Master Thesis

A cup of branding
A case study in applying corporate branding
to the online company Espresso Gear

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En kop branding
Et case study i anvendelsen af corporate branding
på online virksomheden Espresso Gear

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ESPRESSO GEAR™
Abstract

Specialet er et casestudie af den svenske online virksomhed Espresso Gear AB (EG). Virksomheden specialiserer sig i at designe og producere espresso relaterede produkter til at lave espresso på autentisk vis. EG er en en-mandsvirksomhed bestående af Fredrik Gorthon. EG er vokset støt det seneste år, men har indtil nu ikke arbejdet med en konkret kommunikations- og branding strategi. Motivationen for specialet er, grundet globalisering, teknologi og øget konkurrence, behovet for integrering af en virksomheds kommunikation for at opnå bedst effektivitet og differentiering. Da virksomheden ønsker at blive en mere markant spiller på markedet ligger fokus for specialet på hvordan en ung virksomhed bedst optimerer kommunikation, ved hjælp af corporate branding elementer og forøgelse af stakeholder værdi.

Gennem en todelt analyse introduceres læseren først for kerneelementerne inden for corporate branding samt vigtigheden af at have et godt omdømme. Her benyttes primært teori fra Majken Schultz og Mary Jo Hatch samt Charles Fombrun og Cees van Riel. Dette giver en status quo på EG ud fra et corporate branding synspunkt og udleder, at en af virksomhedens største udfordringer er mangel på værdiskabelse og dialog med stakeholders. Del to fokuserer på, hvordan værdi skabes ud fra forfatterens egen værdimodel. Derudover, analyseres de online redskaber, hjemmeside og Facebook, EG benytter sig af for på den måde at finde frem til, hvordan disse kan effektiviseres. Teori er her hentet primært fra akademiske tidsskrifter. Metoden består af semi-strukturerede interviews samt en online undersøgelse og sekundær empiri. Afslutningsvis forelægger forfatteren forslag til, hvordan EG kan forbedre kommunikationen med sine stakeholders, blandt andet ved hjælp af bedre hjemmeside navigation, øget online interaktion, feedback muligheder og bedre henvisning til EGs online services ved køb af produkt. Grundet uventet begrænset empiri har det haft en indvirkning på de konklusioner, der kan drages. Det konkluderes dermed at EG med fordel kan påbegynde kommunikationsinitiativ, men at effektfuld brug af corporate branding kræver mere fokus end hvad EG har ressourcer til lige nu.

Nøgleord: corporate branding, Corporate Branding Tool Kit, reputation, brand equity, online branding, loyalty, interactivity
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1.0 Introduction

Sergio Zyman\(^1\) wrote: “Everything you do communicates something about your brand to your customers” (Zyman 2002: 13). It does not matter if the company is a big international company or a small start-up, all the decisions, the actions and the communication says something about a brand. Even when nothing is said something is said. The motivation for this thesis lies in the interest of integrating company communication in order to increase efficiency and brand position.

The evolution of branding has gone through changes and due to the rise of globalization, consumer demands and technology, the way companies communicate and brand most effectively has changed. A key factor for a company is to be different from its competitors, in order for customers to choose and prefer their product or service. Because of the changes in society the focus for successful communication and branding initiatives, now, also lies in the intangible assets. Terms like corporate branding, relationship focus, reputation and value creation are all areas that are granted a lot of attention when working with the intangibles assets in a company.

This thesis has a theoretical base in the field of corporate branding as well as brand equity and online brand management. The author will investigate a current problem in a specific global company and outline a theoretical framework to test, on the grounds of the problem in the case company. The Swedish company Espresso Gear A/B (EG) has been applied as a case study and will create the basis of all conclusions made throughout the thesis.

An introduction will be given to the current situation of the company, which will provide the reader with a basic understanding of the background and knowledge that has triggered this thesis.

1.1 Current situation

EG was created in 2008 by Fredrik Gorthon and Lars Wahlin in Gothenburg, Sweden, after undergoing a name change. Fredrik Gorthon started out as a marketing consultant but devoted his full time to EG around 2010 and became the CEO. Fredrik Gorthon has a background within the

\(^1\) Former chief marketing officer at The Coca-Cola Company
coffee industry and previously worked eight years for Espresso House Sweden, one of the largest coffee shop chains in Sweden.

EG is a small online company designing and selling espresso equipment on a B2B market. The company is currently run by Fredrik Gorthon also being the only employee working at EG. EG is a good example of a modern company working and communicating in a global marketplace of speciality coffee serving customers across the globe. Many companies today, operate via the Internet and do not need to consist of many people in order to be successful. Thus, the Internet has made it possible to bring EG and the customers closer together.

In the last year EG has welcomed two sub brands to the company; notNeutral and Tiamo, who offers equipment for manually brewing coffee and products like cappuccino cups. EG’s own designs are designed in-house but manufactured in China and the company has recently moved their storage facility to Sweden.

The business idea of EG is, as stated in the company presentation to (appendix A): “invent, design, produce and sell equipment that stands out. Focus on espresso equipment used for the making of espresso related drinks by private and professional baristas” EG is part of a traditional value chain being the designer and manufacturer of the products selling them to either wholesalers or retailers, who then distributes them for the end consumers to buy.

1.2 Problem area
As with every other young company the desire to grow and expand is a vital part of surviving. Since EG is still somewhat of a new player to the coffee speciality market, the necessity to create a recognizable brand and a strong reputation is considered crucial in order to increase recognition, position and increased sales. EG has been growing since it was founded and has also expanded its customer base. However, when it comes to consistent communication the company is struggling with time and restricted resources to spend on branding initiatives. EG do not employ a branding strategy yet and uses a, as Fredrik Gorthon described it, “shotgun approach”, meaning the branding and communication lacks consistency and focus and is therefore not coherent (appendix B, I). EG is part of a value chain where they are never in direct sales contact with the end-consumers, only communicating with wholesalers/retailers. Because EG is an online company the
means to communicate and interact with various stakeholders are present via the website, direct contact or social media. However, because EG has not yet worked with a strategy on how to structure the communication, the company does not appear to be effectively using the opportunities that come with operating online. This causes the communication to be fragmented, which means that communication is present it is just not coherent and unified as an integrated communication plan. This can have something to do with being a start-up company where it takes time to build up a structure, since the feeling often is that everything needs to be attended to at the same time. Furthermore, branding and communication is an intangible asset that might be neglected due to other tangible matters occurring for a new company such as logistics, product manufacturing, financial issues etc. These issues might be the first ones that are attended to when building a company and thereby setting aside the less obvious assets that just as much helps shape the company internally and externally.

Despite the fact that EG is a small company it is the desire to try to investigate how it can be possible for a company with limited time and resources to create a stronger brand via optimized communication.

2.0 Research area
On the grounds of the previous introduction to EG the research area has been created. By getting a more in-depth view into how EG is communicating and acting with its stakeholders, the interest in how to optimize the communication in order to create better stakeholder relationships and thereby applying a corporate brand approach arose. The research will, therefore, be founded in theoretical literature on corporate branding and reputation management. These two pillars will work as the backbone of the research guiding the analysis in order to try to investigate both the internal- and the external communication. Moreover, brand equity and elements of online branding will be introduced to further analyse the communicational challenges and lastly lead to actual recommendations for the case at hand.

2.1 Research question
Based on the observations from the company as well as the obstacles outlined in the problem area above, the research question constructed to guide the research is:
“How can elements from corporate branding be applied to the one-man company Espresso Gear via optimized online communication and increased stakeholder value in order to foster a stronger brand position”?

In the search to answer the research question it has been found necessary to use theories from different disciplines such as; corporate branding, reputation management, brand equity and online branding. This thesis will therefore take a cross-disciplinary approach.

2.2 Delimitation
In order to narrow down the scope for the thesis it has been decided only to focus on the products designed by Espresso Gear. The reason for this choice is the limitation in the paper. The author sees a distinction between the products designed and manufactured by EG and the sub-brands, since they are fairly new to the company and majority of the people interviewed has focus on the EG products.

The focus is on the current clients and not potential ones and these are only a part of the stakeholders that EG works and communicates with. The restriction to focus only on the wholesalers/retailers and end-consumers is, to best investigate the research question, as well as due to the limitations of the thesis. Thereby, stating that the author is aware of the fact that the wholesalers/retailers and end-consumers are not the only stakeholders available but have been deliberately chosen. The focus on both groups have been decided, due to the authors belief that both groups are important to investigate when using corporate branding as part of the thesis framework.

Moreover, the reason for this distinction is that it is believed that the best way to start is by investigating the current clients and end-consumers in order to improve the overall communication activities. Moreover, the maturity of the company is vital in relations to the possibilities of suggestions and implementation of these.

2.3 Structure
The following structure for the thesis will begin with the frame for the theory of science, followed by the research design and methods for data collection. Hereafter, the reader will be given a short
introduction to the evolution of branding in order to shape the understanding of the selection of theories. These will be presented and argued for afterwards. This leads to the analysis consisting of two parts. The first part deals with corporate branding and reputation management in order to deduce the current status at EG, from a corporate branding perspective. The second part focuses on the formation of brand equity and online communication shaping the grounds for the author’s recommendations to EG. Lastly, the author reflects on the restrictions from the methodical data and finishes with a discussion of the accomplishment of answering the research question. Finally, the thesis comes to an end in a conclusion.

