical framework. The case companies revealed the aspect of analysis as the owners bothered to examine the immediate environment in terms of what services and target group was appropriate for them. However, the case companies did not conduct an in-depth marketing analysis such as brand auditing. This could be due to the fact that compared to large companies, SMEs have limited resources and might not been able to carry out extensive marketing research. Our findings revealed that most of the case companies did not have formal functions such as marketing that could help with such activities as analysing. Only one case had a brand manager and rest did not have. We found that even though the analysis stage was there, it was not as detailed and formal as the presented in the framework.

The empirical findings also revealed the existence of the planning stage. In the planning stage the theoretical framework emphasises the aspect of communication to both the internal and external stakeholders. Communication to both internal and external stakeholder hinges on gaining the necessary support during and after the transition. From our cases, we found that those that rebranded due to changes in ownerships structures preferred to employ new staff and therefore the aspect of internal communication may not have been very necessary as the new staff joined when there was a ‘rebirth’ of the company and they did not have to deal with issues of employee resistance. For the case companies that rebranded due to changes in market preferences, only one of the two changed some of its employees whilst the other one maintained them. Regardless of whether the case companies maintained the employees or not, it was revealed that there was no deliberate program aimed at communicating with the employees to gain their support or understanding. The empirical findings also revealed that the case companies did not have any communication programs involving external stakeholders. Additionally all the case companies indicated that they preferred to use word of mouth advertising and social media as opposed to the more formal approach of advertising.

The last stage from the theoretical framework is evaluation. All the case companies revealed that they evaluated their process. The evaluation was done based on the company sales or the number
of customers going to the R&Bs or the desired social behaviour. Even though we our empirical findings concur with the existence of the three stages, we found an interesting discovery. We found that actually from most of our case companies, it was revealed that the rebranding process does not necessarily start at analysis stage. But rather it started with the owner being inspired and wanting to rebrand. Once the owner was convinced that rebranding was the way to go then the analysis stage started. We thus added an extra stage before the analysis to depict this aspect. We named the first stage of the rebranding process the assurance stage.

Furthermore we found out that whilst the theoretical framework is very much marketing and communication oriented. It was not the case with the empirical findings. The emphasis of the rebranding according to the case companies was more about the actual transformation. Therefore we added an extra step after the planning stage to illustrate what we found was the emphasis in the rebranding process of SMEs. This stage is the realisation stage. In our analysis we found that the analysis and planning stage sometime occur at the same time and they interact, thus we in our model we depict this aspect. In our suggested model we propose that there are five stages in the rebranding process namely assurance, analysis, planning, realisation and evaluation.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This study offers theoretical contributions on corporate rebranding literature as follows;

Firstly we found in SMEs the culture and image component of the corporate brand is more explicit than the vision component and that in R&Bs specifically, the culture and image are closely related.

Secondly the study contributes to literature on corporate rebranding by revealing that in SMEs and particularly in the R&Bs context there is a close relationship between corporate rebranding and product rebranding. This was evident from all our case companies that showed that corporate rebranding led to the change in the product offerings thus leading to product rebranding as well.
The third theoretical contribution of the study is the description of corporate rebranding from a process perspective. Our study revealed that in SMEs the analysis stage is not necessarily the first stage of the rebranding process. We found that the process begins with the owner who analyses what he personally wants and once he is convinced about what he would like to stand for or represent then the rebranding process starts. This aspect was revealed from three of our case companies that demonstrated that the owners took time to discover themselves in the first place and this inspired the rebranding process. Therefore, we consider the new additional stage of assurance as a contribution.

Fourthly the study revealed that the emphasis of the rebranding process in SMEs was on the actual physical transformation and thus we added a new stage to highlight this aspect in our suggested rebranding model called the realisation stage. The current rebranding model in the theoretical framework emphasises communication both during and after the rebranding process to internal and external stakeholders, however, this aspect was not emphasised from our case companies. Also the theoretical framework emphasises intensive marketing a situation that was not very evident in the case companies. The additional stage of realisation in our model is relevant to depict rebranding process for SMEs.

In addition the study highlighted the fact that for SMEs, the rebranding process is not is detailed, formal and complex compared with theoretical framework. The rebranding process was owner driven with the involvement of very limited other actors. The role of the owner in the rebranding process is emphasised and lastly the study revealed that SMEs rebrand themselves more in a revolutionary way than evolutionary. They change significant aspects of the companies ranging from aesthetics, name change, services etc.

6.3 Limitations

Like any other research process, our research study has some shortcomings as well. Firstly the results of this research study cannot be generalized due to its qualitative nature. The results are based on only four cases and may not be generalized for all SMEs. Secondly the research study was only focused in Sweden particularly in Östergötland. Thus the results may not be generalized to SMEs in other countries other than Sweden. This is because the structure, purpose and
functionality of SMEs may differ depending on the country. Thirdly the research study has been done in the R&Bs context, therefore generalisations to other industries is limited as different industries may have different features from this sector.

6.4 Further Research

As we have already mentioned, research about corporate rebranding and particularly corporate rebranding process in SMEs is still in its infancy stages. Therefore room for more research is available in this regard. Our research studied corporate rebranding process from the internal point of view involving only management. It would be interesting to study the same phenomenon from the external point of view to include other stakeholders such as customers.

In addition, for further research we would suggest a quantitative study about corporate rebranding process in SMEs as that would increase the sample size and the validity of the results and enable the researchers to generalize the results to all SMEs. Furthermore this research study only considered cases that are from the R&B segment excluding other industries. We suggest similar research to be conducted in other industries to see the extent to which the process is similar or differs from industry to industry. Lastly, this study was conducted in Sweden. However it would be interesting to see results of a similar study on a broader scope or in other countries.
7 REFERENCES


The interview Guide

Personal Information

Name:
Age:
Position:
Years of working:

Company history & Background

1. What type of R&B is this?
2. When was it established?
3. Who are the owners?
4. What is the company's vision?
5. How many employees do you have?

Main Questions

6. Why did you decide to change?
7. What was the company like before-appearance, services provided, ways of operating etc.?
8. What has been changed now?
9. How did the changing process begin (We would like to hear your story):
   a. What was the first thing the company did and what followed afterwards? Kindly take us through all the activities and details one after the other.
   b. Who was involved in the changing process?
   c. Who was making the important decision
   d. How long did the whole the process take to come to completion
   e. How did you plan for the employees during this transition?
   f. How do you know whether you have achieved the intended purpose
10. How does the company market itself to reach the customers especially after the changing process?
11. What is your comment about the outcome of the changing process?

Thank you very much for your time. 😊

Date and Time: