Retaining graduating students in Jönköping

From a place brand identity and place brand image perspective

Bachelor Thesis within Business Administration

Number of credits 15 ECTS
Programme of study International Management
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Jönköping May, 2016
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our supervisors, Khizran Zehra and Elvira Kaneberg, for guiding us throughout the research process. We really appreciate all the time you have taken to share your expertise and knowledge, and to provide feedback on our thesis. We would also like to extend our gratitude towards the thesis groups who provided feedback, suggested alternative approaches, and gave encouraging words during the seminars. Camilla Nilsson and Chiao Hung Tsai are to deserve extra recognition in regards to this thankfulness.

A sincere thanks to Erika Arevalo at Jönköping University for providing feedback on the early purpose approaches and for supporting our research.

A special thanks to Patrik Olderius at Destination Jönköping and Helena Nordström at Placebrander.se for their contributing views on Jönköping; this thesis could not be done without you. Additionally, thanks to the four graduates who participated in our study and enthusiastically shared their views on the research topic.

We owe many thanks to our friends and families who in one way or another shared their support. Last, but not least, we would like to thank for the participation and encouragement of so many people whose names are not enumerated.

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis was to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflected its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affected the retention of graduating students.

Problem: Sweden has many cities with large universities that have extensive student populations. These students could have a strong influence on a city’s economic growth and as companies may choose to cluster around high concentrations of talents, one could therefore argue that these university cities are in advantageous positions. However, most university cities in Sweden fail to retain graduating students and make them permanent residents. Therefore, these cities miss out on important opportunities to attract companies and reach economic growth.

Method: This qualitative study was carried out through in-depth interviews on place brand identity with two different key actors in the city of Jönköping as well on the place brand image, and the criteria considered when deciding on location to reside in, with four graduating students.

Findings: The results showed that there is a strong reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image and that the students have positive attitudes toward the city. However, Jönköping does neither possess, nor is strong in, the factors and characteristics students desire and need in a city. Therefore, the results pointed to the conclusion that it is not the reflection between the place brand identity and place brand image that affects the retention of graduating students.

Implications: The analysis indicated that it is the characteristics a city possesses and the focus brand managers put on addressing and improving them that affects the retention of graduating students.
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1. Introduction

This section presents the background of the topic for this thesis and introduces a problem discussion, after which the purpose and the research questions are stated. Furthermore, the delimitations of this thesis are brought to light as well as the necessary definitions. Finally, an outline for this thesis is presented.

1.1 Background

Globalization has led to an increase in the global shifts of resources, people and capital in today’s society. As a result, there is an increased competition between cities for the access to attention, markets, investments, businesses, visitors, influence, significant events, and talent (Zhang & Zhao, 2009). Today, many companies experience an increased difficulty to recruit talented and qualified employees and it has therefore become an important consideration for companies when deciding on which location to operate in. In addition, Florida (2002) argues that companies often choose to cluster around high concentrations of talent in many cases. Talent can be described as persons with academic degrees, bachelor or at a higher level, within any field (Zenker, 2009). Talented people is a group that are of great importance for a city as their choice of location to reside in can have a strong influence on a city’s economic growth (Darchen & Tremblay, 2009; Bayliss, 2007). The talent universities produce is a source to economic growth, which would be beneficial for all cities. As a result, if talent were to stay, university cities that have thousands of enrolled students at different levels may be seen to have a great advantage in the process of reaching economic growth compared to cities, or regions, without the great access to university students. If students are attracted to become permanent residents and therefore retained, meaning that they choose to stay in the city for an extensive period after their graduation, companies in the area would, intuitively, have an increased access to talent. However, for most university cities in Sweden, retention of graduating students is rarely the case. There is a large movement among Sweden’s students who often tend to leave their city of education (Saco, n.d.) and therefore, neither the university cities nor the companies in the city are in a position to benefit from the many students once they graduate.

One tool that is often used to make geographical areas stand out from an extremely homogenous crowd and to stay competitive is place branding (Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri & Kurtulus, 2010; Van Ham, 2002). In addition, it is now widely believed that a successful brand asset management strategy is required to attract high-tech jobs, brain power and venture capital (Van Ham, 2002). Furthermore, the practice of place branding has been more frequently observed in recent years due to increased competition for mobile resources, e.g. investors, skilled workforce, visitors (Kaplan et al., 2010; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a) and talent (Zhang & Zhao, 2009). In addition, place branding is a growing academic field (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013) and it applies general branding theories and practices to countries, regions and cities in order to strengthen relationships between the geographical area and individuals as well as to achieve economic and political benefits (Van Ham, 2002). Therefore, place branding is arguable a tool that may be
helpful to solve the problem of students leaving their university cities upon graduation, as students is a kind of talent and mobile resource that cities can compete for.

1.2 Problem discussion
For Stockholm county, the retention of graduating students is high, as according to a study made by Saco (n.d.), eight out of ten students who moved to Stockholm for higher education were still residents in the area ten years after graduation. However, this is not a national trend as the statistics are not consistent with other counties in Sweden. For example, in Östergötland county, only two out of ten who moved to the county to conduct their studies were still residents ten years after graduation. These results are similar to the findings in Västerbotten county and Örebro county, where two out of ten in both counties were still residents in the areas ten years after graduation. Moreover, in Jönköping county, the number is as low as one out of ten (Saco, n.d.). In each of the latter counties, there is a major university city to which thousands of students move to each year to conduct their higher education (see Studeravidare.se, n.d.). In Östergötland county, the dominant institution is located in Linköping while in Västerbotten, the major institution is found in Umeå. In Örebro county, the large university is located in the city of Örebro. This is also true for Jönköping county, where the large university is located in the city of Jönköping. Hence, one can clearly see that it is rather these cities than the actual county that has a great advantage in keeping the university talent. The loss of talent these cities experience presents missed opportunities to economic growth as this talent could have been used to attract large companies and it is therefore an urgent need for a solution. To turn around this negative trend, different tools to promote the retention of graduating students are needed and one tool could be place branding as it is often used to compete for finite and mobile resources (Kaplan et al., 2010; Zhang & Zhao, 2009; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a). Therefore, it could be beneficial to study the perspective on how a university city can retain graduating students by improving its practice of place branding.

In this thesis, the focus will be to investigate the reflection between a place brand identity and place brand image, and see if it impacts the students’ views on the city and their desire to stay after graduation. Place brand identity represents the brand’s own internal view of itself (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013) while place brand image refers to the impressions and beliefs people hold about a place (Kotler & Gerter, 2002), hence, the external view. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) state that branding refers to managing perceptions. Unfavourable images can badly impact the business community’s activities and can have negative effects on a city’s future prosperity (Trueman, Klemm & Giroud, 2004). Therefore, it is important to monitor and consider a place brand image. Moreover, the place brand identity is important to consider in relation to the place brand image as an entity without self-knowledge will not be able to produce realistic, credible, coherent and sustainable images (Bennett & Koudelova, 2001). Hence, it is important that the brand image reflects the brand identity (Davies & Chun, 2002). In this thesis, reflection is defined as ‘casting back a mirroring or similar view’. Hence, an existing reflection means that one can clearly see inputs from the place brand identity within the place brand image. It is also referred to a ‘relation’. Furthermore, the research will focus on the city of Jönköping, which is a middle-sized city in Sweden and a smaller city when compared
internationally. The reason for this focus is threefold. First, Jönköping and its university is located in one of the counties that experiences a large outflow of graduating students. Second, Jönköping is a middle-sized city in Sweden as it has 133,310 inhabitants (SCB, 2016) compared to Sweden’s capital city, Stockholm that has as many as 923,516 inhabitants (SCB, 2016). The smaller size of Jönköping’s population could be a disadvantage since Florida (2002) argue that people attract other people. Third, the place brand identity may be of even greater importance for smaller locations as these need unique identities to possess the power of attraction (Anholt, 2006) and thus, it is highly relevant for the city of Jönköping to consider. By comparing Jönköping’s brand identity that the city tries to convey with the place brand image graduating students have of Jönköping, one could examine if the image reflects the identity or if this could be a cause for the large outgoing movement of students. To connect the place brand identity and the place brand image to the retention of graduating students, it is also necessary to analyse the criteria on which this group of people base their choice of which location to reside in after graduation. This study and its findings could be beneficial for Jönköping and other middle-sized as well as smaller cities in Sweden since it could provide suggestions for the importance of a successful place brand identity and its reflection on the place brand image as a mean to retain graduating students and thus, promote economic growth.

Although a clear need for a solution, no current literature solves the problem of how to retain graduating students in university cities from a place branding perspective. The concept of place branding has previously been applied to countries rather than cities (Hankinson, 2001) and current literature on place branding focuses particularly on the field of tourism and vacation (Kaplan et al., 2010; Hankinson, 2001). Research within a broad area like place branding cannot be limited to one field (Kaplan et al., 2010) and therefore, research must be conducted in other areas than tourism and vacation. When linking place branding to the field of talent retention, research has been conducted on how to use place branding to attract talent from abroad (e.g. Silvanto & Ryan, 2014), how city image attributes can influence the attraction of talents (e.g. De Noni, Orsi & Zanderighi, 2014), and how to attract talent with place branding by understanding their needs and preferences (e.g. Zenker, 2009). Moreover, De Noni et al. (2014) made an attempt to combine previous research on attracting talents. As one can see, the focus is on attracting talent as well as the attributes and preferences of a place. However, the main attention is paid to attract talents, and not on how to retain talent, or more specifically, graduating students in a city and attract them to become a new kind of stakeholder, i.e. permanent residents. This gap needs to be filled in order to improve a university city’s ability to retain graduating students and to support economic growth.

**1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affects the retention of graduating students.

**Keywords:** Place branding, Place brand identity, Place brand image, Retention of graduating students
1.3.1 Research Questions

To guide this research into achieving the purpose of this thesis, three different research questions (RQ) have been formulated:

**RQ 1: What place brand identity is the city of Jönköping trying to convey?**

The first research question takes the perspective of the sender and looks at Jönköping’s brand identity. The purpose of this question is to discover how the city of Jönköping view itself, what identity it tries to convey to its stakeholders as well as its aspirations.

**RQ 2: How is the place brand image perceived by graduating students in Jönköping?**

The second research question takes the perspective of the receiver and looks at the place brand image graduating students have of Jönköping. The purpose of this question is to examine Jönköping’s brand image from graduating students’ perspectives.

**RQ 3: Which are the criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation?**

The third research question looks beyond the place brand identity and the place brand image. The purpose of this question is to understand the criteria that attract students to reside in a city, in order to discover if these are found in Jönköping’s brand identity and therefore, to understand whether the brand identity of Jönköping is what students actually desire.

1.4 Delimitations

In this thesis, the purpose is to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affects the retention of graduating students. One delimitation of this thesis is the choice made to only examine one city. However, this thesis does neither aim to generalize the findings nor to state any applicability to all cases and situations. Instead, the findings from this thesis should be viewed as guidelines for further research on how to use place branding, and which aspects to focus on, in order to retain graduating students in their city of education.

Moreover, this thesis will exclude some groups of students. First, the focus will be on the retention of graduating students from undergraduate programs and not from graduate programs, since graduate students are likely to have different images of the city compared to undergraduate students as their time spent in the city will differ. Second, this research will only consider the undergraduates who are planning to work after graduation and will therefore not take the undergraduate students who have plans to conduct master studies closely following the graduation into account. Third, this research will only focus on Swedish students and hence, it will exclude the international students at Jönköping University. The reason for this is that different factors are likely to affect students from other countries when deciding on a location.
to reside in after graduation. These exclusions delimit the thesis and is a conscious choice due to the circumstances, such as limited time and resources.

1.5 Definitions

**Talent:** Persons with academic degrees, bachelor or at a higher level, within any field.

**University city:** A city that hosts the largest university within the county of operation, with a minimum of 9000 enrolled students.

**Retention of graduating students:** Retaining students within a university city for an extensive period after their graduation, making students a new kind of stakeholder, i.e. permanent residents.

**Place:** Describes a geographical area and includes a city, county, region and country. (Also referred to as ‘location’).

**Place branding:** Umbrella term that applies branding theories and practices to cities, counties, regions and countries.

**Place brand identity:** The brand’s own internal view of what it wants to be and how it wants to be perceived by its audience.

**Place brand image:** The external view of a place brand, i.e. the beliefs, ideas and impressions people hold about a place.

**Reflection between place brand identity and place brand image:** Casting back a mirroring or similar view. An existing reflection means that one can clearly see inputs from the place brand identity within the place brand image. (Also referred to as ‘relation’).