3.0 Theory of science
In the following chapter the framework for the theory of science is outlined and furthermore illustrates the paradigm applied. According to Guba a paradigm is: a set of values which guides our actions – both everyday actions and actions linked to disciplined investigations (Guba in Darmer & Nygaard 2005: 23). The paradigm is therefore leading the way we perceive the world and therefore has consequences for the way the author deals with the subject area. There exist a variety of paradigms when it comes to conducting scientific investigations, such as the constructivist paradigm and the positivistic paradigm. These two opposite paradigms differ in the sense of ontology where we identify what our reality is, epistemological where we define how this reality is acknowledged and methodological where we decide how this reality should be investigated (Darmer & Nygaard 2005: 24).

3.1 The constructivist paradigm
Constructionism has gained a position within the last years as the overall definition of several theories from both the social sciences and the humanistic sciences. A more moderate take on constructionism has been applied for this thesis, meaning that a phenomenon is seen as something routed in history and does therefore not exist simply as something that ‘just is’ (Collin 2003: 11).

Constructivism is the exact opposite of positivism because constructivists do not believe, as opposed to positivists, that reality and truth exists because it is constructed by the individual. Constructivists believe that reality and truth is an interpretation that depends on the eyes that
see. On an ontological level the constructivists are somewhat relativistic because they cannot uncover the truth but can seek to understand how the truth is constructed in their subject area. An investigator from a constructivist paradigm cannot be objective towards the empirical data because one, within the interaction with the subject area, always will affect it. The constructivist epistemology is therefore subjective and the methodology complex (Darmer & Nygaard 2005: 28).

With a bachelor in English and Communication and finishing a Master’s degree in communication, strategy and management, it falls naturally to concentrate on the communication, as well as the social practises and how these are constructed. This leads the thesis towards social constructionism and will be further elaborated on below.

3.2 Social constructionism
The most common type of constructionism is social constructionism (Collin 2003: 11-12). Social constructionism stems from the constructivist paradigm where the reality and truth is still seen as a construction albeit a social construction. This means it is created through collective and social processes instead of individual ones.

Social constructionism arises from the post modernism and is characterized by focusing on interaction and social practises, meaning that the social processes are constituted via social practices and interaction (Fuglsang & Olsen 2007: 352). In order to better grasp how social constructionism is constituted its complete opposite ‘realism’ will briefly be explained. As opposed to social constructionism, realism stems from the understanding that the existence of reality and the truth about a field is existing however much people interfere. The truth is pre-constructed and unchangeable (Collin 2003: 13).

The author admits to a social constructionist paradigm since she assumes that knowledge is socially constructed. Furthermore, it correlates with the understanding of brands and branding as a socially constructed phenomenon. The knowledge produced is, therefore, not displaying an objective reality but an insight produced via the interaction between the subject area and the empirical data. Furthermore, the author believes that there exists a physical reality and that the subject area exists in its physical form, indicating a distance away from the more radical social constructionism, as before mentioned. The author is aware of the fact that a pre-understanding
about the subject area is present and will have an impact on the approach to the area and therefore also the results – e.g. the answers received from the people interviewed depends on the questions asked, which again depends on the pre-understanding of the subject. The insight obtained through the thesis is thereby only one out of many possible ones.

It is believed that social constructionism can be used for the thesis because the author is part of the context being researched. Being part of the analysed context and believing that this context is evolved through participation means that what is the essential truth can be altered and modified over time. Social constructionism can be defined as a relativism based on the idea that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon where language, interaction, relations and meaning plays and important part (Esmark et al 2005: 18). This means that the interaction with individuals, when gathering data, is understood as knowledge exchange between subjects in “a fabric of relations”, which means that knowledge is neither inside an individual nor outside in the world but exists in the relationship between individuals and world (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 53).

The pre-understanding within social constructionism is, therefore, affected by cultural and historical aspects. When a message is understood it has already been decoded through a subjective interpretation process. The human interpretation process is a central point in the social constructionism paradigm and supports the focus of the thesis. Societal phenomena are hereby dynamic and changeable through human actions, since all social and historical patterns are created hereof. In the same way a brand is dynamic and changeable on the basis of the human construction.
4.0 Research Design

The research design is vital for the thesis as it helps to outline and argument for the methods used for collecting the data. Furthermore, it functions as a structure that is intended to benefit the research and result.

4.1 Case study

The research method applied for this thesis has been decided on the basis of Robert K. Yin’s scope on what defines a case study. According to Yin a case study is: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003: 13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of a good case</th>
<th>Key points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Context</td>
<td>Unique setting with rich contextual details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Complexity</td>
<td>Complex problem with more than one solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Ambiguity</td>
<td>Central problem not easy to identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Relevance</td>
<td>Relevant to more than just the researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The model above is taken from the article “The elements of a good case” by Fossey and Crow. These four factors were initially used as a guideline in order to determine whether or not the situation at EG was fruitful enough to be used as a case study. EG’s situation is both contextual and complex since the reader was introduced (chap. 1) to the contextual details at hand, which lays the ground for the problem area. Furthermore, the problem for EG is complex since there do not exist one single solution to the problem. Moreover, by selecting existing theory to test on the case the author tries to deal with the ambiguity and despite the fact that the problem does not have a single unanimous solution it is still understood as being relevant. This shows that the case is not based on the researchers own ideology, while it will be inevitable to be solely objective when seen from a social constructionism point of view.

According to Yin there are five types of cases; critical, unique, typical, longitudinal and revelatory (2003: 40-42). The case for this thesis is determined to be critical, since this specific case is chosen to allow a better understanding of the specific circumstances, as well as testing existing theory on
the case at hand (Bryman & Bell 2007: 55). When selecting a critical case approach the intention is to test already existing theory in order to confirm, challenge or extend these (Yin 2003 in Swanson & Holton 2005: 11). This is why the critical case study has been chosen to investigate a specific circumstance at EG by making use of existing theory, in order to test, whether or not, the theory can help provide possible solution methods.

The design of the research is a case study approach, meaning that the case is an object of interest in its own right and the researcher aims to provide in-depth elucidation of it. (Bryman & Bell 2007: 54). The purpose of this research design is not to uncover information or generate results that are generalizable but to elucidate the unique features of this case. This can be denoted as an idiographic approach to knowledge, as instead of generalizing, the aim is to understand the meaning of a subjective phenomenon (Bryman & Bell 2007: 54). According to Yin, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” and “why” questions are sought to be answered, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (2003: 1).

Furthermore, it is a research investigation that will run alongside of the daily routine of the company, which means that the level of control over events is little and the research problem at hand is contemporary. This is supported by Yin’s argument stating that the preference of a case study examination is when there is a desire to examine contemporary events but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated (Yin 2003: 7).

When conducting scientific investigations there are several investigation method one can apply. For the purpose of this thesis the division made by Heine Andersen has guided the selection of investigation method (1994:36). The chosen type is the explanatory investigation, since the thesis seeks to explain a certain phenomenon based on theory and data. In an explanatory investigation there will be elements of descriptive parts but the theory is a stronger element than if the investigation was strictly descriptive because the theory is the tool needed to explain the phenomena (Andersen 1994: 38). According to Heine Andersen when adopting an explanatory method it is important to be aware of the fact that the theories chosen to verify the investigation can have an effect on the observations. Furthermore, the theory will interfere with the data measuring methods and the overall interpretation of data. This is inevitable but it is, therefore,
important to try to stay critical towards own prerequisites and by using different data collecting methods on the same problem (Andersen 1994: 39).

4.2 Validity, reliability and generalizability
Validity, reliability and generalizability have been discussed intensively when using a case study as a research design model. Questions on how a single case can cause useful findings to other cases are one of the main critiques when using case study methods (Bryman & Bell 2007: 288). It is believed that the understanding of the three terms is not to be understood in its modernistic way where these three concepts are used to uncover the one single truth (Kvale 1996: 230). As previously explained this thesis is being looked at from a social constructionism paradigm and therefore supports the statement that there is not just one single truth but many truths and these occur through social interactions.

In a postmodern era, the foundation of true and valid knowledge, in a modern objective reality, has disappeared. The concept of knowledge as a mirror of reality has instead been replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality where truth is created through interaction (Kvale 1996: 239).

External validity refers to the degree as to which the findings can be generalized across social settings. Most often this creates a problem when using qualitative research because of the tendency to employ case studies and small samples. (Bryman & Bell 2007: 288). Yin states that what the use of a case study method can provide, is analytical generalization based upon theory and not a statistical generalization. The concept of generalizability is here understood in a postmodern way distancing itself from the positivistic understanding of social sciences where the aim is to uncover laws on human behaviour that can be universally generalized. Instead it is believed that every situation is unique and the focus is more on contextuality of knowledge, which implies a shift from generalization towards contextualization (Kvale 1996: 232). If this is kept in mind the external validity does not cause as big of a threat as assumed (Yin 2003: 37). Internal validity deals with whether or not there is a good match between the observations made by the researcher and the theoretical ideas developed. LeCompte and Goetz argue that internal validity tends to be a strength in qualitative research, because the prolonged participation (in this thesis
the participation is 6-8 months) allows for congruence between concepts and observations. (Bryman & Bell 2007: 288).

External reliability often refers to whether or not a study can be replicated. This is a difficult criterion to fulfil when doing qualitative research since it is impossible to ‘freeze’ a social setting. However, it is suggested by LeCompte and Goetz that a qualitative researcher who replicates ethnographic research needs to adopt a similar social role as the one adopted by the original researcher. This way the researcher conducting a replication can see and hear comparability to the original research (Bryman & Bell 2007: 288). Furthermore, it is a matter of thoroughly documenting the steps and procedures undertaken so that if another researcher were to conduct the exact same research investigation the needed information would be well documented (Yin 2003: 38). This is why the various interviews, interview guides etc. are all documented and attached. This will be taken into consideration in relation to the different data collection approaches but it is also important to state that the desire to generalize across social settings, on the basis of the findings in this case study, is not present.

4.3 Triangulation
Triangulation is a good tool for supporting credibility and validity when conducting empirical research. Methodological triangulation means using more than one kind of method to study a phenomenon (Bekhet & Zauszniewski 2012: 40). Due to the fact that the thesis is a single case study, with relative few data collecting sources, triangulation is beneficial in supporting the findings, increase validity and enhance understanding (Bekhet & Zauszniewski 2012: 40). Triangulation has been practiced by using ‘across method’ combining qualitative and quantitative data collecting methods (Boyd 2001; Casey & Murphy 2009 in Bekhet & Zauszniewski 2012: 40). The author has attempted to use several different sources of data; qualitative, quantitative and secondary in order to try to decrease the weakness of an individual method and strengthen the outcome of the study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski 2012: 41). Throughout the analysis the author has tried to always use more than one method of data or at lease different statements on the same subject, in order to enhance the data validity. Ideally, the author would have wished for a bigger diversity of qualitative data to be able to increase the validity more. However, this was not
possible and triangulation has been used the best way possible to make the findings credible and valid.

4.4 Criticism of a case study
As before mentioned opponents of case study, as a research method, criticize it for being too subjective. It is said to often rely too much on the researcher’s views regarding what is important as well as the somewhat close relationship the researcher tends to get with the people being studied (Bryman & Bell 2007: 300). Since the interviews with all parties involved were done via Skype but acted as a telephone interview, the author does not see a close relationship occurring with either of the interviewed. On the matter of the case study being too subjective, taken from a social constructionist perspective, it is impossible to be objective in any matter. In order to be as objective or nuanced as possible many of the statements first gathered from EG founder Fredrik Gorthon was then used as a basis for validation from his stakeholders. This way the author tried to get different opinions and understandings on the same matter, in order to try to stay as critical and objective as possible. Moreover, the objective for this thesis is to achieve a great amount of information on a given problem, here the problem occurring for the case company EG, which would indicate that a case study method would provide more context-dependent knowledge than a representative case or a random sample (Flyvbjerg 2006: 229). Yin defends the case study method by stating that it might not be generalizable to populations or the universe but the case study method is generalizable to theoretical propositions, meaning that the goal is to expand and generalize on theories and not create a statistical generalization (2003: 10).

Furthermore, the choice of research design correlates with the theory of science for the paper, being social constructionism. The critique of the method being too subjective is not as much seen as an obstacle since the reality and knowledge is being created through social interaction and reinterpretation and not by a concrete opinion created up front.

The theory of science is social constructionism, which means that the focus is on interaction and meaning creation constructed, mainly, through interviews. The idea is that the interviews are an interaction between two parties, the author and the interviewee, and the meeting between their understandings. The interview is not seen as a way of emptying the interviewee for his/her
subjective experiences and meaning but a social meeting where experience is interpreted and meaning is created (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2005: 29-30).

To put it in the words of professor Bent Flyvbjerg: “Good social science is problem driven and not methodology driven in the sense that it employs those methods that for a given problem, best help answer the research questions at hand” (2006: 242). Therefore, in line with the data collected it will come apparent that qualitative methods have been favoured in order to gather the necessary data. However, despite preferring qualitative data methods one quantitative data method was used.

The approach for this thesis is said to be deductive since the author on the basis of existing theory have formulated a research question she wishes to subject to empirical scrutiny (Bryman & Bell 2007: 11). The deductive approach began with a selection of theory that the author found appropriate to use on the case study, based on the initial information gathered on EG. It is the intention to investigate whether or not the selected theory for the research can help provide answers to the research question. The actual accomplish of this will be elaborated on in the discussion (chap. 13).

4.5 Methods for data collection
Before giving a thorough explanation of the choices of different data collection methods, a brief summary will be given to the structure of the data.

4.6 Preliminary data collection
The initial data collection started with the author exchanging emails with the founder of EG Fredrik Gorthon. This was used as an initial way of communicating and to provide the author with some insights into the company while still closing in on a definite research question. During this process Fredrik Gorthon provided the author with secondary data such as a company presentation and a yearly statement as well as product catalogues and pricing lists. At first the emails included clarification questions requested from the author in order to better understand the situation at EG, while narrowing in on a research question. Email correspondence as a data collection method is being criticized as being too lean to facilitate agreements between people with different interest (Bülow 2009: 2). This however, is more a criticism made when emails are used to negotiate and
not to share information on a common ground, as is the case here. On the positive side the leanness of email can be seen as a strong medium since it gives the parties time to think and revise the answers. This can also be helpful since the correspondence takes place in a second language and unfamiliar norms and language situations might occur and by using emails allow for longer reflection and interpretation time (Bülow 2009: 4-5). It is important to state that the drawbacks outlined above have been taken into consideration by the author and are why this type of interview method is not used for more than preliminary information gathering. It was used only as a tool to get a better understanding of EG and its founder Fredrik Gorthon, in order to shape the ground for the further research.

This led to the first interview with Fredrik Gorthon. The idea was to fist interview Fredrik Gorthon in order for him to shed some light on the various questions that had risen from the author’s company insight. By interviewing him the hope was that he would elaborate on questions, as well as raise others, that could be confirmed or invalidated during the next set of interviews. The next two set of interviews were with two of EG’s wholesalers/retailers who each provided their input on the matters regarding EG’s communication activities with its clients and customers. Moreover, a brief email interview with another wholesaler/retailer was set up in order to get a better variety in the answers.

Furthermore, alongside the interviews an online survey was set up in order to get the end-consumers input as well. Lastly, after gathering the data from the different clients and customers a final interview was made with Fredrik Gorthon in order to present the results and get feedback on recommendations. The idea with this structure of data gathering was to try to get as much ping-pong going as possible. It was the intention to get as useful answers as possible by always getting more than one angle.

4.7 Interviews

4.7.1 Semi-structured interview
The definition of a semi-structured interview is according to Kvale & Brinkmann: “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (2009:3).
In line with the social constructionism way of thinking the founder of EG has a perception of what the current status is, as well as what he wishes the company to reflect and where it wants to go. Therefore, it is important to investigate the perceived reality within the company. In order to obtain sufficient knowledge from EG two individual interviews with the CEO and founder Fredrik Gorthon were conducted as well as interviews with three of his wholesalers/retailers.

The interviews were semi-structured meaning that themes and research objectives to be discussed were prepared upfront but with the possibility to further elaborate and ask new questions (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 105). Please see appendix CI, CII and CIII for the interview guides used.

The social world must be interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied, in order to obtain the best results and knowledge gathering, although, due to this, critics say that the result of the research is bound to portray a pre-determined view of the researcher (Bryman & Bell 2003: 293). The semi-structured interview could help avoid this pre-determination since it only provides a frame for the interview and allows for dynamic dialogue and flexibility. When doing qualitative research the matter of validity relies on the researcher’s ability to continually check, question and interpret the findings, which has been taken into consideration from the beginning and therefore reinforcing validity. Reliability can also be seen as an issue since the research will be conducted using leading questions, however leading questions are not necessarily a bad thing and can help the author reinforce reliability as well as giving the interviewee a range of possibilities when responding as well as purely disagreeing or rejecting the questions. Therefore leading questions can be useful when conducting qualitative work and provide a broader variation of answers than using quantitative methods, though it again always depends on what the researcher wishes to clarify (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009: 171-173). The questions asked are mainly open-ended in order to create as much dialogue and ‘free talk’ as possible (Hjort 1986: 106).

The first interview with the CEO and founder of EG Fredrik Gorthon was conducted on November 28th 2012 at 9am via Skype. The interview was in English and lasted roughly 1 ½ hours and was recorded with a digital recorder and is enclosed in a digital version on CD.

The second interview conducted was with Ben Silverston, an Australian wholesaler and retailer, who runs the company Espresso Gear Australia. The interview was in English and took place on the
9th of January 2013 at 10am via Skype. The interview lasted around 1 hour and was digitally recorded and is enclosed in a digital version on CD.

The third interview was conducted on February 13th 2013 at 3pm via telephone and was with Niels Hestbech from the Danish company KaffeMekka, who operates both as a wholesaler and as a retailer. The interview was in Danish and lasted around 45 minutes and was digitally recorded and is enclosed in a digital version on CD.