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis has the following structure; Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Empirical Findings, Analysis, Conclusions, and Discussion and Further Research (see Figure 1). In the first section, a background of the topic is presented, the problem is discussed and the purpose and the research questions are stated. In addition, delimitations are presented. The second section focuses on previous research in connection to the thesis’ research questions. The most relevant perspectives are summarized in a conceptualization. The third section explains how data is collected and analysed while the fourth section presents the empirical findings. Section five analyses the findings while section six draws conclusions for this thesis. Finally, in section seven, additional findings, limitations of this thesis, suggestions for further research and practical implications are discussed.
Figure 1: Outline of the thesis
2. Literature Review

In this section, several studies related to the research questions are presented. Furthermore, it continues with a conceptualization where the most relevant studies and theories related to the research questions are summarized.

2.1 Branding

Branding is not a new phenomenon as it has been used for centuries in order to differentiate the goods of one organization from those of another. A brand is, according to the American Marketing Association as cited in Keller (2012, p.30), “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”. In practice, however, a brand is referred to beyond this definition and involves for example the creation of awareness, reputation and prominence in the marketplace (Keller, 2012). Brands could be viewed as guides to consumers facing information overload and complex decisions (Van Ham, 2002). Furthermore, branding is the process of attempts made to influence consumers’ interpretations and the development of the consumer’s own view of what a brand is (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a). Therefore, branding refers to the management of perceptions (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

2.1.1 Brand identity and brand image

Two concepts within branding are brand identity and brand image. These are closely linked to each other, however, there are distinct differences between the two concepts (see figure 2). Brand identity represents the sender’s perspective of a brand while the brand image refers to the receiver’s perspective (Kapferer, 2012).

![Figure 2: Brand identity and Brand image (Based on: Aaker, 2010, p.vii)](image)

The brand identity is aspirational (Aaker, 2010; Roy & Banerjee, 2007) and Aaker (2010, p.68) defines brand identify as “a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategists aspire to create or maintain”. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to the customers (Aaker, 2010). The purpose of a brand identity is to identify a brand’s meaning, aim and self-image (Kapferer, 2012). Thus, brand identity is no different than any identity – it reflects the basic characteristics of how one wants to be perceived (Aaker, 2010).
In opposite, brand image describes what people think about a brand and the feelings that occur when exposed to the brand (Roy & Banerjee, 2007). A brand image can be defined as “a subjective mental picture of a brand shared by a group of consumers” (Riezebos, 2003, p.63). Brand image refers to how groups decode messages originated from all of the brand’s products, services and communication and then how these messages are interpreted into signs. How these signs are shaped depends on two potential sources; the brand identity, how the brand wants to be perceived, and extraneous factors outside the brand owner’s control (Kapferer, 2012). In order to create a positive brand image, the brand identity and the messages sent must reflect reality (Riezebos, 2003).

### 2.1.2 Reflection between brand identity and brand image

To create a lasting relationship with the consumers, the brand identity and brand image have to be related. Therefore, the brand owner should strive to identify and remove gaps between the identity and the image. If this is not done successfully, the organization may suffer from setbacks in the market, which could lead to irreparable loss (Roy & Banerjee, 2007). According to Keller (2012, p.36), ultimately, “a brand is something that resides in the minds of consumers”.

### 2.2 Place branding

Increased knowledge of branding as a strategic marketing activity has brought interest to branding outside product branding (Hankinson, 2001). Today, nearly anything can be perceived as a brand and one can clearly find branding practices in reality applied to countries, regions and cities (Van Ham, 2002). A place brand can be, as similar to other brands, defined as “the totality of the thoughts, feelings, associations and expectations that come to mind when a prospect or consumer is exposed to an entity’s name, logo, products, services, events, or any design or symbol representing them” (Lindsay, 2000 as cited in Van Ham, 2002, p.253). Although the main focus historically has been on countries as brands, the concept of place branding is increasingly applied to cities as well (Hankinson, 2001). Cities are becoming more similar to each other and strong brands are vital in order for a city to stand out from a homogenous crowd and to capture mind- and market share (Kaplan et al., 2010). Branding adds trust and emotion to a city, which in turn helps the consumers make their choices concerning a city less difficult (Van Ham, 2002). Place branding is now believed to impact a city’s growth and thus, its long-term survival. Therefore, a strong and positive brand is a great tool to compete with other cities (Kaplan et al., 2010). The success of a brand is important as it does affect decisions and behaviours of its stakeholders (Anholt, 2005). The practice of place branding applied to cities has been increasingly perceived as a mean to strengthen the city’s relation with its stakeholders in order to achieve economic and political benefits (Van Ham, 2002). Hence, place branding has been applied as a response to the increased competition for finite and mobile resources, for example investors, skilled work force and visitors (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a; Kaplan et al., 2010) and talent (Zhang & Zhao, 2009). Furthermore, it is now widely believed that a successful brand asset management strategy is required to attract high-tech jobs, brain power and venture capital (Van Ham, 2002). To conclude, if place branding is applied
correctly, it can contribute to all aspects of urban development (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a).

Place branding is a complex endeavour (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a) as cities are multifunctional and have several stakeholders (Hankinson, 2007; 2004). The practice of place branding combines the theories of branding applied to products (Kaplan et al., 2010), services (Warnaby, 2009; Hankinson, 2004) and corporations (Kavaratzis, 2009; Hankinson, 2007). Hence, managing a successful place brand is a more complex task than within the field of products and services (Kaplan et al., 2010; Kavaratzis, 2009; Hankinson, 2001). First, similar to a corporation, but for different reasons, a city is unlikely to have a single target market or a single offering (Anholt, 2005). A city cannot exclude groups of users due to social justice, political balance and future security and sustainability (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007a). Furthermore, a city can be experienced by different individuals and for more than one purpose at the same time, which may lead to conflicts between different stakeholders. As a result, the consumer experience cannot be controlled by the brand manager in the same way as a physical product (Hankinson, 2001). Second, a city’s boundaries are legally defined and cannot be changed easily (Hankinson, 2007) and therefore, product development may be limited. Third, a place brand is managed by an indirect organization that consists of both public and private stakeholders. Therefore, it may be a difficult task to create a consistent brand proposition (Hankinson, 2001). Following this complexity, a place brand has no clear owner as in the case of a product, a service or a corporation (Fan, 2006; Hankinson, 2001). Due to the complexities of place branding, it should be considered as a dialogue between different stakeholders (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013) since a place brand is more likely to be successful if there is a united purpose and commitment to a common branding strategy by all stakeholders (Hankinson, 2001). This means that a city should aim for internal cohesion and consistency that is communicated externally (Kaplan et al., 2010). Therefore, place branding is not only about increasing awareness or improving the market share, it also involves additional aspects, for example managing the identity and image of a city (Van Ham, 2002).

### 2.2.1 Place brand identity

In recent years, governments have started to realize that there is a need for cities, regions and countries to renew their perceptions of identity in order to survive and prosper. Moreover, for smaller locations, identity is a contributing factor to growth. When places have less power compared to other places, there is a larger need to be interesting and to possess the power of attraction, which could possibly stem from unique identities. In addition, place brand identity is important since it is the starting point of how place images are formed and can be expressed by a simple model including, identity, behaviour and image (Anholt, 2010). This model can be illustrated by the following reasoning: “Who you are determines how you behave; how you behave determines how you are perceived” (Anholt, 2010, p.47).

Despite this importance of, and interest in, place brand identity, the theory development is still in an early stage (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013). Several case studies have attempted to renew the view on the identity of places by applying general marketing principles. Literature on place brand identity attempts to draw practices from product and service brands. However,
this is challenged as the complexity of places is pointed out (Skinner, 2010). It is highlighted that places do not have single identities and that places, unlike products, cannot be created and started from zero. Further, he argues that places have more similarities with corporations than products, as both can be seen to have single identities but with multiple facets, displaying the importance of combining different focuses of branding since one is not enough to manage the complexity of cities and places (Skinner, 2010). This is examined within several articles that aim to develop the field of place brand identity by suggesting that one can build further on existing literature within corporate branding as a way to understand the brand identity of places (Anholt, 2010; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007b; Trueman et al., 2004).

Although the concept of place brand identity is included in several branding models there is a lack of detail on the subject and there is yet no model of place brand identity widely accepted in academia (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013). Still, place brand identity is considered as the part of the image-building process that can actively be affected by an entity (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). There is a great importance in the selection of brand elements to represent a place identity and the identity’s cohesiveness depends on the consistency of the elements (Cai, 2002). Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013) have made an attempt to develop a place brand identity model and the elements included are mission, vision, values, personality, distinguishing preferences, and benefits. The distinguishing preferences can be functional like a beautiful city, or psychological like the feeling of safety (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013). However, in Cai’s (2002) framework, the brand elements that create the identity are the perceptions of a place’s tangible and intangible features as well as the personal values and benefits connected to the place’s attributes. These elements align with the notion that to develop a place brand identity, the strengths and weaknesses of a place’s intangible and tangible attributes need to be analysed (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Furthermore, Hanna and Rowley (2011) continue their argument on tangible attributes by highlighting the importance of an attractive environment with pleasing architectures and add on the more intangible factors culture, history and the economy. Another attempt to develop a brand identity model was made by Trueman et al. (2004), in which the authors applied five elements of corporate identity to a place, whereas the elements are; the actual identity, the communicated identity, the conceived identity, the ideal identity and the desired identity. Place brands need to be truthful and ensure that the communicated identity and the actual identity matches. It is also important to avoid dissonance between the different identities since a dissonance is believed to result in an organizational crisis (Trueman et al., 2004). Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013) conducted a research in which both public and private actors participated and the conclusion was that all different stakeholders will combine the elements of a place in different ways, but what is important to be successful is that the stories of the place remain the same. Therefore, all stakeholders of a place have an influence when shaping the place brand (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013).

2.2.2 Place brand image

Place brand image is the beliefs, ideas, and impressions people have of a place (Hanna & Rowley, 2011) and it is critical since the feelings around an image are drivers of people’s behaviours. The image is not only the feelings about an entity, but it also includes the associations, memories, and expectations. In addition, image has been considered the same as
reputation (Anholt, 2006) and it is possible that the perspectives of various people within a place differs (Anholt, 2010). The place brand image is important to consider since unfavourable perceptions of a place is likely to devalue its image and have effects on its future prosperity. When negative perceptions of a place occur, the business community’s activities may be badly affected, inward investments may be reduced and the number of visitors may decrease (Trueman et al., 2004). Countries, regions and cities with anonymous or negative images can also experience less attention from the public, visitors, businesses and investment than what is needed (Anholt, 2006). This receives support from Trueman et al. (2004), stating that image perceptions may influence the behaviour of visitors as well as potential investors.

The place brand image is not in the hand of the brand owner and does not exists within an office, but instead in the minds of the consumers. Places can speak about building and managing their brand images, but even though attempts can be made to adjust the identity, there is no guarantee that it will have an effect on the brand image (Anholt, 2006). However, Skinner (2010) believes that places should consider the image presented and that most places receive the image deserved based on the behaviour and thus, it is arguably possible to some extent affect the image of a place. This belief is supported by previous research (e.g. Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007b) and practices, for example New York and London, where the cities have been able to select their images when trying to renew the districts (Bennett & Koudelova, 2001). Furthermore, places have many stakeholders (Anholt, 2005) and therefore, the desired image of a place can differ depending on whom is trying to affect it (Bennett & Koudelova, 2001). Moreover, Anholt (2010) argues that place images cannot be easily altered as these are more stable and robust than in the case of products and corporations. Although this is widely believed, places can try to understand and monitor their images, collaborate with businesses and civil society openly and effectively and to maintain innovative in their different sectors (Anholt, 2006). Moreover, it is important that a place image is perceived as unified (Hanna & Rowley, 2011) and Anholt (2010) believes that focus should be on creating substance rather than on communicating merely empty promises when enhancing a place image.

2.2.3 Reflection between place brand identity and place brand image
The reflection between place brand identity and place brand image is discussed in the literature (e.g. Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013; Hanna & Rowley, 2007; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007b; Cai, 2002; Bennett & Koudelova, 2001). It is argued that places should attempt to reduce gaps between identity and image (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013) since a gap between the place’s reality and its image is a problem (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007b). Cai (2002) puts identity at the core of the brand-building process and highlights the need to ensure that an assessment could be made between the perceived image and the projected identity. Anholt (2006) argues that the identity affects the image, while Cai (2002) informs how the image formation and building contributes to strengthening and creating a unique place brand identity. Although place brand image is not necessarily concurrent with place brand identity, a close affinity between the two concepts is essential as an entity without self-knowledge will not have the capability to produce realistic, credible, coherent and sustainable images (Bennett & Koudelova, 2001).
2.3 Talent retention

The discussion of human resources as a mean to shape economic growth has been present for a long time. In recent years, the majority of the strategies regarding economic development have shifted from an industrial based economy strategy, which focused primarily on manufacturing, towards a knowledge driven development geared towards innovation and information (Venhorst, van Dijk & van Wissen, 2010). Moreover, researchers such as Insch and Sun (2013), Darchen and Tremblay (2009), and Bayliss (2007) have highlighted the importance of human resources, innovation and creativity in supporting economic development. Therefore, cities and other locations with high levels of human resources have a competitive advantage and grow more quickly as highly skilled people seek employment in innovative locations (Darchen & Tremblay, 2009; Bayliss, 2007). Bayliss (2007) elaborates on this and argues that the main driving force behind the success of a place comes from the clustering of talented people.