The fourth and last interview was conducted on May 3rd 2013 at 10am with Fredrik Gorthon. The interview was conducted via Skype. The interview was in English and was a way to present the authors findings to Fredrik Gorthon, as well as engage in dialog about these. The interview lasted roughly 1 hour and was digitally recorded and is enclosed in a digital version on CD.

As illustrated above, the interviews were conducted via Skype and none of them took place in person due to the geographical distance and cost savings (Sturges & Hanrahan 2004: 109). All were conducted as telephone interviews via Skype, meaning there were no face-to-face interaction. Naturally, the lack of personal contact was missing since the author and interviewee did not sit together, causing a lack of interpretation of body language from both sides. Despite this, all the interviewees were used to conducting business via telephone and it was very natural for them to also take part in an interview over the phone (Irvine et al. 2012: 90).

But a number of reasons were to cause for not using the video function on Skype. One of the interviewed persons was at home when the interview was conducted and did not want to use the video function due to privacy reasons. Another was at work and was using Skype via his mobile phone, making it easier for him to hold the phone to his ear while talking. One interview was conducted via mobile phones and was, due to time pressure and change of plans, conducted differently than first planned. The author would have preferred to conduct the interviews face-to-face, however, a number of researchers have declared that the telephone interview functions just as well as a face-to-face interview in gathering acceptable and valuable data (Sobin et al. 1993; Weissman et al. 1987; Fenig & Levav 1993 in Sturges & Hanrahan 2004: 110).

A part that raised concern during the interviews with the wholesalers/retailers was that they all were recommended by Fredrik Gorthon himself. Initial contact was always established by Fredrik
Gorthon, causing the concern that he might choose the ones he had the best working relationship with. When attempting to contact wholesalers/retailers, without Fredrik Gorthon’s involvement, the author did not have any luck. It therefore seemed that the best way of establishing contact was via Fredrik Gorthon due to his working relationship with the people in question. After having interviewed the wholesalers/retailers the fear of only receiving unanimous answers were removed when they each had focus on different issues and had different concerns relating to their own demands and experience with EG. It is still not to say that the selected ones are not chosen by Fredrik Gorthon due to their good work relationship but the author found each of them sincere and genuine and with different points of constructive criticism.

4.7.2 Email interview
Because of time restrictions the last interview with Costas Pliatsikas from Sweden, who is a retailer, was conducted via email. Initially the author wished to interview him like the others but he had no time and suggested email as an interview option instead. The author used open questions in order to make Costas Pliatsikas answer as freely as possible (Bryman & Bell 2003: 156). Because of the obvious lack of time in participating, the author only selected eight questions to be answered. The reason for this was the fear that if more had been included it could have caused a lack of response (Bryman & Bell 2003: 157). The author also had to remind Costas Pliatsikas about replying to the questions before they were answered and returned. Naturally, this type of interview does not provide the author with as much data as with the semi-structured telephone interviews, however, it did provide some additional useful answers (appendix H).

4.8 Secondary data
The secondary data received came from Fredrik Gorthon and entailed an annual statement for the fiscal year 1.5.2011-30.04.2012 (appendix D). This document provides a solid overview over the latest financials of EG. Furthermore, a company presentation has been provided to give a brief presentation of the company (appendix A). This will be used to help build the current situation at EG as well as to build questions and background information for the primary data (Bryman & Bell 2003: 413).
As with any other data collecting method secondary data has its flaws. Being provided by EG requires that the author takes into consideration that especially the presentation is subjective and illustrates an idea and understanding of the company from within not necessarily taking external interpretations and factors into account.

4.9 Self-completion questionnaire
An online survey created via SurveyMonkey.com was constructed in order to reach the end-consumers. Initially, the idea was to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to get a broader and more nuanced discussion but lack of response from several attempts to invite end-consumers to participate, led to this alternative. Initially, the author was provided with a list of end-consumers from Fredrik Gorthon. Together we constructed an email that was sent out but unfortunately no one replied. Due to the big variety of end-consumers and the fact that they are scattered between many countries it was not possible to reach the end-consumers by other means than email. The lack of response might be a combination of lack of interest and time to participate in an interview as well as the email could end up in spam. An online questionnaire was a method for the end-consumers to answer in their own time and speed (Bryman & Bell 2003: 142).

Furthermore, it might be a question of loyalty and wanting to take time out to answer questions. Often times, if people feel close to a brand they use frequently they will be interested in submitting their opinion but since EG is still a young and not yet well established brand there might be a lack of interest from the end-consumers. Some might also be one-time customers or feel like they have nothing to contribute with.

It was therefore concluded that a self-completion questionnaire could be considered an easier and faster way to gather data, making the end-consumers more willing to participate. Furthermore, they were informed about the chance to win a product from EG in order to keep them more interested in participating which according to Bryman and Bell can help to improve response rates when using self-completion questionnaires (2003: 144). The questionnaire consists of ten questions where only one is an open question. The choice for this is that question 3 is an attempt to get the respondents to answer in their own terms, in order to receive diversified answers (appendix E). The rest of the questions are closed questions with answers to select from.
The reason for this is that since the end-consumers have been hard to get in contact with, those who answer the questionnaire will most likely want to get it over with fast (Bryman & Bell 2003: 156-159). The problem with closed questions is that there might be a loss of spontaneity and that the respondents do not feel like the answers available are compatible to what they think. In order to limit this restriction there are in seven out of ten questions placed an “other” box for them to elaborate, should they wish to do so (Bryman & Bell 2003: 159-160).

The questionnaire was sent out to roughly thirty end-consumers both from EG’ own list as well as the end-consumers from EG Australia. This was done in order to reach a larger number of respondents since EG does not have direct contact to many of the end-consumers. The first round of emails was sent out on the 29th of January 2013 and a reminder email was sent out on the 18th of February 2013. From the around thirty end-consumers ten responded, which is the equivalent to around 33%.

As with any other data collecting method the self-completion questionnaire also has its disadvantages. There is no one present if the respondents have difficulty answering or understanding the questions. It has therefore been an attempt to ask the questions as clear and unambiguous as possible since there is no interviewer present to assist (Bryman & Bell 2003: 143). It also creates an obstacle with the open-ended question since it would be preferred to follow up or ask for further elaboration in order to receive the best information. Furthermore, the amount of open-ended questions asked was at a minimum since respondents rarely want to write a lot when answering a questionnaire, as well as it might make respondents reluctant to answer or even participate in the survey (Bryman & Bell 2003: 143). There might also be a language barrier since the questionnaire is in English and not all of the respondents can be guaranteed to understand English sufficiently. This can also create a higher possibility of misunderstanding the questions which creates the risk of not completing the questionnaire or unwillingly answer wrong.
4.10 Cobweb method
For the purpose of gathering data, internally in EG, the cobweb method (appendix F) was found to be a way to achieve insight via an indirectly collecting method. The idea was to instruct Fredrik Gorthon to determine eight characteristics he found described EG and then rate the eight characteristics from 1-10, 10 being the best. He was instructed to do so both in accordance to what he saw as being the actual or current rating number, as well as what his desired number was. The exercise was performed via email and began with an instruction from the author to list six to eight characteristics. Once Fredrik Gorthon replied he sent eight key characteristics and was then instructed to rate them according to his believes and send back the answers via email. The rating was then analysed and inserted into the cobweb model where the green line indicates the current characteristics and the yellow line the desired one.

This method was intended as a way for him to uncover identity characteristics, while at the same time giving the author data to use in comparison to other data. The purpose was to do this small exercise in order to get Fredrik Gorthon’s view on EG while being able to compare it to both the data gathered from the interviews as well as the online survey. Furthermore, it was hoped that by not fully instructing in the purpose of the exercise it would give a more realistic picture of the values Fredrik Gorthon ascribe to EG than if he would have been asked during an interview and had to answer on the spot. Moreover, it provided him with time to reflect on his answers before sending them back.

The cobweb method has been criticized for focusing only on the internal side of a company. Often this method is used in managerial workshop when several managers need to derive certain key values or characteristics, in order to come to a joint agreement. This way, it becomes one-sided with a focus on how the managers want the company to be understood internally. As most people know the identity does not always coincide with the image stakeholders might have. This critic of the cobweb model is known by the author, however, the model is used in combination with other data collected via various methods, which should help to limit the one-sidedness that the model is being criticised for.
5.0 The development of branding
Before introducing the reader to the chosen theory, an overall introduction to branding will be given to include the reader in the development within branding.

5.1 What is a brand?
Traditionally, a brand is defined as “a name, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler 1997: 443 in Erdem 1998: 135). Following this definition, many have given their version of what constitutes a brand. Some say it is a promise (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 283) others that: “brands are artefacts that have always been used symbolically to express identity, whether it is identity of a product, a company or a person” (Schultz et al. 2005: 25). Others believe that: “a brand is a cluster of functional and emotional values that enables organizations to make a promise about a unique and welcomed experience” (Chernatony et al. 2013: 31). The definitions of what constitute brands are many and differentiate in small ways but the author believes knowledge and understanding is based on social interaction and reflection. Therefore, it only comes naturally that a brand can never be defined once and for all.

The term branding and the actual meaning of the word ‘to brand’ originate from the US, where people would brand their cattle in order to separate and identify them from their neighbours. Since then, branding has gone through an evolution, especially over the past decades. Where branding before was solely associated with product branding, today it entails much more and has reached a broader perspective, among others entailing corporate branding, personal branding, city branding and nation branding.

5.2 Product branding – “The beginning”
A product can be defined as a problem solver in the sense that it solves a customer’s problem and is the means by which the company reaches its objectives. Therefore, a great deal of importance lies within the product, being that it is the object that is being exchanged (Chernatony et al. 2013: 14). In classical product branding the customer is perceived, from a present perspective, in a slightly outdated way since the customer is described as a passive receiver of the brand message.
The classical product branding does not rely on interaction between the brand and the customer but on a passive orientation. The interaction between brand and customer can thereby be characterized as one-way communication where the brand is the only active party.

The way companies communicated were very one sided and mostly through mass media. Consumers were more receptive of what were communicated to them and they believed what they were told via the mass media.

The characteristic for product branding is that it focuses on the product and strives to create a strong market position for the individual product or service. To name a few of the authors who have made an impact on the elements of product branding are: David Aaker, Wally Olins, Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller. All of these men have contributed immensely to the understanding and evolution of concepts within strategy, branding and marketing.

5.3 Corporate branding – “The first wave”
One of the primary reasons for the shift towards corporate branding stems from the changing competitive conditions in a global marketplace. It has become increasingly more difficult and expensive to create stand-alone products that provide a meaningful differentiation. Therefore, companies are increasingly trying to build relation to their stakeholders based on the organization itself. A majority of companies are working in a global market with many competitors and the need to stand out demands the use of several communication channels making it more difficult to reach today’s selective and sceptical consumers (Schultz et al. 2005: 31).

The so-called first wave of corporate branding took shape in the mid 1990’s where authors such as Olins, Aaker, Balmer, Keller, Hatch & Schultz and Chernatony played an important role in paving the way branding were thought of and understood (Schultz et al. 2005: 10). The different contributors came from fields such as marketing, corporate communication, organization theory and visual and graphics. For many the idea of branding was still rooted in the product branding approach with a main focus on brand essence, benefits and individual visual identities. For others the idea of branding, and in particular corporate branding, was seen as a strategic concept that could help companies formulate an enduring identity that was perceived relevant to its stakeholders. This again points to the fact that the way branding is understood very much depends
on the historical background and social interactions between people, in order to come to a definition on where branding has its origination.

However, this meant that the field of corporate branding was divided into two camps; one with a visual focus and one with a strategic focus. The visual approach was the one who ended up dominating both literature and practice, and brought along a marketing and campaign driven approach to corporate branding. The first wave of corporate branding was seen as an extension of product branding but with a more visual and tactical focus. Despite the disagreement within the field of corporate branding, the main idea was to put more focus on the organization as a force for differentiation (Schultz et al. 2005: 11). This also came as a factor of the increased difficulty in differentiation of products as well as it became easier to emulate, increasing the focus and importance on brand name as the differentiator (Chernatony et al. 2013: 17).

What the first wave of corporate branding overlooked was the possibility for companies to build relationships with its environment in a strategic and long term manner. What was ‘missing’ was a focus on building long-term stakeholder relationship (Schultz et al. 2005: 12). The emergence of globalization also intensified the necessity of building relationships with stakeholders across countries. Many companies today work in a global marketplace and the explosion in the number of communication channels have made it more expensive and difficult for companies to position their stand-alone products. Especially, since customers are even more sceptical and tired of classical mass communication (Schultz et al. 2005: 31). The first wave of corporate branding was, therefore, still understood as a somewhat static concept focusing too much on campaigns and short-term benefits similar to the way product branding functions.

5.4 Corporate branding – “The second wave”
Within recent years the move towards the second wave of corporate branding has appeared. Here the focus is no longer put on short-term relationships and single campaign initiatives but on the overall holistic way a company deals, or should deal, with all the stakeholder groups and paradoxes it is faced with. According to Moser: “the first step to having a cohesive brand is to have a cohesive company (2003: 15 in Doorley & Garcia 2007: 283).
The second wave of corporate branding builds on the experience gained from the first wave, and is characterized by having a more realistic insight into the many conflicts and complex relationships that exists between a company and its stakeholders. According to Majken Schultz corporate branding can end up becoming one of the few central cross-disciplinary concepts that can manage to establish cohesion between the company’s strategies, organization and marketing (Schultz et al. 2005: 16). Schultz claims that there are five academic disciplines that have contributed most to the understanding of corporate branding, as it should be practised today. These are: marketing, visual identity, communication, organization theory and strategy.

The second wave of corporate branding tries to outline the many paradoxes a company is faced with and tries to provide an understanding of how a company should work with these paradoxes, instead of trying to solve them. As mentioned, corporate branding stems from a mix of several disciplines. The different disciplines deal with different issues, which then naturally cause paradoxes. The task, when striving to achieve a coherent corporate brand, is to try to maintain a balance between the different paradoxical perceptions of what it takes to create and maintain a corporate brand (Schultz et al. 2005: 53). In order to illustrate what possible paradoxes might occur the model below has been formulated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand dimensions</th>
<th>Corporate branding consistency</th>
<th>Corporate branding flexibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brand communication</td>
<td>Coherence between internal and external communication</td>
<td>Shifting emphasis on internal and external communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand relations</td>
<td>Relevance and transparency for all stakeholders</td>
<td>Involvement of different stakeholders with different demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identity</td>
<td>Authenticity in culture and unique identity</td>
<td>Reinterpreting identity in accordance to stakeholder perceptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model 2, inspired by Schultz et al. 2005: 54

The second wave therefore takes a more cross-disciplinary perspective on corporate branding when it outlines that a corporate brand is constructed from various disciplines and causes an organization-wide concern instead of only being concerned with marketing and communication. No doubt that when understanding corporate branding as a paradoxical process it will also create
more tensions. By acknowledging the presence of these tensions they also imply that they can never be resolved once and for all. Schultz claims that by recognizing the contributions from both sides of the paradoxes and not trying to resolve them but instead try to work with the shifting balances, it is a starting point for the on-going management of a corporate brand (Schultz et al. 2005: 55).

Corporate branding, in accordance to the second wave, is a dynamic continuous process where the focus is not only on the current situation in a company. It also deals with the future in the form of a company vision, which is a strategic intent to define the corporate brand and an attempt to try to influence a corporate reputation (Schultz et al. 2005: 49). According to Lars Sandstrøm, the reason why corporate communication is so vital in today’s business world is that it helps bring the values of the surrounding environment together with the values of the company (2003:22).

The need for corporate branding stems from a combination of globalization and a new economy. This means that the possibilities and borders have expanded due to technology and the focus on listening and interpreting values has become very important. Furthermore, the demand from the surroundings for openness and transparency also supports the need for a coherent and unique corporate brand. Corporate branding is also a mean to more effective communication and marketing initiatives. A successful corporate branding strategy forces the company to continuously reflect if it is making good enough use of its communicative resources.

5.5 Coherent communication and technology evolution
A discipline that has contributed greatly to the understanding of corporate branding is communication studies. Generally speaking, studies on communication have focused on the communication processes that emerge and develop between a sender and a receiver. From having an interest in either internal or external communication, communication scholars have within recent years emphasized the need to shape an overall image of the full communication network, since it relates to the company and its various internal and external stakeholders (Schultz et al. 2005: 35-36).

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) stems from more than a decade of work by many professionals and academics trying to improve the effectiveness and reach of marketing.
In a very simple manner Doorley and Garcia explains that marketing is about getting and keeping customers and IMC is about clear, consistent messaging devised to support a company’s marketing objectives (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 271). It is a new way of looking at the company as a whole as opposed to a fragmented view. The core idea is to try to take the different parts of communication instruments that have been seen as somewhat independent of each other and combine these, in order to achieve a homogenous entity. The benefit of IMC is that a consistent set of messages are being conveyed to all people who come in contact with the company.

This relatively new IMC concept has been created on the basis of convergence between communication and marketing. Mass marketing is more or less a thing belonging to the past and the enormous impact the Internet has made has changed the way people communicate. The need for transparency has become more evident, since everyone today can access information at any time and share this information in various ways. As a consequence the control that before was entitled to the company has now shifted into the hands of all stakeholders (Capozzi in Doorley & Garcia 2007: 288-289).

The way branding is practiced has changed in accordance to how the world has changed. Over the last 20-25 years, focus has changed from one-way mass media approaches towards a more complex personalized to-way communication approach (Sandstrøm 2003: 10). Globalization has had an impact on the changes in how best to communicate. The world has become ‘smaller’ and the possibilities for people across borders to interact, work and do business together has expanded and forced companies to change the way communication is used. Moreover, the technological development has given birth to communities where people can engage and share experiences, good or bad, with each other. This has created more well informed people who are less likely to trust a company unless they feel that it lives up to the promises it makes. Value is therefore not something created by a company alone, but it is something that arises in the interaction between the company and the consumer, and the consumer and other consumers (Schultz et al. 2005: 86).

In today’s world, where the amount of messages and big variety of products and services are available, it is difficult to stand out and be accepted in the minds of the selective and busy stakeholders. It is therefore important that all stakeholders who come across any type of message
from the company are met with consistent communication. If the stakeholders are met with inconsistent information it will take them longer time to process and create value around the brand or company, time they might not have or want to spend (de Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 18).