A lot of research addressing the geographic mobility of human resources have been based on, and inspired by, the work on the theories by Florida (e.g. Andersen, Bugge, Hansen, Isaksen & Raunio, 2010; Darchen & Tremblay, 2009; Houston, Findlay, Harrison & Mason, 2008; Bayliss, 2007; Hansen, Ban & Huggins, 2003). Florida’s (2002) research identifies ways of attracting and retaining what he refers to as the ‘creative class’ through the use of conveniences in order to promote economic growth and affluence. The ‘creative class’ is referred to as talented people who are principally paid to do creative work for a living, for example scientists, engineers, designers and other knowledge-based professions. Further, it is believed that jobs follow skilled people, rather than the opposite and traditional view where people follow jobs.

Many small to medium sized locations have experienced a negative migration resulting in a loss of human resources and knowledge. The outflow has been caused by large groups of people moving toward metropolitan areas, which is a phenomenon referred to as the ‘brain drain’ (Andersen et al., 2010; Hansen et al., 2003). In order to restrict the brain drain and to keep talent within the area, policy makers have tried to gain a better understanding of graduates needs and wants (Venhorst et al., 2010). The conclusion drawn is that graduates make trade-offs between many factors when deciding where to reside and start their careers (Venhorst et al., 2010; Hansen et al., 2003).

2.3.1 Factors influencing talent’s decision of location to reside in

The talents’ decision making concerning the choice of which location to reside in is highly complex and impacted by several factors (Venhorst et al., 2010; Houston et al., 2008; Hansen et al., 2003). According to Hansen et al. (2003), job opportunities is the most important factor to attract and retain human resources and Houston et al. (2008) argue that most individuals ensure a job position before residing in a new area. From this aspect, larger locations tend to have the upper hand according to Andersen et al. (2010) as these often have more job opportunities. However, this view contradicts with Florida’s (2002) view that jobs follow talent. Still, recently graduated students are assumingly drawn to locations with a strong labour market, that can offer a wide variety of positions with competitive salaries and benefits (Venhorst et al., 2010; Houston et al., 2008; Hansen et al., 2003).
During the period of higher education, students establish networks and contacts with the local society and build relationships with local businesses through different opportunities to interact and communicate with them. This is created through, for example, networking, events, internships, scholarships, on-campus recruiting and business incubators. Through these local connections, many students can relate to, and associate themselves with, the place and are therefore more likely to remain within the area in which they have achieved their university degree and to start their career than they were in the beginning of their education (Huffman & Quigley, 2002). Therefore, students who have spent more time in the city of education are more likely to consider to stay in the area. This explains why graduate students rather than undergraduate students are likely to stay and can be reasoned as the greater associations these students have with the place and the fact that these students are more familiarized and comfortable with living away from home (Venhorst et al., 2010; Huffman & Quigley, 2002).

In addition to employment, cultural amenities have a high influence, both for night- and day time, when talent choose which area to reside in (Florida, 2012). A vibrant city life with an active nightlife is essential (Florida, 2012; Bayliss, 2007), involving late-night restaurants, bars and cultural events such as theatre. Moreover, the day time needs and wants relate to amenities such as cafés and shopping alternatives. These facilitate social interactions, which appears to be important in a highly mobile market and play key roles in making a place attractive. In addition, there are intangible aspects of a place that attract talent. The cultural atmosphere and high-quality of life are argued to be important to talent as these represent open-mindedness and tolerant mindsets (Florida, 2012; 2002).

2.4 Conceptualization
The literature review has presented the relevant theories and researches for this study. These are summarized and the results are presented in this part of the thesis: the conceptualization. The conceptualization aims to simplify the view on the areas of interest (Gruber, 1993) and to present the theories in relationship to each of the research questions of this thesis. This framework works as a guide to the data collection and the analysis.

2.4.1 Research question one: Jönköping’s brand identity
The conceptualization of the place brand identity combines the perspectives of both place branding and general branding. The reason for this is the previous applications of general branding theories to place branding, and the lack of a widely accepted place brand identity model. Looking at place brand identity and general brand identity combined, an identity is formed from three perspectives:

- **The brand’s own view of itself**
The identity is the sender’s own perspective of the brand and its self-image (Kapferer, 2012). An identity is also ‘who you are’ (Anholt, 2006) and the brand’s personality and values (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013).
The attributes and characteristics that differentiate the brand from other entities
Identity is the brand associations brand owners try to create and maintain. It is also what the brand stands for and its promises as well as the basic characteristics of how one wants to be perceived (Aaker, 2010). Differentiating attributes can be both intangible and tangible, like culture and history or an attracting environment and pleasing architecture (Hanna & Rowley, 2011).

The brand’s desires and aspirations for the future
Mission and vision are two elements of a place’s identity (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013) and the identity is also the brand’s meaning and aim (Kapferer, 2012).

2.4.2 Research question two: Jönköping’s place brand image from the graduating students’ perspectives
The conceptualization of place brand image combines the perspectives of both place branding and general branding. The reason for this is the many previous applications of general branding theories to place branding, and the depth it contributes with. Looking at brand image and place brand image, it has three major themes:

The perception receivers have of a place
The image is people’s thoughts and feelings about a brand (Roy & Banerjee, 2007) and their associations, memories and expectations of a place (Anholt, 2006) as well as beliefs, ideas and impressions built around it (Hanna & Rowley, 2011).

The many different possible images of a place
The image exists within the minds of consumers (Anholt, 2006) and it can differ with the perspectives of various people (Anholt, 2010).

It is important that a place is perceived as unified (Hanna & Rowley, 2011)

Existing difficulties in changing a place brand image
It is widely believed that place images cannot be changed easily (Anholt, 2006).

2.4.3 Research question three: Criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation
The conceptualization of the criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation is mainly based on the previous findings concerning talent retention. The reason for this is the lack of previous research within the field of retaining graduating students and that students are one kind of talent.

Tangible influencing factors
Employment is the primary driver of migration from one location to another (Hansen et al., 2003). Furthermore, graduating students are assumingly drawn to cities with strong labour markets that can offer a wide variety of positions with competitive salaries and benefits
(Venhorst et al., 2010; Houston et al., 2008; Hansen et al., 2003). Moreover, cooperation with local businesses can lead to internships and other opportunities. This can result in permanent jobs after graduation and the flow of students leaving may be reduced (Huffman & Quigley, 2002).

In addition, cultural amenities that address both the night- and day time needs and wants have a high influence when talent choose which area to reside in. First, night time needs and wants relate to late-night restaurants, bars and cultural events such as theatre (Florida, 2012), which characterise a vibrant city life (Florida, 2012; Bayliss, 2007). Second, day time needs and wants relate to amenities such as cafés and shopping (Florida, 2002).

- **Intangible influencing factors**
The cultural atmosphere is important to talent as this represents open-mindedness and tolerant mindsets (Florida, 2012; 2002).

Social interactions are important and play key roles in making a place attractive (Florida, 2012; 2002).
3. Method

This section includes both the method as well as the methodology as it strongly relates to the method. It begins to present the methodology; research philosophy, research purpose, research approach and research strategy. Then it continues with the method of this thesis; data collection, sample selection and data analysis. Last, the quality standards of the research are analysed.

3.1 Research philosophy
The research philosophy chosen for a study is important as it comprises assumptions about how the researchers view the world, assumptions that will guide the research strategy and the methods chosen (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). There are four different research philosophies; positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Interpretivism underlines the importance to reflect on differences between humans as social actors (Saunders et al., 2009) and it was therefore the choice of philosophy for this research as it needs to reflect on and understand the different opinions and views of Jönköping. Moreover, an interpretivism stance is relevant for business and management as these situations are complex and unique. Researchers who apply an interpretivist philosophy usually choose qualitative methods and conduct their study with small samples and in-depth investigations (Saunders et al., 2009). This research philosophy is in line with this thesis as it is written within the field of business administration and contains small samples and in-depth interviews, as well as humans as social actors.

3.2 Research purpose
There are three main classifications of research purposes; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Saunders et al., 2009). The primary purpose of this thesis is exploratory as Saunders et al. (2009) state that exploratory studies are useful when one wants to clarify the understanding of a problem and seek new insights. Moreover, exploratory studies can be used to assess a phenomenon in a new light (Saunders et al., 2009). This can be connected to the purpose of this thesis, which is to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affects the retention of graduating students. However, this thesis is partly descriptive as well. Descriptive studies are meant to describe persons, events or situations. In addition, it can be a forerunner to exploratory research as it describes situations (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, this category also applies to this thesis as it aims to describe how Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image may impact the retention of graduating students.

3.3 Research approach
According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are two different research approaches; deductive and inductive. In this thesis, an inductive approach is used. An inductive approach focus on collecting qualitative data in order to gain “an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.127). In addition, it is less concerned with findings that can be
generalized (Creswell, 2002 as cited in Saunders et al., 2009, p.127). The logic behind this choice is related to the purpose of this thesis, which is to gain an understanding on how the retention of graduating students in the city of Jönköping may be impacted by a reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image. In addition, this thesis does not aim to generalize its findings. Saunders et al. (2009) believe that an inductive approach is more suitable when the research area is new and not very developed. As this is the case of place branding overall, and in particular in relation to the retention of graduating students, the inductive approach is useful to compare and analyse data to the previous theoretical findings. Furthermore, this thesis aims to examine the beliefs and thoughts of the interview participants in order to fulfil the purpose rather than to find statistical answers. Overall, an inductive approach with qualitative data is more suitable for this thesis based on its purpose and the unexplored field of theories it operates in.

### 3.4 Research strategy

There are many different strategies to apply in terms of research strategies; experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, and archival research. When choosing a strategy, it is important to consider whether it will enable the researchers to answer the research questions and meet the objectives of the research. Additional factors available to guide the choice of strategy are the amount of time, other available resources and existing knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009). The chosen strategy for this thesis is a case study. A case study is described as a strategy suitable for research that involves an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon investigated in real life context. Moreover, case studies are often used in exploratory research (Saunders et al., 2009) which makes it a suitable strategy for this thesis. Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2009) states that a case study is suitable when the research aims to develop a rich understanding of the research context, which is the case for this thesis. The aim is to understand individual perspectives, and the relation between the different perspectives as well as attracting attributes, which demands a broad and rich understanding of the context.

### 3.5 Data collection

The data collection consists of both secondary and primary data. The secondary data applies to the literature review while the primary data applies to the continuing research of this thesis.

#### 3.5.1 Secondary data

The academic secondary sources for this interview are books, webpages, and articles from various journals. The impact factors of the journals are not very high, which was to be expected as the field of place branding is very specific within branding, and not yet fully developed. This was taken into consideration and careful attempts were made to identify the most respected names within the field in order to both use their works, works they have cited and works they have been cited in.
3.5.2 Primary data

When using case study as research strategy, there are many techniques for data collection available (Saunders et al., 2009). This thesis applies interviews as the method to collect data, which according to Saunders et al. (2009) refers to a discussion between two or more people. The reason for choosing interviews as the method is that a discussion allows for capturing individual perspectives from the interviewees, which is important for the research topic as both place brand identity and image are built within the minds of individuals. The strengths and weaknesses of this method are presented in Table 1 and are taken into account when conducting the research. These are further discussed in section 3.7 Quality Standards.

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<tr>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<td></td>
<td>• Depth of information</td>
<td>• It is possible that the interviewer affects the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provides valuable insights</td>
<td>answers of the interviewee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Allows for flexibility</td>
<td>• Time-consuming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Accuracy and relevance of data can be checked</td>
<td>• Interviews produce non-standard responses</td>
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<td>when collected</td>
<td>• It can invade on the interviewees privacy</td>
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<td>• High response rate since most interviews are</td>
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Interviews can be categorized as structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The semi-structured, also referred to as non-standardized, interview is the choice for this thesis. Semi-structured interviews can vary from interview to interview as long as there is a list of themes and questions (Saunders et al., 2009). The reason for this choice is threefold. First, it is a good fit with our research purpose as Saunders et al. (2009) state that this kind of interview is often included in studies with exploratory elements. Second, non-standardized interviews allow the interviewee to reflect on complex events without writing anything down (Saunders et al., 2009), which facilitates the process for our interviewees. Third, interviews are the most advantageous when questions are either complex or open-ended (Saunders et al., 2009), which is allowed with non-standardized interviews. As place branding is complex and the aim is to have the interviewees to explain their own views, open-ended questions are chosen for the interviews.