Furthermore, the importance of building relationships is crucial because they are built on trust (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 280). As integration has become a key factor, companies are faced with the problematic task of dealing with the difficult environment of the twenty-first century. This comes as a cause of decline in advertisement effectiveness, increasing consumer scepticism, high noise levels and the nonstop access of the Internet (Capozzi in Dooely & Garcia 2007: 287). Despite the fact that IMC seems to be a concept that can lead to enhanced communication integration it is not an easy thing to adopt. Successful IMC implies that the company operates under a ‘one voice’ approach, which is not an easy task to fulfil. Overall in a complete integrated communication environment, corporate identity definition, corporate reputation and image building, stakeholder communication and marketing communications are fully integrated (de Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 36).

6.0 Theory presentation
In order to unfold the theoretical framework for this thesis, the chapter will aim to display the theories and how they can be useful for EG. The choice of theories will be argued for continuously and it is the intent to present the reasoning for the choice of theories. For the purpose of answering the research question it has been decided to focus on corporate branding and the different aspects that lie within this term. It is vital to pay attention to identity, culture, and vision in order to be perfectly clear on who EG is and where they wish to go. Furthermore, the concept of image and reputation is important in order to understand how others perceive EG. In order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the analysis structure the author has constructed a model of the theoretical framework. The first two blocks make out the first part of the analysis and are interrelated. The outcome of the first part of the analysis will then lead to the second part being the operational one. This framework will conclusively lead to recommendations. Each component will be elaborated on in the following.
6.1 Integrated Marketing and Corporate Communication
From chapter 5, the reader was introduced to the evolution branding has gone through and lastly the relatively new paradigm of integrated marketing communication (IMC). The framework for the analysis will therefore be constructed in a frame of what the author has decided to combine into Integrated Marketing and Corporate Communication (IMCC). The reason for this contraction is that the analysis will focus on both marketing activities as well as corporate communication and the author did not feel like the concept of IMC would be sufficient enough. The frame rests upon the belief that in order for EG to improve their communicative initiatives, integration of these are the most efficient and successful way to do it. Furthermore, IMCC as an overall analysis focus is supported by the rest of the theory that are being put to use, since corporate branding is a way to align multiple entities and communication for a company. This means that IMCC has been the focus and has helped select and determine on the rest of the theory, which will be used for the analytical purpose. Due to space limitations in the thesis, the author has been forced to reduce the amount of space used for IMCC, which would have been ideal to elaborate on further. However, it is the hope that the short introduction and reasoning for the analysis focus have provided the reader with an understanding and argumentation as to where the focus will be put and why.

6.2 Part one
Two main theories have been found especially relevant for the first part of the analysis. The theories are evolving from corporate branding and are mainly depicted from Majken Schultz and
Mary Jo Hatch and reputation management by Charles J. Fombrun and Cees B.M van Riel. These two theoretical perspectives will dominate the first part of the analysis but be supported by contributions by other authors throughout the chapter.

It is important to state that the application of these two theories will function as the foundation to capture the essential aspects of EG’s status quo to guide the further analysis.

6.3 Corporate branding elements
The choice of corporate branding as one of the foundational theories was an obvious choice based on the initial insight into EG and their communicational challenges. In order to determine the best possible ways for EG to improve their communication we first need to know who they are and in order to do so the concept of corporate identity will set of the analysis.

6.4 Corporate identity
David A Aaker (Aaker), a well-known brand guru, defines an identity structure as consisting of the so-called “core identity” and the “extended identity”. The core identity is what Aaker calls the timeless essence of the brand and is central to both the meaning and success of the brand. The core identity is the elements or associations that are most likely to remain constant and should be more resistant to change than the extended identity. Furthermore, the core identity should include elements that make the brand both unique and valuable (Aaker 2002: 85-87). The extended brand identity is the elements, which gives texture and completeness, providing the details that help to illustrate what the brand stands for. By using Aaker’s concept of identity, in a combination with a selection of the data gathered, it can help determine EG’s identity, making the further analysis of the corporate brand possible. The fact that Aaker uses the term “brand identity” and not “corporate brand identity” is not seen to cause problems for the analysis. Aaker mentions previous to the brand identity introduction that a brand can be seen from a variety of perspectives, one being “brand as organization” (2002: 82). His concept of brand identity is thereby assessed to be applied in the search for a corporate (brand) identity.

Furthermore, in the determination of EG’s identity The Organizational Identity Dynamics Model by Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz has been applied in order to portray the dynamics that interplay in the continuous identity formation (2008: 51). Moreover, it is intended to support the
It is the author’s opinion that by combining Aaker’s concepts of core and extended identity with the Organizational Identity Dynamics Model, it can be possible to deduce the current corporate identity at EG and thereby continue the analysis of the corporate brand by having determined the foundation. Majken Schultz condones: “With a relatively broad conceptualization, corporate branding requires a stable foundation that all stakeholders and company members recognize. In the Corporate Branding Tool Kit the corporate identity provides this foundation” (Schultz et al. 2005: 48).

6.5 Corporate Branding Tool Kit
Besides answering the question “who are EG” it is also important to know how they are perceived and where they wish to go. For this purpose, the author has found it useful to use The Corporate Branding Tool Kit (also known as the VCI model) by Majken Schultz and Mary Jo Hatch. This framework is an excellent tool to analyse the different constituents that are part of defining a corporate brand.

The Corporate Branding Tool-Kit outlines the Vision, Culture and Image (VCI), which are all contributors in constructing a company’s corporate brand. The more dynamics and connections there are between the three constitutes, the stronger the brand. The model illustrates how a company’s vision, culture and image are all pieces of the same continuous puzzle. They all affect and influence each other and touches upon the central piece of the puzzle, the company identity. Furthermore, the model can be used as a tool to uncover if and why VCI components are not functioning and this way, uncover the so-called gaps. If gaps are occurring it means that the corporate brand will lose its strength and this can have severe consequences for the company overall. The three gaps are as follows:

The Vision-Image gap appears when the company’s stakeholders are not aware of or agreeing to where the company wishes to go and what its values are. As well as when the company does not match its goals with the needs and wants of its stakeholders.
The Image-Culture gap appears when the company culture does not care whether or not they live up to the image perceived by the stakeholders. Furthermore, when the stakeholders do not experience the company keeping the promises it set out.

The Culture-Vision gap appears when the culture of the company does not support the vision, values and goals or when goals and values are not shaped in accordance and respect to the peculiar culture.

The Corporate Branding Tool Kit indicates that creating a strong corporate brand is a constant and on-going process. This means that the task of managing a corporate brand will never be completed. This will cause a need for change in one of the VCI components and the way the corporate brand is being managed (Schultz & Hatch 2008: 227).

6.6 Corporate Branding Life Cycle
Inspired by Larry E. Greiner’s model over organizational growth, Hatch and Schultz has created the Corporate Branding Life Cycle, which is a tool to help indicate where a corporate brand is placed within the life cycle (Schultz et al 2005: 185). This model has been found useful in order to place EG on one of the five life cycles. This way the model illustrates where EG is, on the basis of the corporate branding part of the analysis. Thereby, the model is used as an illustrative tool to provide the reader with an overview.

6.7 Reputation management
The next step in the analysis will focus on the importance of reputation as a cause of successful corporate communication. The main literature is taken from Charles Fombrun & Cees B.M. van Riel but will also be contributed by other authors within the field of reputation management. The reason for this choice is that a corporate reputation is said to measure how successful a company is at fulfilling the expectations of its stakeholders (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 208). A good reputation is said to help improve the success of a company and it has therefore been decided to focus on how coherent communication can help give EG a good reputation and thereby increase the chances of success. Since EG has not yet worked with a concrete communication and branding strategy it was determined that by investigating the use of communication, it could help determine the current reputation. Moreover, it will be outlined how a reputation is formed and
why it is vital to focus on. Furthermore, it can help to uncover areas of improvement that can help guide the future recommendations.

6.8 Summary part 1
As illustrated, the first part of the analysis will look into the main constituents of corporate branding. The intention is that the outlined theories should work together in order to thoroughly analyse EG’s current (corporate) brand. The Corporate Branding Tool Kit helps deduce the vision, image, and culture as well as possible gaps, which help guides the further analysis. Aaker’s identity theory helps to define the elements of an identity, which is at the centre of the Corporate Branding Tool Kit model. The Corporate Branding Cycle is used as an illustrative tool for the reader to see where EG is positioned in accordance to the findings of the part of the analysis. The aim is to provide the reader with an insight into the benefits of working with corporate branding as well as deducing the status quo at EG. Furthermore, the results of the analysis should help support the further focus areas.

In the extension of looking into corporate branding elements it was found relevant to focus on reputation. Working on creating a corporate brand has a direct effect on reputation because a good reputation is influenced by the elements of corporate branding and vice versa. A good reputation can lead to competitive advantages for EG which can help increase business growth. The focus will lie on the importance of a reputation and why it is seen as important for EG to focus on this by improving communication and create more value for the stakeholders.

6.9 Part two
The second part of the analysis will function as an operational part, with focus on the formation of brand equity and how best to obtain this via the online tools EG has available. As opposed to the first part of the analysis, part two will draw on theory taken from a range of academic journals. However, the theory used for brand equity is predominantly taken from two academic articles, since the author has constructed a model on the basis of these. The theory for online branding stems from a variety of academic articles each with an online communicational focus.
6.10 Brand equity
If a company wishes to create value around it, it is said to be vital to focus on reputation and brand equity (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 273). In the previous part reputation was described, so it only comes natural to include equity formation too.

Brand equity emerged as a concept around the 1990s as a way to try to bridge a gap between short- and long-term marketing successes. Brand equity was denoted as a non-financial, market-based intangible asset resulting from previous marketing activities that could lead to future profits (Christodoulides et al. 2006: 800). Over a decade later brand equity has become an integrated part of many companies and a vital source of competitive advantages.

The reason as to why the choice fell upon brand equity is that the author found it interesting and useful to look into how EG can create better value. When working with brand equity it is, as with branding, difficult to reach a concrete definition on the conceptualization of equity creation. Ambler notes that the reason why brand equity is such a big concept and difficult to conclude on, is due to a variety of researchers looking at different aspects of the same concept (2003: in Cristodoulides et al. 2006: 801). The author concurs to this and has chosen theory from an information economic perspective (Erdem & Swait 2001) as well as a cognitive perspective that deals with consumers (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002). The perspectives will be elaborated on, as well as argued for in the following section.

6.10.1 Economic information perspective on brand equity
An information economic perspective acknowledges the imperfect and asymmetric information structure in a market and defines credibility, created via interaction between consumer and company, as the determinant of consumer-based brand equity. The focus is put on information and indicates the importance of content, clarity, and credibility of a brand to help increase perceived quality with the consumer. The emphasis in this perspective is on the informational aspect as well as the credibility. Furthermore, this framework proposes that brand loyalty is a consequence of brand equity, which is opposing many of the cognitive perspectives on equity creation, where loyalty is seen as a component of brand equity. The author has assessed that by looking at brand equity this way it can deduce some valid reasons for why brand equity is so important for EG, as well as why it might not be exercised to its full potential.
6.10.2 Web equity
As stated, EG is a company that only operates online, why it was found useful to use theory on brand equity that takes an online perspective. The article by Page and Lepkowska-White (2002) takes a more traditional look on brand equity with the dimensions of awareness and image. They do, however, build up a framework around the term web equity, which is characterized as consumer familiarity and perceptions about a company’s website. Web equity is created via web awareness; consumer familiarity with an online company’s website and web image; consumer perception about an online company. What is distinctively different in the web equity perspective, as opposed to the traditional take on brand equity, is that customer loyalty is not a component of equity but a consequence.

This equal understanding of consumer loyalty is why the author sees it plausible to make use of both articles despite their different focus on brand/web equity formation. By combining these two frameworks the author seeks to cover a wider area of what can create equity at EG. This way it is possible to analyse different factors that can have an impact on EG. Because the two frameworks both understand consumer loyalty as a consequence of equity creation the author sees the combination as being valid, since the desired outcome of equity formation is loyalty.

6.11 Online initiatives
Due to the fact that EG is a company that only operates via online channels the author found it appropriate to include elements of online branding theory. This part of the analysis will address the key aspects in the online branding landscape that is assessed to strengthen the corporate brand. As with brand equity, online branding is being used as a tool to operationalize processes for EG and help lead to recommendations.

6.11.1 Interactivity
The aspect of online interactivity is said to be one of the main drivers of loyalty and relationship creation. As described in chapter 5, the evolution of technology and the need for integrated communication and marketing activities has shifted the focus away from one-way communication towards two-way communication. The literature describes the importance for a company to interact in an online environment. This is mainly due to the lack of physical interaction as well as
the variety of choices available, which calls for the need to create intangible values. The notion of interactivity is considered as an important aspect for EG, since they provide products to a global customer base and by interacting more it can help create a stronger and more loyal relationship. Furthermore, the aspect of communicating two-way also leads to the notion of feedback which the author also finds interesting and useful for EG in order to improve communication.

6.11.2 Website
Looking into EG’s website, is a way to analyse the consistency of the messages as well as how the identity shines through. A website is said to be the means to strengthening the image of a brand (Alwi 2009: 1). Only being present online often makes the website the first encounter a customer has with the company and should therefore be clear and consistent, both visually and communicative. It is therefore considered a way for the author to investigate the current website function of EG in combination with the theory, in order to uncover if there is a need for improvement. Furthermore, the author wishes to investigate to what extent EG provides their customers with enough intangible value which are said to create the best chance of revisit and repurchase.

6.11.3 Social media
The last focus for this part of the analysis is on how EG currently are using social media. It is believed that the use of social media should be seen as a strategic tool once it has been decided to be used. Furthermore, the literature states that social networks are a useful way of attracting attention and can help create word of mouth. By investigating EG's use of social media it is the intention to seek out ways to use the tool more strategically and integrate it into the communication processes.

6.12 Summary part two
The focus on equity formation comes from the notion that functional and emotional value can be drivers for loyalty towards a brand. It is therefore interesting to analyse the components of equity formation in order to seek out what EG currently is doing and where there could be room for improvement. Furthermore, by creating added value among stakeholders it can help EG to better
understand why it is important to communicate coherently and why it requires optimized use of the online communication.

By looking into EG’s online presence it can help determine the areas that need improvement. Furthermore, the equity formation that is needed to create more loyal stakeholders has to come via EG’s online presence. It is therefore important to look closer at the website and the social media platforms as well as the degree of interaction, which are drivers of value.

6.13 Future recommendations
On the grounds of the findings from the analysis the author will suggest recommendations for EG to consider. On the basis of this, several initiatives will be outlined and argued for their specific influence on a corporate brand.

7.0 Corporate branding analysis
Model 4 (below) is an illustrative way of providing the reader with an overview of the elements that will be investigated as the first part of the analysis. The model consists of five parts, all dealing with the formation and dynamics of corporate branding. The analysis will begin from the inside and work its way out. However, as corporate branding is a dynamic process and all parts of the model is part of a corporate brand construction it is only natural that overlaps will occur during the analysis. Model 4 displays the intended corporate brand dynamic where all aspects are aligned.

[Diagram of corporate branding model]

Corporate branding is here suggested as a way to uncover the elements that needs to be investigated, in order to streamline EG’s communicational initiatives. It is believed that by doing so, it will be possible to deduce certain areas in need of improvement, in order for EG to obtain the benefits of gathering all communication under a corporate brand. The model will reappear throughout the
analysis, in some cases only as parts. Lastly, by the end of part one of the analysis, the VCI model will be applied on EG in order to illustrate to the reader, on the basis of the analysis, where the focus will be further on.

7.1 Identity is key
In order to outline an understanding of the current internal status of EG, the first part of the analysis will, to the extent possible, uncover the characteristics of the current corporate identity. The identity of EG can assist in outlining the foundation on which the corporate brand should be built on. A corporate identity helps to shape the image, vision and culture and vice versa which is why it is important to look into all aspects.

7.1.1 Core identity
According to Aaker, the core part of the identity represents the timeless essence of the brand (2002: 85). The reason why identity is so important is because it requires the company to reflect on who they are. If this is not treated with strategic care and a company do not know who they are, how is it then possible for the stakeholders to know (Schultz et al. 2005: 58)?

After having interviewed Fredrik Gorthon it became clearer what identity features exists at EG. The core identity is central to the meaning and the success of the brand and therefore contains the associations that are most likely to remain constant. For Fredrik the characteristics of EG are: innovation, design and quality, when stating that he wants EG to be a design company offering innovative solutions and good quality (interview Fredrik Gorthon 16.04). Furthermore, the cobweb exercise (appendix F) also indicates that Fredrik applies these three characteristics as important and also as something EG already possess. In the majority of the other characteristics in the cobweb he has reflected on bigger improvements. This makes the author believe that the core identity associations are, according to Fredrik Gorthon, innovation, design and quality. This coincides with the fact that the core identity should be timeless and constant and include elements that help make the brand both unique and valuable (Aaker 2002: 86-87).

From being an online company the only way for people on the outside to look in, is via the website. So also here it is important that the identity shines through. On the start page it is written: “We make coffee related accessories. We not only make them, we design them as well.”
Our aim is to make products that are well designed, both in function and in form. We also put emphasis on making products that are just a little bit more clever”2. Here it is again clear that the emphasis has been placed on design and making innovative products, which coincides with Fredrik Gorthon’s idea for the company.