For this thesis’ interviews, the interviewees are grouped into two categories, graduating students and place brand managers. At first, it was considered whether individual interviews or focus groups would be most suitable for the groups of graduating students. However, individual interviews are chosen for both categories in order to avoid conversation dominance by certain interviewees or peer pressure where the interviewees influence each other with their answers. When conducting individual interviews, it is possible to either ask questions face-to-face, by telephone or via the Internet (Saunders et al., 2009). The interviews for this thesis are made face-to-face in order to discuss more complex questions in-depth, which is, according to Saunders et al. (2009) more difficult with for example phone interviews. Furthermore, the
strengths of Internet and phone interviews, which are low costs and reaching geographically dispersed audiences (Saunders et al., 2009), are not necessary to apply for these interviews. The reason for this is that this study focuses on Jönköping and therefore, all participants are in the same geographical area, which means that the research already has very low costs.

3.6 Sample selection
In order to fulfill the purpose of this thesis, two different samples are needed. First, to understand Jönköping’s brand identity, and therefore the sender’s perspective, the ones in charge of managing the brand are taken into consideration. Second, to examine Jönköping’s place brand image, hence the receiver’s perspective, stakeholders of Jönköping are interviewed. As this thesis considers only one kind of stakeholder, the graduating students, these are the ones interviewed to represent the receivers’ perspective.

3.6.1 Sender’s perspective
The sender is referred to as the brand owner and in general branding, the company or the company owner is viewed as the brand owner. However, as discussed in the literature review, this is more complex within the field of place branding as there is no clear owner. Therefore, concerning the sample selection on the behalf of the sender, the sampling process is different from the process of sampling students as it is needed to choose between different entities to determine which ones to view as the main brand owners. To exclude the word ‘brand owner’ as there are several owners related to a place brand, the ones in charge of the place brand identity will be referred to as brand managers henceforth.

When gathering a sample, one can choose between two main different sampling techniques: probability and non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2009). This thesis adapts a non-probability technique, which means that the probability for the elements to be chosen may differ from each other (Saunders et al., 2009). The reason for applying a non-probability technique relates to, as aforementioned, that any stakeholder could actually be perceived as a partial brand manager. Within non-probability sampling, there are many different ways to choose elements that are to be sampled. This thesis mainly uses a purposive sampling (see Saunders et al., 2009) as this allows for choosing the brand managers to present the sender’s side alone. The purposive sampling is often used in studies with small samples where the researcher wants to choose elements that are very informative (Saunders et al., 2009). This sampling method is suitable for this thesis due to the small sample size the time limit allows for, and the more in-depth information needed to fulfill the purpose of this thesis. However, the purposive sampling limits the possibility to generalize the results (Saunders et al., 2009). This thesis does not aim to make a generalization but rather to find out if a reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image may impact the retention of graduating students.

In many countries and cities, there are predetermined agencies or companies working toward creating and strengthening the place brand. This is also the case in the city of Jönköping as there is a public company named Destination Jönköping that mainly focuses on managing the city as a destination brand. As this company can be perceived as the main brand manager of Jönköping,
the place brand identity that the city of Jönköping is trying to convey is based on the opinions and views of Destination Jönköping. In order to increase and widen the sample representing the sender’s aspect, the choice of involving another entity in the city of Jönköping was made. Therefore, Placebrander.se was chosen, which is a company where the CEO is the previous Marketing Manager of Destination Jönköping and worked for the company until 2012. There are two main reasons for interviewing this person in addition to Destination Jönköping. First, to avoid being biased by the current brand manager and to understand the brand identity from a person with great insights, however, not mainly responsible for Jönköping’s brand today. Second, a brand cannot be created and started from zero (Skinner, 2010) and therefore, the previous Marketing Manager is most likely to have important inputs on how the identity has earlier been developed. This is useful information that the current management may not be able to provide.

3.6.2 Receiver’s perspective

Similar to the sample selection of senders, this thesis adapts a non-probability technique when sampling the graduating students. The reason for applying a non-probability technique relates to the time and the practical aspect as it would be too time-consuming to adapt a probability sampling. The sampling of graduating students mainly uses a purposive sampling (see Saunders et al., 2009) as students who fit the chosen criteria and who are considered suitable to answer the interview questions are chosen. This sampling method is, once again, suitable for this thesis due to the small sample size the time limit allows for, and the more in-depth information needed to fulfil the purpose of this thesis.

As this thesis’ purpose relates to graduating bachelor students, the participants chosen are all in their last semester of their Bachelor’s degrees. In addition, bachelor students can be divided into two groups: 1) the group of students who plan to continue their studies and to pursue a master’s degree straight after graduation and 2) the group of students who plan to start their working lives and careers. This thesis focuses on the latter group, the working group, as it is believed that this is the group that has the greatest possibility to reside in the city of their higher education. Continuing on this, Hansen et al. (2003) state that the graduates’ priorities shift throughout the life-cycle and therefore, all participants in this study are between 20-30 years old and full-time students. Furthermore, the participants are all considered to be ‘typical students’, meaning that all of them live nearby the campus area and participate in different student activities and events outside school. Finally, the participants represent all four faculties at Jönköping University and have moved here from different parts of Sweden, including both small cities as well as large cities. Therefore, none of the participants are from Jönköping originally. This means that the students have different experiences with and interests in the city. However, all students participating are Swedish citizens as involving international students would broaden the scope and therefore, most likely involve additional or different factors to consider. For the same reason, to limit the scope of the research, all participants are undergraduates. This choice is made since the time spent in the city most likely differs between undergraduates and graduates. Furthermore, to increase the diversity of our sample within the chosen criteria, two of the interviewees are males and the other two are females.
The criteria involving all participants are:

- The participant is in his or her last semester of the Bachelor’s degree
- The participant does not have plans to begin a Master’s Degree within one year
- The participant is a Swedish citizen but is not from Jönköping originally
- The participant is a full-time student between 20-30 years old
- The participant is considered to be a ‘typical student’

3.7 Data analysis

There are four general strategies for analysing qualitative data. This thesis adapts two of these; ‘relying on theoretical propositions’ and ‘developing a case description’. The first strategy follows the theoretical propositions derived from the literature review while the latter refers to organizing the case study according to some descriptive framework (Yin, 2014). This thesis relies on theoretical propositions as the analysis is divided after the research questions which are related to the theory and the conceptualization. In addition, this thesis partly develops a case description as the analysis answers the research questions by analysing and describing the current situation in Jönköping. Furthermore, there are five analytic techniques that can be applied; pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models and cross-case synthesis. The pattern-matching technique is the one most desirable for case studies and compares empirical findings to expected results (Yin, 2014). In this thesis, the findings from the interviews are compared with, matched against, and structured according to the conceptualization developed for this research.

When conducting the analysis, this thesis takes inspiration from the data display and analysis approach based on the work of Miles and Huberman (1994). The analysing process is said to consist of three sub-processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) namely:

- Data Reduction
- Data Display
- Drawing and Verifying Conclusions

First, data reduction refers to “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.10). As one can see in Figure 3, data reduction is done throughout the entire research process, starting already before the data collection. Second, data display relates to the process in which one organize and compress information that allows one to draw conclusions. This facilitates the analysis of this thesis as the themes of the interviewees’ answers become more clear and thus, makes it possible to point out similarities and differences. Third, drawing and verifying conclusions are made to conclude the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
3.8 Quality standards

It is impossible for a researcher to know for sure that one’s findings are purely accurate. However, one can attempt to increase the possibility of getting the findings correct by emphasizing two main aspects; reliability and validity (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.8.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to “the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.156). This thesis takes this aspect into account in order to yield reliable findings and conclusions. First, Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) as cited in Saunders et al. (2009, p.156) that reliability can be assessed with three questions: 1) Will the measures yield the same results on other occasions, 2) Will similar observations be reached by other researchers, and 3) is there transparency in how sense was made from the raw data?

To minimize the risks to reliability, the steps taken in this study, including how data is gathered and analysed is easy to follow and understand in detail. This allows another researcher to find equivalent results and to discover similar findings in other occasions. Furthermore, transparency in the findings is implemented by avoiding common threats to reliability; participant error, participant bias, observer error and observer bias (Robson, 2002 as cited in Saunders et al., 2009, pp.156-157). First, the participant error can be avoided by having the interview at a neutral time (Saunders et al., 2009). This is made by making appointments for interviews in the beginning and middle of the week and without any interview beginning later than 4 p.m. Second, the participant bias refers to interviewees who may not be, for some reason, to answer from their own perspective and can be avoided by anonymity or confidentiality (Saunders et al., 2009). For this thesis, this threat is considered in two ways as it involves two different samples. In the case of the sender’s perspective this is not considered to be any threat as the interviewees are the CEOs for both companies respectively and therefore, represent and stand for their work. In the case of the receiver’s perspective, confidentiality is applied and therefore, the students’ names are not mentioned in this thesis. However, in order to follow the discussion and analysis easily, the students are referred to as F1, F2, M1 and M2. Third, the observer error can be avoided by an interview guide of high structure (Saunders et al., 2009). Hence, this is created and implemented to all interviews made. Furthermore, in order to avoid different ways of asking questions and distractions for the participants, the questions are asked by one person alone during the interviews. Fourth, observer bias refers to the ways the given answers are interpreted (Saunders et al., 2009). This threat is minimized by basing
the thesis mainly on the interviews conducted and to ensure that the answers given are clear before ending each interview. Furthermore, the interviewees are allowed to read how their answers are interpreted before applying the answers into the thesis.

Finally, a fifth threat is arguable related to language of the interviews compared to the thesis. This thesis is written in English but the interviews are conducted in Swedish in order to make the interviewees more comfortable to discuss the topic of matter by conducting the interview in their native language. Clearly, there is a threat to reliability when translating the interview from Swedish to English although the interviewers are fluent English speakers. This threat is minimized by allowing the interviewees to read through the translated answers.

3.8.2 Validity

Validity concerns whether “the findings are really about what they appear to be about” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.157). According to Yin (2014), there are three different measures of validity for a case study thesis; construct validity, internal validity and external validity. To be able to achieve construct validity, Yin (2014) provides three main tactics: 1) to use multiple sources of evidence, 2) establish a chain of evidence and 3) have key informants review draft case study report. For this thesis, the latter two recommendations are applied while the first tactic is only partly applied. As aforementioned, interviews is the only method for data collection for this thesis, which oppose Yin’s (2014) recommendation of having multiple sources of evidence. However, as interviews are considered to be the only relevant source of data to address the purpose of this thesis, which is to examine whether there is an existing reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image and to see if it impacts the retention of graduating students. Two of the strengths with interviews are the depth of information and the valuable insights these provides, while one of the main weaknesses is related to the possibility that the interviewer affects the answers of the interviewee, thus resulting in biased answers. Instead of applying several sources of data collection, a great emphasis is directed to avoid the weaknesses of interviews in order to produce valid results to academia. This is done by accomplishing several interviews and creating interview guides. However, the latter two recommendations are applied for this research. First, the literature review and the following conceptualization establish a chain on what has been done before and how. Second, this thesis is read by, as well as discussed and analysed with, both the tutors as well as peers during the seminars throughout the spring semester. However, if any reader finds the research invalid and questions about the data collection and the interviewees answers, the interviews are saved in the form of audio records. This in order to make it easier than to read several pages of transcripts. Moreover, Yin (2014) states that internal validity is more important for explanatory research. Therefore, this is not a major concern for this thesis as it is mainly descriptive and exploratory rather than explanatory. Lastly, external validity refers to how one can know if the study’s findings can be generalized for the population and not just the sample (Yin, 2014). As this study is not aiming to generalize the results but rather to understand whether the place brand image and place brand identity may impact student retention, this is not a major consideration for this study.
4. Empirical Findings

In this section, the empirical findings are presented. The data has been collected from the interviews with the two brand managers as well as the four graduating students. The empirical findings follow the structure of each research question.

4.1 Research question one: Jönköping’s brand identity
The first research question, concerning Jönköping’s brand identity, has been viewed from two different brand managers of Jönköping that each represents the place brand identity at different points in time. Therefore, the empirical findings related to this research question is divided into two parts, beginning with Placebrander.se and the previous place brand identity while ending with Destination Jönköping and the current place brand identity of Jönköping.

4.1.1 Placebrander.se
Helena Nordström, the CEO of Placebrander.se described the city of Jönköping as a city with a long history that has experienced major changes during the past ten years, a trend that is still present. The largest change is the cityscape where one can see large improvements in the project ‘Munksjöstaden’, which is the development of a whole new part of the city. A major change within the field of communications is the high speed line that will be built in the centre of the city. This will improve the communications the city of Jönköping has with other parts of Sweden. Furthermore, Nordström described the city of Jönköping as entrepreneurial and stated that entrepreneurship lies within the city’s DNA, meaning that the city of Jönköping has a culture in which people are rewarded for ‘doing’ and where focus is on trying and moving forward. This makes the city of Jönköping a start-up stage where one can choose between a position as an employee but also to start a new company. This is evident in the form of Science Park, a company that helps people build their own companies. Combining this with the digitalisation that is on-going nationally, a trend that seemingly has come further in Jönköping compared to other cities, makes Jönköping a great place to start a company as well as an exciting place for the companies to operate in. In alignment, the personality of Jönköping was described as international as it interacts with people worldwide and as entrepreneurial as it is curious about new technical approaches. Moreover, Nordström stated a belief that the main competitive advantages for graduating students in Jönköping are, once again, the international and entrepreneurial mindset within the city. In alignment, one of the greatest tangible features of Jönköping relates to the start-up stage as one is able to have an office in the middle of the city, while the city is also in the middle of ‘business Sweden’ which makes it easy to transfer all over the country to network and build partnerships. In terms of employment opportunities, Nordström did not believe that there are any major differences compared to similar cities in Sweden. However, as mentioned, the city of Jönköping has the advantage that one is able to create his or her own company, which makes Jönköping stand out in comparison from the homogenous career opportunities that other similar sized cities offer.
Further, Nordström stated that the city of Jönköping is one of few in Sweden that is actually expanding. She believed that the offerings in terms of restaurants are really good compared to similar cities. However, in regards to the city’s offerings in terms of cafés and shopping, Nordström stated that there is a constant development but that there is a major competition from other cities. In terms of nightlife, Nordström believed that overall it is relatively strong compared to similar cities. However, she considered the opening hours to be a drawback and thus, a part of the puzzle that needs to be solved in order to favour the image of the city. Moreover, she stated that the city’s cultural side needs more attention and development as many cities are ahead of Jönköping. She argued that cultural events are not in Jönköping’s DNA and it is therefore challenging to improve the city’s cultural life. Furthermore, Nordström believed that the city of Jönköping is moving towards an atmosphere more similar to, although far away from, the largest cities in Sweden. This means that the city is becoming more tolerant and open-minded. As a result, it becomes acceptable to be different and to stand out from the crowd.

Generally, the mission and vision of Jönköping during Nordström’s time as Marketing Manager used to be to attract more residents, students, visitors and companies in order to promote economic growth. However, although an important group, Nordström mentioned that the vision was not to have all graduating students to stay but rather for every student to bring a positive image of the city that could result in recommending the city to others or moving back later in life. Hence, the main aim was to make the students ambassadors for the city.

Nordström stated that a place brand is owned by everyone who lives and operates within the place and therefore people with a great diversity were invited to discuss how the city of Jönköping wanted to be perceived and which the strengths were in order to create its values. The agreed values of Jönköping were international, entrepreneurial and standing by its word. This could be connected to the religious history of the city of Jönköping, which could bring trust and beliefs that promises will be kept. The brand aimed to create a common feeling among the residents that would result in a coordinated communication. To manage this aim, Nordström tried to understand which parts of the city that the residents were proud of, and reassured an updated picture by testing the image frequently. As the brand manager of a place brand, Nordström argued that one should try to understand what most people consider to be the strengths of Jönköping, and build on them. Therefore, it is important to have a dialogue with the residents to discover what is going on.

4.1.2 Destination Jönköping
Patrik Olderius, the CEO of Destination Jönköping, described the personality of the city of Jönköping as a middle brother. In other words, the city of Jönköping is in a quite challenging position as it has to struggle with the larger as well as the smaller siblings. In practice, this means that the city of Jönköping is relatively stable, for example it is of moderate size, there are a few large companies and there is a low unemployment number within the city. However, this is a frustrating position as there are no new and exciting changes at this moment, meaning that the city of Jönköping is not getting closer to the larger siblings while the smaller siblings are fighting to work their way up.
According to Olderius, the work towards improving the retention of graduating students often falls between different institutions as there are no clear directions between the different entities. Although Destination Jönköping mainly works to increase the number of visitors, the large events mentioned are discussed with the university as well. From this sense, Olderius argued that several aspects that promotes tourism are also related to attracting and retaining students. Another aspect that Destination Jönköping indirectly works with, that also increases the likelihood of retaining graduating students, is to create connections between students and companies in the city. For example, Destination Jönköping incorporates a few students each year to work some extra hours and the company is also striving to influence other public companies to follow their practice. However, Olderius believed that overall, the city is not as successful at this compared to many similar cities. Furthermore, he believed that the job opportunities within the city of Jönköping are bad as there are too many traditional companies without any rethinking. Further, he highlighted a great job market with an unemployment rate far below the national standard. However, there is not a clear profile of neither the job market nor Science Park. In addition, some professions probably have great difficulties in finding a job opportunity, for example within marketing and communication as there are almost no company headquarters located in Jönköping.

A great tangible feature of Jönköping is considered to be the connection Jönköping has with the water and the nature. In terms of other tangible features, Olderius considered the range of the nightlife to be fine while the opening hours are under standard. He also stated that the city of Jönköping has better shopping opportunities in comparison to relatively similar cities. In addition, Olderius believed that the city’s offerings in terms of restaurants are of high class while the options of cafés are just fine. One aspect that he considered the city of Jönköping to have a lot to improve on is the traditional cultural events. He argued that it is not very varied and that he missed theatre. The strongest intangible features on the other hand are the feeling within the city as well as the strong, and many, associations that are present within the city. Thanks to these associations, the city as a whole is fast to gather around important issues, and Olderius mentioned the manifestation against hostility towards foreigners that was held in 2015. Adding to this, the city of Jönköping values a safe society. Furthermore, Destination Jönköping desires to create proudnness between the city and its residents. However, Olderius stated that the residents in the city of Jönköping are not truly proud of the city and this is something that has to be changed. Therefore, Destination Jönköping wants to create an awareness and proudnness of the city by attracting large events and happenings.

Olderius stated that there is no clear vision for Destination Jönköping of how the city wants to be perceived as the politicians are the ones in charge for this decision. Instead of a mission and vision, Destination Jönköping has implemented a statement to work towards. This statement involves the geographical location as the company wants to use it as a metropolitan, which is referred to a place that is open-minded and modern in its way of acting and behaving. As a result, a metropolitan attracts people with a cosmopolitan view of life. For this statement to become true, the airport is a contributing factor. However, Olderius stated that it is difficult to determine where to direct the place brand without a clear vision. Still, it is important that the place brand is a guarantee that what you believe it consists is true.
4.2 Research question two: Jönköping’s place brand image from the graduating students’ perspectives

All four graduating students presented different views on which factors that lead them to the city of Jönköping. F1 and M2 based their choices on recommendations from others. In addition, M2 as well as M1 stated the location of the city while F2 highlighted the image of the city presented to her in advance.

All participants described the city of Jönköping as nice. M1 even used the word amazing and stated that he would love to promote the city to others. Moreover, F1 and M2 described the city as cozy and M2 described the city as having a lot of everything as well as a favourable location next to the lake Vättern. F2 agreed to the latter opinion as she described the city as beautiful, a lot due to the location next to Vättern and Munksjön. F1 stated that everything is within bicycle distance and M2 showed appreciation that the city allows everyone to live relatively close to each other. M1 believed that the city has grown in a high pace and stated that there are several places to socialize, for example ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Piren’. F1 agreed and stated that Jönköping is almost equal to ‘Bryggan’. All participants mentioned the size of the city, however many different opinions were presented. F1 considered the city to be small while M2 focused on the growth of the city and its forward movement. M1 and F2 presented a view somewhere in between as M1 compared Jönköping to his smaller home town, while F2 used the word ‘lagom’ – meaning neither to big nor too small. The size of the city was related to many of the feelings associated with Jönköping. M1 argued that the city is not as impersonal as larger cities and argued that it is appreciated to run into people one knows on the street. F1 presented divided feelings for Jönköping whereas the negative feelings were related to the size of the city as she argued that there is not a lot of activities to do on a day off. Moreover, F1 had some negative feelings toward the student life, which she described as a ‘bubble to love and hate’ as well as one she has to, from time to time, get some space away from. In contrast, M1 and M2 presented mainly positive feelings toward Jönköping and in particular, toward the student life. In addition, M1 and F2 considered the city to be safe and joyful and F2 stated that the city contributes to calm and wellness among the residents.

Regarding the values of the city, M1 and M2 believed that the city values a strong drive for the future – to develop and grow as well as to renew itself. This involves taking advantage of the city’s geographic location. In alignment, F1 considered a desire from the city’s side to appear young and trendy. However, M2 stated that the city is not at its final destination but merely on the way towards its goal. Moreover, F2 argued that the values of the city are related to making everyone feels welcomed. M1, M2 and F1 associated Jönköping with their student life and M1 highlighted the ‘student bubble’ with many parties while M2 discussed a coherent city where everyone is connected as a result. In addition, M1 associated the city with ‘Bryggan’ while F1 thought of driving past Vättern. In opposite, F2 associated the city with Christianity and people’s caring and compassion. Moreover, F2 believed that one of the city’s promises to its residents is related to that the residents will enjoy the city and become a part of it, thus making it ‘their’ city. F1, however, stated that the international spirit is a promise that also has been kept while M2 has felt a promise of good education and a strong drive for the future. M1
continued on this and stated a promise to grow and for the residents to have the possibility to establish networks and develop. Also, M1 felt that the city promises employment opportunities and interesting positions.

All participants agreed that the city’s greatest competitive advantage relates to its geographic location. First, it is a midpoint and closely located to larger cities. Second, Munksjön and Vättern contribute with beauty to the city. Moreover, F1 and F2 argued that the university should be viewed as a competitive advantage due to the students’ contribution of life and happenings to the city. These advantages are related to the city’s greatest tangible characteristics. F1, F2 and M1 argued for the city’s nature with greens areas, parks, lakes and a beach in the middle of the city. F1 also stated that ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Munksjöstaden’ as well as the planned high speed line to be great tangible characteristic of the city. Moreover, the greatest intangible characteristics are, according to M2, related to the students and the city’s drive. M1 considered the student life as well as the city’s acceptance for it to be of great importance. Finally, F1 highlighted the young and trendy atmosphere while F2 argued for the welcoming people in the city. However, all participants except M2, believed that these associations, competitive advantages and characteristics are badly communicated by the city to students. In opposite, M2 felt that the city has good communication with the students.

M1, F1 and F2 felt that the city does not work to retain graduating students and argued that it is students that help other students, through for example career fairs, to make connections with companies in the city. M2 had no clear picture of whether the city attempts to retain students or not, however he felt that there are some attempts by Jönköping to build relationships between students and companies. Concerning the job opportunities, the answers given among the participants differed. F2 stated that there are plenty of job opportunities for her profession as well as to find a variety of jobs. In opposite, F1 argued that there are no job opportunities for her choice of career, meanwhile M2 considered the job opportunities as present, however, with less competitive salaries compared to larger cities. However, M2 stated that the city provides the individual with an opportunity to pursue entrepreneurial dreams and to start an own company. M1 considered the job opportunities as fairly good due to the many projects in the city, however, these rely on the individual’s own drive and commitment.

As for Jönköping’s nightlife, F1, F2 and M2 believed that there is a good supply with clubs for both students and the general public. However, M1 did not agree and stated that the supply is weak with a few exceptions. M1 argued that the opening hours of the clubs are a disadvantage as one cannot be as spontaneous as in larger cities. In opposite, F1 has come to prefer the early closings. There were separated opinions among the participants regarding the shopping opportunities in the city. F1 and M1 considered the shopping as weak while F2 and M2 considered it accepted when compared to the size of the city. Regarding the supply of restaurants, M1, F1 and F2 stated that the city has a good standard but in need for greater variations of concepts. M2 did not agree with the other participants regarding the restaurants, but he agreed with all the other opinions that the supply of cafés in the city is good. Moreover, F1, M1 and M2 considered cultural events to be fairly present. M1 argued that Jönköping put a lot of effort into the creation of events such as after works, festivals, beach volleyball contests,
Black Friday, and Easter egg hunts. However, F2 argued that the communication is low and that the responsibility is on the individual to find information about these. The atmosphere in Jönköping was described by F1 as safe, where one never has to feel afraid. F2 described it as nice and suitable for all stages in life. M2 explained the atmosphere as developing and with a sense of acceptance while keeping the core Christian values. Moreover, F2 and M2 described the atmosphere as lively. Moreover, F1 stated that the atmosphere results in a feeling of being welcomed as the people are friendly and caring.

4.3 Research question three: Criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation

All the participants agreed that a city’s attractiveness to permanently reside in is predominantly influenced by the possibility to secure a job after graduation. M2 expanded on this and argued that a competitive compensation is also essential. Moreover, F1 stated that the size of the city is an important aspect and argued that most people are likely to live in larger cities right after graduation. In addition, F1 and M2 explained that the personality of the city plays a major role and F1 argued that it is important for a city to be open to new trends and allow for adaption in a rapidly changing environment. In opposite, M1 considered a city to be perceived as ‘bonhomme’ as more important. Furthermore, F2 and M2 highlighted the importance for a city to offer a wide range of activities as well as ongoing events and happenings. F2 argued that it is to a city’s disadvantage if one feels a need to leave the city in order to find interesting activities and further acknowledged that a small or middle-sized city cannot provide the same range of activities that larger cities can.

The participants were asked to rank the following factors, according to its importance for a city to offer in order to be attractive to reside in permanently; nightlife, shopping, restaurants and cafés, cultural events as well as culture and atmosphere. In the ranking, 1 represents the most important, and 5 the least important factor, of what makes a city attractive. The results are presented in Table 2. Job opportunities was disregarded from this question as it is the prevalent influencing factor when determining a city’s attractiveness.

Table 2: The importance of different factors within a city

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nightlife</th>
<th>Shopping</th>
<th>Restaurants and cafés</th>
<th>Cultural events</th>
<th>Culture and atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, a great nightlife was ranked relatively low compared to the other factors. However, all participants expressed that the nightlife is very important. Second, shopping was in general ranked in the middle of the mentioned factors except for M1 who believed that it is the most important factor. However, all participants agreed that it is important for a city to offer a wide range of alternatives. Further, M1 stated that a large number of shopping alternatives can make a city be perceived as larger. F1 agreed with M1 although she explained that she did not care
as much about shopping. However, F1 stated that the shopping alternatives tell the audience whether a city is trendy or not and she therefore argued that shopping is an important factor for a city to consider. Moreover, F1 stated that it is more important for a city to have a wide range of activities rather than to take an approach in which one is really good at something, while really bad at another. Third, restaurants and cafés were ranked relatively high, although none believed it was the most important factor. F1 highlighted the importance for a city to offer a wide variety of cafés as these offer a simple way of meeting up with friends. Fourth, cultural events were another factor that has divided importance for the participants. M1 and F1 believed that cultural events are a top priority for a city if it wants to be attractive for residents while M2 and F2 does not have the same interest in it. Fifth, the opinions regarding culture and atmosphere were divided. F1 and F2 ranked it as the most important factor. F2 stated that it is the atmosphere that contributes to make an individual feel welcomed to a place and that in order to reside in a city, one must feel a connection to the place. Further, she referred to these emotions as making a city become ‘one’s own’. In opposite, M1 ranked culture and atmosphere last while M2 ranked it in the middle in terms of importance.

All participants believed that Jönköping experiences difficulties in retaining graduating students due to a lack of job opportunities and its disadvantage of being a smaller city. M1 felt that although job opportunities exist, there is a sort of ceiling that limits the career opportunities. F1 and M2 expressed plans to leave the city right after graduation as they want to live in a larger city, in addition to M2 leaving due to salary demands while F1 leaving due to a longing to move back to her hometown. F2 planned to stay in the city as she has already received a job and because she really enjoys the city. M1 planned to stay in the city for six more months due to a current job position. Afterwards, his choice depends on the career opportunities available. However, he stated that if he stays, he would feel like a failure because he would be ‘the one to stay’ although he loves the city.
5. Analysis

In this section, the analysis starts with analysing the three research questions. Moreover, these are discussed in relation to each other in order to analyse the purpose of examining whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity and if it affects the retention of graduating students.

5.1 Research question one: Jönköping’s brand identity

Place brand identity is the sender’s own perspective of the brand (Kapferer, 2012) and Olderius, the CEO at Destination Jönköping who represents the sender’s perspective, described Jönköping as the middle brother that is constantly struggling to keep its position against its smaller siblings. He added to this that Jönköping has difficulties to go further than the stated position in order to reach new and exciting stages. When analysing the brand identity of Jönköping, this description seems partly accurate. The city of Jönköping has its struggles, but it also seems as the city is exhaustible and never gets tired of fighting and developing to reach new and exciting places. For example, the city is developing new projects, such as the high speed line that will improve the city’s connections, and, Jönköping works hard to create many large events that will increase the its attractiveness. The many projects and the attempts to become more attractive shows that Jönköping does not only live in the present, but that it also has big plans for the future.

A place brand identity is, as mentioned, the brand’s own view of itself. As the two brand managers described the identity from different points in time, the identity seemingly differs and could be separated into the earlier one, and the current one. The early identity presented the city as international and entrepreneurial as well as a perfect start-up stage where it is possible to network and have access to people with many different skills. Although this entrepreneurial identity was more apparent in the early identity, it is somewhat present in the current one as well since the city currently aims to be a metropolitan as well as modern and open-minded, which could represent an innovativeness and entrepreneurial drive. Therefore, it seems like the earlier view has not been forgotten even if it is not in the centre of attention. Since a brand cannot be created and started from zero (Skinner, 2010), it is not surprising that parts of the earlier identity are still present as Olderius could not simply start from a clean slate when taking over Destination Jönköping. However, there is a side of the current identity that separates it from both the earlier, entrepreneurial one, as well as the current, persistent identity with a future oriented drive. Namely, that the companies in the city were described by Olderius as traditional and non-innovative. Adding to this, there are few company headquarters in the city, which makes it difficult for residents to find certain jobs. In addition, students that could be a great source of human capital, are often forgotten. As entrepreneurs often work with the resources available to them, forgetting students is not considered very entrepreneurial. Moreover, it leads Jönköping to miss out on an opportunity to retain important human capital that could help build upon the identity and image of Jönköping as a metropolitan. That the city forgets the students could possibly be explained by the change of focus of Destination Jönköping, which has shifted
from, among others, residents and students, to attracting tourists exclusively. Even though the focus has changed, Olderius stated a belief that the attempts to promote tourism also relate to attracting and retaining students.

A place brand identity also involves the brand’s basic characteristics (Aaker, 2010), and the tangible as well as intangible differentiating attributes a brand has (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). One differentiating tangible attribute Jönköping has, that is also its greatest competitive advantage, is its geographic location. The reason for this is twofold. First, the geographic location makes the city of Jönköping a midpoint in Sweden which makes it easy to access larger cities and conduct business with other companies in different locations. It also contributes to Jönköping as being the perfect start-up stage. Second, Jönköping’s location between two lakes gives the city a beautiful scenery and its nature with, in addition to water, many green areas and parks, is something that could make Jönköping more attractive and to stand out from other similar entities. Another characteristic Jönköping has that differentiates the city from similar ones, is the Christian heritage that has contributed to the feeling of a safe city and to the many associations present. This is favourable as it can facilitate freedom of the residents since they can feel safe to move around in the city, and the associations could facilitate the feeling of being part of a community.

Even though the city of Jönköping possesses strong competitive advantages and characteristics, it seems as the city settles in many other areas at an acceptable level but no more than that. For example, the restaurants were described as keeping a high standard meanwhile the cafés as ‘just fine’. This shows an inconsistency and it could make it difficult for Jönköping to show itself as better than other similar cities. Another example is the nightlife in Jönköping that was described as relatively good compared to other cities, but that the early closings are a disadvantage. One could argue that Jönköping needs to be more than relatively good, and try more to have something extra that will impress people. The shopping possibilities in the city were described as poor, and the cultural events as in large need of improvements. Due to all these reasons, it seems like even though Jönköping is fighting hard to develop and be attractive, there is still a long road ahead.

According to the place brand managers interviewed, there are no clear missions and visions for Jönköping. This could be seen to contradict the theory as Ruzzier and de Chernatony (2013) state that a place brand identity consists of the brand’s mission and vision. However, as discussed, Jönköping fights to develop and become more attractive, and the city also wants to become a modern and open-minded metropolitan. This shows that the city aims to stand out and to be something extraordinary, and it is possible to see is that the city possesses a strong future drive. Therefore, even though neither mission nor vision are stated, they are present within Jönköping.

One can see that Jönköping’s brand identity has potential and that there is a lot of on-going improvements, which clearly shows that Jönköping is not a city that stands still even though it is not entirely where it wants to be yet. One reason Jönköping has not reached this position yet could be Destination Jönköping’s attempt to change the identity, thus making the earlier and
the current identity different from each other. Since an identity is difficult to change, the earlier identity is still present and its entrepreneurial mindset could collide with the traditional view, making it a city that is somewhere in between. It is entrepreneurial, yet traditional. It is tolerant, open-minded and modern yet not entirely innovative. It does have a low unemployment, yet it is difficult to find all possible positions. It seems as even though Jönköping is fighting hard to become something more, it is still the middle brother Olderius described it as, because it cannot get rid of its position of being merely moderate, not really good but not really bad either.

5.2 Research question two: Jönköping’s place brand image from the graduating students’ perspectives

As expressed by Anholt (2010), the image of a place exists within the minds of the consumers and may differ with the perspectives of various people. This is evident from the empirical findings as the interviewees presented different images. However, there is an overall agreed upon image of Jönköping that reflects a welcoming city, which is open and tolerant to its citizens and visitors. This is beneficial to Jönköping as it is important that places are perceived as unified (Hanna & Rowley, 2011). Jönköping was also described as a beautiful city with its constant exposure to the lakes Vättern and Munksjön combined with the city’s capitalization of these assets with areas such as ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Piren’. In addition to this, the geographic location of Jönköping is perceived as beneficial as it provides for easy commutes both within the city but also with the rest of Sweden.

The city’s perceived promises are related to being international and developing. Also, it is believed that the city values a strong drive for the future and to renew itself. This can for example be represented by the emerging ‘Munksjöstaden’ as well as the renewed area surrounding ‘Bryggan’. Associations made to a place are a part of the place brand image (Anholt, 2006) and ‘Bryggan’ is a place that the graduating students especially associate Jönköping with. Moreover, the city is viewed as a city that tries to be perceived as young and trendy in order to appeal to the younger generation. A large contribution to this is the location of the university in the middle of the city which makes the city feel vibrant with all the student related activities. What is interesting is that since feelings about a brand is a part of the image (Roy & Banerjee, 2007), the students themselves are contributors to the feeling of the city as being vibrant. Therefore, they are partly the reason to the perception of the city’s attempt to be young and trendy. Contradicting this young and trendy view of Jönköping, the city is perceived as a Christian city that values its old traditions. These traditions, however, seem to have been transferred into the modern society by contributing with hospitality, security and care.

Regarding the job opportunities for a newly graduated student, Jönköping is viewed as a highly limited market as it does not provide the same opportunities as larger cities and the job market is believed to have a limit on the future career possibilities. In relation to this, the city is not perceived to help establish and nurture relationships between the students and the corporations within the city, which can be seen as a disadvantage as the students feel that they are taken for granted and assumed to start their career in the city. As a result, the students feel overlooked and that their needs are not addressed.
The empirical findings assess the city life of Jönköping as mediocre as it hosts an acceptable variation of nightlife activities and cultural events. The supply of restaurants was described as average while the cafés were positively perceived. Although the brand image of Jönköping is generally positive, few students plan to stay in the city. This may be related to the mediocre city it is perceived as, which may be connected to the statement of M1 who stated that it would be viewed as a failure in the eyes of others to stay in Jönköping and thus, pressuring the decision of leaving the city after graduation.

5.3 Research question three: Criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation

Houston et al. (2008), Hansen et al. (2003), as well as Huffman and Quigley (2002) all stated that jobs have an effect on the retention on students and that the primary deciding criteria is the availability of job opportunities after graduation. This theory states that a great amount of talent will stay in an area when offered jobs after graduation, however, this is not fully supported by the empirical findings. The findings show that in short term, merely a job offer could be enough. However, it might not be enough in the long term as students consider other factors related to job opportunities that may be more important, for example to have a competitive compensation and the possibility for career advancements. From this aspect, larger cities may be more likely of attracting graduating students due to the deeper labour markets offered.

According to Florida (2012; 2002), shopping, nightlife, restaurants and cafés, cultural events, and cultural atmosphere are factors that attract talent to a location. This is supported by the empirical findings, which also add suggestions on the order of the importance of the factors although all factors were stated to be of importance. The empirical findings also give insights to why some of the factors are important. For shopping, numerous shopping alternatives and variations are important due to the different needs of the target markets. The findings also state that the shopping alternatives say a lot about a city, for example how trendy it is and the perceived size of the city. In addition, a vibrant city life with a lively nightlife and happenings is desired by talent (Florida, 2012; Bayliss, 2007), which is supported by the empirical findings. Even though nightlife do not have the highest ranking, it is agreed that alternatives of nightlife are important, such as variations in the activities from pubs and clubs to concerts. According to the empirical findings, the atmosphere and culture within a city is the most important criteria and the reason is that it impacts whether one feels welcomed or not.

It is seemingly that the students have previously based their choice of location on recommendations and opinions regarding the location of others. This creates a great need for cities to make ambassadors of their residents as they can portray a favourable image of the city, even if they at some point in time would decide to leave the city. Based on this, a factor not previously mentioned in the field of talent retention is that the advice and opinions of others may be important to consider.
5.4 Reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image

To obey the purpose of this thesis, to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affects the retention of graduating students, one needs to start by comparing the place brand identity with the place brand image. The keywords of both concepts are displayed next to each other in Table 3 and the similarities are coloured.

Table 3: Comparison between the keywords of Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords of Jönköping’s brand identity</th>
<th>Keywords of Jönköping’s brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future drive</td>
<td>Future drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature – water and green areas</td>
<td>Beautiful nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian heritage</td>
<td>Christian heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong geographic location</td>
<td>Strong geographic location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Limited job opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>‘Bryggan’/’Piren’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism-oriented focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing the keywords of Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image, it is possible to see that there are many similarities. For example, the students have noticed the city’s strong future drive and its development, which is favourable for Jönköping as its expansionary efforts are not in vain. Also, the nature is a competitive advantage that both sides clearly points out, as well as the geographic location that is well exploited by the city. Another similarity is that both the place brand identity and the place brand image contains the feeling of an international city, even though the international side is more evident in the early identity, which shows that the earlier identity is still present within the minds of the students. In addition, the students feel that the city is tolerant, and this is mentioned as an aim in the identity as the city desires to be an open-minded metropolitan. What is interesting here, is that the place brand identity’s future desire of being open-minded is already an existing state from the perspective of the students. Lastly, the city’s Christian heritage is mentioned by both parties, and one could argue that it has contributed to other factors associated with the city. For example, it could be the reason for the city being felt as a safe and secure place. Additionally, the Christian heritage could have laid the foundation for the many associations and the feeling of being part of a community, which could contribute to the city’s welcoming feeling.

The nature and the city’s geographic location are considered to be Jönköping’s strongest competitive advantage among both the brand managers and the students. Places like ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Piren’, which are closely related to the nature, represent the city in a sense as these are very important and facilitate socializing opportunities. According to Florida (2012; 2002), opportunities to socialize are essential for talented people and thus, one can argue that places like ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Piren’ are beneficial to the city in order to retain graduating students.
However, these places are overlooked by the brand managers and were not mentioned at any point during the interviews. It seems as the value of these places is not recognized in an accurate way, which could be detrimental for the city. Therefore, the city might not exploit these places to their full potential and to use them in the process of retaining graduating students in the city.

Jönköping’s feeling of belonging and being welcomed is highly valued by the students. As discussed earlier, this could stem from the city’s Christian heritage and this shows a clear reflection between the identity and image. It was stated in the empirical data that the feeling of being welcomed relates to a place’s cultural atmosphere. As the cultural atmosphere is an important factor for successfully retaining talents, it is likely that this reflection is favourable for the city and that it could help Jönköping to retain graduating students.

Although the many favourable characteristics of Jönköping, the city is perceived as merely moderate and this has been noticed by the students. Overall, the students appreciate the city of Jönköping and its offerings, but as their studies are reaching the end, they desire something more. The job opportunities are not what graduating students want or need and the compensation as well as possibilities for higher advancements are low. This can be seen as a major factor determining the students’ choice of location since Venhorst et al. (2011), Houston et al. (2008) and Hansen et al. (2003) state that graduating students are drawn to strong labour markets that offer competitive salaries and a wide variety of position. The lack of an attractive labour market is recognized by the brand managers and hence, the default is not found in a poor reflection as both sides have noticed the same issue. Clearly, Jönköping do not have the important and strong labour market that students desire and need once they graduate. The fault could instead be put on the fact that Destination Jönköping does not actively work towards an improvement as students are no longer within the area of focus. Olderius did state that several aspects that promote tourism are positively related to retaining graduating students as well. However, it seems like the students in that sense is merely a bonus if they are retained, but if they are not it does not matter since it was not the aim. Therefore, it is the tourists’ needs and wants that are listened to and not the students’. Consequently, there is no wonder that the students feel forgotten and taken for granted. Despite the claim that the issue of retaining students is partly accounted for, Olderius is aware of that the issue of retaining graduating students often falls between institutions. Destination Jönköping, does however, make small attempts to introduce students into Jönköping’s job market by offering internships. However, Olderius argued that it is the companies within the city that needs to follow their example and take more responsibility for the issue. One reason explaining why other companies does not follow Destination Jönköping’s lead could be a lack of new thinking and ignorance of the potential value that exists within graduating students. From a talent retention point of view, local connections could increase the feeling of belonging to a place and make it more likely that students would stay in the city after graduation (Huffman & Quigley, 2002). However, since neither the companies, nor barely Destination Jönköping, work to establish connections with students, one could argue that the likelihood of retaining graduating students decreases. Therefore, Jönköping could have benefited from the earlier identity where the focus was more on students, entrepreneurship and innovativeness. If Destination Jönköping had built further on this identity and utilized the access to talent by branding Jönköping as a talented city, more
headquarters as well as innovative companies could have been attracted to the city. This in turn could have led to a stronger labour market, making it more attractive for graduating students to become permanent residents of the city.

As mentioned, the city is perceived as being merely moderate, which could also be found in how the city’s nightlife, shopping, restaurants, cafés, and cultural events were described by both the students and the brand managers. Here, the reflection is not 100 percent accurate since students argued for the cafés to be of a relatively good standard, meanwhile the brand managers highlighted the quality of the restaurants. However, in general, none of these aspects were described as extraordinary or competitive when compared to similar cities. Therefore, these factors do not make the city stand out or contribute to making Jönköping a distinguishing city. What is interesting is that there is a semi-strong reflection between the identity and image regarding these factors, but that no attempts of improvements were mentioned.
6. Conclusions

In this section, the conclusions for each research question and the purpose of this thesis are presented. The purpose was to examine whether Jönköping’s brand image reflects its place brand identity, and to analyse if it affected the retention of graduating students.

To obey the initial purpose of this thesis, three research questions were answered. The first research question concerned the place brand identity of Jönköping and the findings point to an identity that has many favourable characteristics, such as its geographic location, and that it makes attempts to develop further. However, the city struggles to be more than merely moderate and it has difficulties to reach higher levels in terms of labour market as well as the offerings of shopping alternatives, nightlife, restaurants and cafés, and cultural events. The second research question related to the place brand image of Jönköping and the findings suggest that the graduating students have good feelings toward the city, a lot due to its geographic location and welcoming atmosphere. The graduating students also believe that the city is constantly working to renew itself and has a strong drive for the future. However, the career opportunities are perceived as limited, while the offerings of shopping alternatives, nightlife, cafés and restaurants, and cultural events are merely moderate. The third research question regarded the criteria students consider when deciding on location to reside in after graduation. The empirical findings are supported by previous literature on the criteria that attract talent. However, the findings of this thesis also suggest that not only are job opportunities the most important criteria when deciding on location to reside after graduation, but also possibilities to career advancements and the level of compensation. Additional factors that are proven to be important are shopping, restaurants and cafés, cultural events, nightlife, and cultural atmosphere. Finally, one additional factor found, not mentioned in theory, was the importance the opinions and advice of others have on the decision of city to reside in.

With the answers to these research questions, combined with the more extensive analysis, it is possible to fulfil the initial purpose of this thesis. Drawing from the results of the first two research questions, one can see that there is a reflection between Jönköping’s brand identity and brand image as the students seem to have captured the essence of the place brand identity. Although it is not realistic to claim that the reflection is 100 percent accurate, the graduating students and the brand managers tell the same story of Jönköping. Therefore, one cannot blame the poor retention of graduating students in Jönköping on the actual reflection between the place brand identity and place brand image. Instead, Jönköping has actually been successful in conveying an identity that has been captured in the image and it is therefore considered truthful. Instead, it seems as the identity is not what students’ desire as it is not strong enough on the criteria important for students, such as job opportunities and offerings of shopping alternatives, restaurants and cafés, cultural events, and nightlife. Since the factors are not strongly present in Jönköping’s brand identity, this seems to have a negative effect on the retention of graduating students as the students believe that what they need and want are more likely to be found in other places.
7. Discussion and Further Research

This section begins with a discussion of the additional findings and the practical implications. Then the limitations of this research are stated and suggestions for further research are brought to light.

It is interesting to discuss the conclusion of this thesis; the reflection between the place brand identity and place brand image does not affect the retention of graduating students. This was unexpected as it was believed that the reflection would be an important factor. Instead, it was Jönköping’s lack of characteristics and factors that addressed the students’ needs and wants that seemed to have the greatest impact on the retention of graduating students. Even though the result was unexpected, this shows that the place brand identity has a great impact in the retention of graduating students as it determines who the place is and the place brand manager’s focus. The findings in this thesis also point to another factor that could have contributed to the poor retention of graduating students, namely the shift of focus Destination Jönköping has made, from residents to tourists. The retention of graduating students has been poor already before the shift was made, so it is not the determining factor. However, since the main brand manager of Jönköping does not have any focus on students, and as students feel forgotten by the city, the shift has not improved the situation and could possibly have made it worse. The fact that places that are important to the students, such as ‘Bryggan’ and ‘Piren’, were not mentioned by the brand managers shows that the thoughts, needs, and desires of the students are not listened to. Without listening to the students, it seems impossible to know how to improve the retention. What is also interesting is that despite the important economic growth graduating students can contribute with, it is not something that Destination Jönköping has attempted to neither highlight nor exploit to their advantage. If the city would have focused more on retaining graduating students, they could have branded themselves as a talented city, making Jönköping more attractive to innovative and large companies as well as their headquarters. This could in turn have led the city to a stronger labour market, attractive to graduating students. As one can see, many of the factors are related and intertwined, and it all seems to begin with having a focus on students.

7.1 Practical implications

The conclusions of this thesis show that it is important for brand managers to not forget the students, but instead to view them as a valuable asset. The brand managers need to be aware of what the graduating students can do for the city and to communicate their importance with them. There is a great need to have a constant dialogue with students in order to understand their needs and wants, information that can be used to strengthen the city and its identity. As seen in the result, a strong labour market is important to students, and brand managers need to find ways to help strengthen a city’s labour market. By doing this, the city will have an improved ability of retaining graduating students as they would signal that the city has an interest in the graduating students and that they are important for the city.
7.2 Limitations

In this thesis, the sample size of graduating students was only four persons. This limits the received image and cannot be generalized for the entire population of students in Jönköping. Therefore, our collected data merely provides a suggestion for the city’s image. However, these have been combined with previous research to strengthen the credibility of the conclusion. Another limitation is that the case study was only made with one university city. A research on several university cities would have been able to capture a broader picture in analysing the importance of a reflection between place brand identity and place brand image in order to evaluate its impact on the retention of graduating students. These limitations are strongly related to the time limit, which were well known and taken into account when the delimitations of this thesis were stated. Moreover, there was no intention of generalizing the findings but rather to explore a large gap, both in theory and practice, in order to have other researchers develop this research. In addition, there are limits related to the chosen brand managers for this thesis. First, since the two interviewees who represented the place brand identity was chosen because of their relation to one entity, Destination Jönköping, other entities that works more discretely with branding and retaining students may have been excluded. Second, even though the interview questions were based on the conceptualization in order to capture the most important factors of a place brand identity, there is a risk that they did not cover all views of the identity that the brand managers possessed. Third, the brand managers might have deliberately avoided to mention certain opinions as they did not desire to provoke arguments and discussions within their sectors.

7.3 Further research

There are two main suggestions for further research. First, to examine how a city could shift focus of its identity without excluding important target groups. This would have been beneficial to understand in the case of Jönköping as the shift towards tourism contributed the students feel excluded and unwanted. Second, to conduct a study on how a city can effectively communicate with students in order to listen to, and understand, their needs and desires. This would benefit many cities, not merely university cities, as it would give them a sense of the students’ feelings for a city and what needs to improved.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide (Sender: Destination Jönköping), Swedish

Profil av intervjuobjekt
Namn:
Företag:
Titel/Position:
År inom företaget:
År inom place branding:

Introduktion
Tack för att Ni tar Er tid till att bidra till vår undersökning och uppsats. Som vi tidigare nämnt handlar vår uppsats om hur nyexaminerade studenter kan behållas i Jönköping med hjälp av place branding. Vi kommer att undersöka och jämföra två koncept; platsmärkesidentitet och platsmärkesbild. Den här intervjun innehåller 20 frågor och syftet är att ta reda på Ni tankar och åsikter om Jönköpings märkesidentitet samt hur Ni har försökt utforma den.

Vi kommer att spela in den här intervjun för fortsatt arbete. Inspelningen kommer endast att användas för den här undersökningen och till vår uppsats.

Märkets självbild
1. Hur skulle Ni beskriva Jönköping stad?
2. Om Jönköping var en person, hur skulle Ni beskriva dennes personlighet?
3. Vilka är Jönköpings värderingar?
4. Vilka är Erap mål och visioner för Jönköping?

Attribut och karaktärsdrag som skiljer Jönköping från andra städer
5. Vilka associationer försöker Ni skapa mellan Jönköping och dess invånare?
6. Vilka löften vill Ni sprida till Jönköpings invånare, och speciellt till studenter?
7. Vilka konkurrensfördelar skulle Ni säga att Jönköping har gentemot liknande städer?
8. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste mätbara karaktärsdrag?
9. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste karaktärsdrag som är ej mätbara?
10. Hur försöker Ni förmedla dessa associationer, konkurrensfördelar och karaktärsdrag till stadens invånare, och speciellt till studenter?

Relationen mellan studenter och Jönköping stad
11. Hur arbetar Ni för att få studenter att stanna kvar i Jönköping efter examen?
12. Arbetar Ni på något vis med att påverka relationen mellan studenter och företag i staden?
13. Hur ser Ni på jobbmöjligheter för nyexaminerade studenter?
14. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av nattliv?
15. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av shopping?
16. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av restauranger och kaféer?
17. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av kulturella evenemang?
18. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings atmosfär och kultur?

Några sista funderingar
19. Varför tror Ni att Jönköping har svårigheter att attrahera och behålla studenter efter examen?
20. Har Ni några slutliga kommentarer angående vårt ämne och uppsats?
Appendix 2: Interview Guide (Sender: Destination Jönköping), English

Profile of interviewee
Name:
Company:
Title/Position:
Years within the company:
Years within place branding:

Introduction
Thank you for taking the time to contribute to our research and thesis. As mentioned, our thesis concerns how graduating students can be retained in Jönköping with place branding as a tool. We will investigate and compare two concepts; place brand identity and place brand image. This interview contains 20 questions and the aim is to understand your thoughts and opinions on Jönköping’s brand identity as well as how you have tried to create it.

This interview will be recorded with the purpose of further work. The recording will only be utilized for this research and our thesis.

The brand’s own view of itself
1. How would you describe the city of Jönköping?
2. If Jönköping was a person, how would you describe its personality?
3. What are the values of Jönköping?
4. What are your mission and vision for Jönköping?

Attributes and characteristics that differentiate Jönköping from other cities
5. What associations do you attempt to create between Jönköping and its residents?
6. What promises do you try to communicate to Jönköping’s residents, and in particular to students?
7. What competitive advantages would you state Jönköping has compared to similar cities?
8. Which are the greatest tangible characteristics of Jönköping?
9. Which are the greatest intangible characteristics of Jönköping?
10. How do you try to convey these associations, competitive advantages and characteristics to the city’s residents, and in particular to students?

The relation between students and the city of Jönköping
11. How do you work towards retaining graduating students?
12. Do you in any way work to affect the relation between students and companies in the city?
13. What are your views on job opportunities for graduating students?
14. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of nightlife?
15. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of shopping?
16. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of restaurants and cafés?
17. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings of cultural events?
18. What are your views on Jönköping’s atmosphere and culture?

Final thoughts
19. Why do you think Jönköping has difficulties in attracting and retaining graduating students?
20. Do you have any final comments regarding our topic and thesis?
Profil av intervjuobjekt
Namn:
Företag:
Titel/Position:
År inom företaget:
År inom place branding:

Introduktion
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Vi kommer att spela in den här intervjun för fortsatt arbete. Inspektionen kommer endast att användas för den här undersökningen och till vår uppsats.

Märkets självbild
1. Hur skulle Ni beskriva Jönköping stad?
2. Om Jönköping var en person, hur skulle Ni beskriva dennes personlighet?
3. Vilka var Jönköpings värderingar?
4. Vilka var Era mål och visioner för Jönköping?

Attribut och karaktärsdrag som skiljer Jönköping från andra städer
5. Vilka associationer försökte Ni skapa mellan Jönköping och dess invånare?
6. Vilka löften ville Ni sprida till Jönköpings invånare, och speciellt till studenter?
7. Vilka konkurrensfördelar skulle Ni säga att Jönköping har gentemot liknande städer?
8. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste mätbara karaktärsdrag?
9. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste karaktärsdrag som är ej mätbara?
10. Hur försökte Ni förmedla dessa associationer, konkurrensfördelar och karaktärsdrag till stadens invånare, och speciellt till studenter?

Relationen mellan studenter och Jönköping stad
11. Hur arbetade Ni för att få studenter att stanna kvar i Jönköping efter examen?
12. Arbetade Ni på något vis med att påverka relationen mellan studenter och företag i staden?
13. Hur ser Ni på jobbmöjligheter för nyexaminerade studenter?
14. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av nattliv?
15. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av shopping?
16. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av restauranger och kaféer?
17. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av kulturella evenemang?
18. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings atmosfär och kultur?

Några sista funderingar
19. Varför tror Ni att Jönköping har svårigheter att attrahera och behålla studenter efter examen?
20. Har Ni några slutliga kommentarer angående vårt ämne och uppsats?
Appendix 4: Interview Guide (Sender: Placebrander.se), English

Profile of interviewee
Name:
Company:
Title/Position:
Years within the company:
Years within place branding:

Introduction
Thank you for taking the time to contribute to our research and thesis. As mentioned, our thesis concerns how graduating students can be retained in Jönköping with place branding as a tool. We will investigate and compare two concepts; place brand identity and place brand image. This interview contains 20 questions and the aim is to understand your thoughts and opinions on Jönköping’s brand identity as well as how you used to work to shape it during your time as the Marketing Manager at Destination Jönköping.

This interview will be recorded with the purpose of further work. The recording will only be utilized for this research and our thesis.

The brand’s own view of itself
1. How would you describe the city of Jönköping?
2. If Jönköping was a person, how would you describe its personality?
3. What were the values of Jönköping?
4. What were your mission and vision for Jönköping?

Attributes and characteristics that differentiate Jönköping from other cities
5. What associations did you attempt to create between Jönköping and its residents?
6. What promises did you try to communicate to Jönköping’s residents, and in particular to students?
7. What competitive advantages would you state Jönköping has compared to similar cities?
8. Which are the greatest tangible characteristics of Jönköping?
9. Which are the greatest intangible characteristics of Jönköping?
10. How did you try to convey these associations, competitive advantages and characteristics to the city’s residents, and in particular to students?

The relation between students and the city of Jönköping
11. How did you work towards retaining graduating students?
12. Did you in any way work to affect the relation between students and companies in the city?
13. What are your views on job opportunities for graduating students?
14. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of nightlife?
15. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of shopping?
16. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings in terms of restaurants and cafés?
17. What are your views on Jönköping’s offerings of cultural events?
18. What are your views on Jönköping’s atmosphere and culture?

**Final thoughts**

19. Why do you think Jönköping has difficulties in attracting and retaining graduating students?
20. Do you have any final comments regarding our topic and thesis?
Profil av intervjuobjekt
Ålder:
Kön:
Studieinriktning:
Hemstad:
Intressen:

Introduktion

Vi kommer att spela in den här intervjun för fortsatt arbete. Inspektionen kommer endast att användas för den här undersökningen och uppsatsen. Era svar kommer att användas konfidentiellt.

Generellt
1. Vilka var de viktigaste faktorerna när Ni valde universitet?
2. Vad fick valet att falla på just Jönköping?
3. Vad är det i en stad som lockar Er till att bo där permanent?
4. Rangordna de följande aspekterna efter hur viktigt det är för Er i en stad som Ni ska bo i permanent (1=Viktigast, 5=Minst viktig): nattliv, shopping, restauranger & kaféer, kulturella evenemang och atmosfär & kultur. Motivera.

Studenters bild av Jönköping
5. Hur skulle Ni beskriva Jönköping stad?
6. Vilka känslor har Ni för Jönköping stad?
7. Vilka värderingar anser Ni att Jönköping har?

Attribut och karaktärsdrag som skiljer Jönköping från andra städer
8. Vilka associationer har Ni med Jönköping?
9. Vilka löften anser Ni att Jönköping ger dig och andra studenter?
10. Vilka konkurrensfördelar skulle Ni säga att Jönköping har gentemot liknande städer?
11. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste mätbara karaktärsdrag?
12. Vilka är Jönköpings starkaste karaktärsdrag som är ej mätbara?
13. Hur anser Ni att dessa associationer, konkurrensfördelar och karaktärsdrag förmedlas till Er och andra studenter i Jönköping?
Relationen mellan studenter och Jönköping stad
14. Anser Ni att Jönköping arbetar med att få studenter att stanna kvar efter examen?
15. Känner Ni att Jönköping som stad hjälper till med att bygga relationer mellan studenter och företag i staden?
16. Hur ser Ni på Era jobbmöjligheter i Jönköping?
17. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av nattliv?
18. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av shopping?
19. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av restauranger och kaféer?
20. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings utbud av kulturella evenemang?
21. Hur ser Ni på Jönköpings atmosfär och kultur?

Några sista funderingar
22. Varför tror Ni att Jönköping har svårigheter att attrahera och behålla studenter efter examen?
23. Planerar Ni att stanna här i Jönköping efter examen? (Varför, varför inte)
24. Har Ni några slutliga kommentarer angående vårt ämne eller uppsats?
Appendix 6: Interview Guide (Receiver), English

Profile of interviewee
Age:
Gender:
Field of study:
Hometown:
Interests:

Introduction
Thank you for taking the time to contribute to our research and thesis. As mentioned, our thesis concerns how graduating students can be retained in Jönköping with place branding as a tool. We will investigate and compare two concepts; place brand identity and place brand image. This interview contains 24 questions and the aim is to understand your thoughts and opinions on the city of Jönköping and its brand image.

This interview will be recorded with the purpose of further work. The recording will only be utilized for this research and our thesis. Your answers will be treated with complete confidentiality.

General questions
1. Which were the most important factors when choosing university?
2. What made your decision to fall on Jönköping?
3. What is it in a city that attracts you to become a permanent resident?
4. Rank the following aspects according to how important these are to you in a city where you are to live permanently (1=Most important, 5=Least important); nightlife, shopping, restaurants & cafés, cultural events and atmosphere & culture. Motivate.

Students’ image of Jönköping
5. How would you describe the city of Jönköping?
6. What are your feelings towards the city of Jönköping?
7. What values do you consider Jönköping to have?

Attributes and characteristics that differentiate Jönköping from other cities
8. What associations do you have with Jönköping?
9. What promises do you consider Jönköping to make to you and other students?
10. What competitive advantages would you state Jönköping has compared to similar cities?
11. Which are the greatest tangible features of Jönköping?
12. Which are the greatest intangible features of Jönköping?
13. How do you feel these associations, competitive advantages and features are conveyed to you and other students?
The relation between students and the city of Jönköping
14. Do you consider Jönköping to work towards retaining graduating students?
15. Do you feel that the city of Jönköping attempts to build relationships between students and companies within the city?
16. How do you perceive your job opportunities in Jönköping?
17. How do you perceive Jönköping’s offerings in terms of nightlife?
18. How do you perceive Jönköping’s offerings in terms of shopping?
19. How do you perceive Jönköping’s offerings in terms of restaurants and cafés?
20. How do you perceive Jönköping’s offerings in terms of cultural events?
21. How do you perceive Jönköping’s culture and atmosphere?

Final addition thoughts
22. Why do you believe Jönköping has difficulties with attracting and retaining graduating students?
23. Do you plan to stay in Jönköping after graduation? (Why/why not?)
24. Do you have any final comments on our topic or thesis?