Often, a slogan can help capture, if not all then, part of the core identity. Furthermore, a slogan can help express the corporate identity and help to shape the image or brand promise (Sandstrøm 2003: 89). When the topic of a slogan was raised, it turned out that there were some misunderstandings as to the use of such. The author had, via the company presentation, the impression that the slogan for EG was “we produce for the industry” (appendix A). During the interview with Fredrik Gorthon it became clear that this was an old presentation and as he said a slogan used for this specific presentation (interview Fredrik Gorthon 21.01). Furthermore, at the end of the presentation another slogan was presented below the company logo saying “Espresso Gear – infusing innovation” (appendix A). When asked about this slogan Fredrik Gorthon said that this was a slogan they used in the beginning but for the moment he had doubts about using it, since he did not feel like they were designing as many innovative products as before (interview Fredrik Gorthon 37.11). During the interview with the Australian wholesaler/retailer Ben Silverston the confusion regarding the use of a slogan also came up. Ben Silverston manages the Australian based company Espresso Gear Australia, where he uses the same slogan “infusing innovation”3 and when asked if this is EG slogan he said: “Yeah, or well I don’t know if he has changed” (interview Ben Silverston 51.41). Fredrik himself said: “We don’t communicate anything with a slogan at the moment but we should” (interview Fredrik Gorthon 37.33). However, the slogan “infusing innovation” still appears on some of the packaging (appendix G, I)

This inconsistency in the use of a slogan creates confusion as to what EG wants to express and leaves a big part of the interpretation, which could be guided by EG, up to the individual. When EG currently does not brand via a slogan, but then still use communication that includes outdated slogans, it can cause mixed interpretations from stakeholders. Being a young company still trying to imprint their footsteps in the coffee speciality market, it can be essential to create a slogan that

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2 [www.espressogear.com](http://www.espressogear.com)
makes it easier for others to recognize EG, as well as it helps illustrate a clear part of the identity outwards.

Values of a company is also said to be part of the core identity construction because by asking what values help drive the brand it creates a process in determining who the company is. EG’s values are stated in the company presentation as being: humour, quality, sustainable development, clever solutions, and product and marketing uniqueness (appendix A). Because Fredrik Gorthon stated that the presentation was outdated it does not provide the author with a concrete impression whether or not the values are current or outdated, since the values only appear in an outdated presentation. This suggests that there exists uncertainty about the values of EG both in regards to Fredrik Gorthon’s understanding and the wholesalers/retailers.

7.1.2 Extended identity
The extended identity includes the elements that provide texture and completeness, and help portray what the corporate brand stands for (Aaker 2002: 87-88). For EG this includes the products since they are innovative and well designed in function and form. Furthermore, the logo with the two SS’ opposite of each other, the packaging and the logo imprint on the products, are all drivers of the overall brand identity (appendix G, II). Price can also be seen as a driver of the identity since it is important to Fredrik Gorthon that EG offers good quality products at a fair price (interview Fredrik Gorthon 16.17). These drivers are all part of shaping the identity and portray who the company is (de Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 24).

The difference between the core and extended identity is that the core does not possess enough details to perform all of the functions of a brand identity alone. By using extended identity features it can contribute to building uniqueness and differentiation. Schutz states that what makes a company unique is not what it says it is doing or will do in the future but what it does that characterizes it (Schultz et al. 2005: 68). It is therefore important to understand what EG is doing now for building an identity, in order to assess what type of communication will be most effective.

By using Aaker’s model of Identity Structure (model 5) it looks as if Fredrik Gorthon has a clear idea of who EG is, but what seems to be lacking is the actual operationalization of the concept of identity. He seems very certain about what characteristics he wants to communicate but the
consistency and clarity of this gets somewhat lost in a mixture of outdated values and shifting
directions. To illustrate it more clearly, it seems as if EG has the core associations in place, but that
the elements that creates the extended identity, often the ones being communicated and thereby
gives the brand meaning, could use some fine-
tuning.

Model 5, inspired by Aaker’s Identity Structure (2002: 86)

The model is a way to illustrate some of the
aspects that EG could emphasize on in order to
broaden the extended identity. The elements
marked with red are constructed on the basis of
examples from Aaker’s Identity Structure as
well as from interviewing Fredrik Gorthon. The
ones marked with black are taken partly from
the cobweb exercise and first interview with
Fredrik Gorthon, as well as the interviews with
Ben Silverston, Niels Hestbech and Costas Pliatsikas. The impression is that EG needs to take time
to properly formulate the values and beliefs Fredrik Gorthon wants EG to express and expand the
set of elements that help to shape the foundation. This is based on the fact that it is important to
know who you are and what you stand for because a strong identity helps to build the foundation
for corporate branding (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 47). During the first interview with Fredrik Gorthon,
he often referred to how EG had done things before and what he would like to do for the future
(Interview Fredrik Gorthon 29.35, 36.30, 1.10.35). Hatch and Schultz underlines the importance of
corporate branding as a process by which organizations continually asks itself the universal
identity questions that can propel it forwards as a competitive and innovative organization (Hatch
& Schultz 2008: 10). This supports the notion that EG should work more on reflecting on the
current components that assist in creating the identity because a corporate identity that is
communicated convincingly creates confidence and goodwill with external stakeholders (de
Pelsmacker 2010: 26).
7.1.3 Identity is dynamic
The Organizational Identity Dynamics Model by Hatch and Schultz has been used to illustrate the dynamics within an identity (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 51). In order for corporate branding to work it is closely tied to the organizational identity. As the model shows, what constitutes corporate identity is the dynamic process and exchange of the elements of culture, identity and image. Knowing who EG is and how their stakeholders understand it, is described by Hatch and Schultz as the very first step towards successful corporate branding (2008: 47). It is therefore important that EG both let their core values affect the identity formation as well as listening to external image perceptions.

As model 6 displays it is a continuous process of responding and listening, which creates the paradox of staying authentic while still reinterpreting the external impressions. This paradoxical situation is part of what Schultz ascribes to be a constituting factor of corporate branding (2005: 54). Corporate identity is important to take care of since it is increasingly difficult for companies to differentiate them solely on a product (Schultz et al 2005: 31). So by developing a distinctive corporate identity it can be part of shaping a unique market position and create a competitive advantage (de Pelsmacker et al. 2010: 25). The model illustrates why it is important to both listen and respond to both the internal and external entities. Furthermore, it shows how dynamic an identity is and why it cannot be successful without including reflection and expression.

7.4 Caught between the waves
After having examined the current identity elements, the next step is to look into the factors that interplay with identity when making use of corporate branding. For this purpose the Corporate Branding Tool Kit (VCI) will be applied and analysed in accordance to EG.
7.5 Corporate Branding Tool Kit

7.5.1 Vision
The strategic vision is the central idea behind the company that should express the envisioned future and it consists of the goals and the vivid description of the desired end state (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 67). In the search for EG’s vision it was not easy to find an externally communicated one that described the future aspirations. During the interview with Fredrik Gorthon it never became perfectly clear what his ambition for EG is. Again turning to the company presentation, the vision was described as: “the company vision is to be one of the leading producers of espresso gear in the world by 2015” (appendix A). When referring to this vision Fredrik Gorthon said it was a bit old and not updated correctly (interview Fredrik Gorthon 21.02). Moreover, when asked if he had a newer version with a more present vision he said that he has not done an updated one (interview Fredrik Gorthon 21.07). This shows that Fredrik Gorthon started out with a vision for EG that might not have been able to accomplish. However, even if he aimed to high and was faced with reality or Fredrik Gorthon has changed his value foundation, EG still needs a vision and work should be put into this.

In order to achieve a well-functioning corporate brand Schultz and Hatch argues that the vision plays a big part, because it is what leads the continuous question of ‘who do we want to be’, which helps to keep the dynamic development of the corporate brand going in interaction with culture and image (Hatch & Schultz 2008:67). Furthermore, company goals were described as a co-constructer of a strategic vision, which EG does have written on their website. The website is the only present external medium for communicating, and it is a good place to inform visitors about what EG’s goals are. However, the goals are not as clearly described as they could be because they are integrated both on the front page⁴ as well as in the ‘about’ section where the words ‘goal’ and ‘aim’ are used different places on the page⁵. The goals presented on the website are: “be one step ahead with new, fun and clever gear”, “add significant value to the everyday work as a barista” and “be a more professional company that delivers what is promised”. In relation to what creates

⁴ [www.espressogear.com](http://www.espressogear.com)
a vision, EG has set goals and communicated these via their website but a more structured overview of these might help to make the goals clearer to their stakeholders. Moreover, there is no description of future desires or ambitions, which helps to communicate the vision better to stakeholders and make the vision more tangible. This indicates the fragmentation of communication via the website and according to Nicolas Ind fragmentation often can be avoided by structures and systems that encourage convergence as well as a powerful shared vision (1997:10) Here Ind is referring to the internal part of a company, which for EG only amounts to Fredrik Gorthon (1997: 10). Often times it can help to create a vision that is based on both the company’s and customer’s desire in helping to create value (Dooley & Garcia 2007: 277).

7.5.2 Culture
The second element investigated is the culture, which is said to exist of the core ideology, being the core values and the shared purpose (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 67). EG is a one-man company, and do not have a corporate culture with many different individuals. Often said, when determining corporate brand values in small companies it is frequently the belief, that the founder is the one who defines the values and build the foundation for the corporate culture. It is therefore important to define the values on which the culture and vision will be built on (Ind 1997: 6).

Theoretically, the VCI model puts equally focus on culture, vision and image but as it is in praxis, sometimes not every theory fits perfectly. On the contrary, it is not to say that no culture exists at EG because even a one-man company shapes the ground for a culture. The advantage for EG is that by being run by just one person it allows Fredrik Gorthon to decide what values and beliefs are top priority at EG. Normally, the culture can play a difficult part in constructing a corporate brand, since the organizational “we” is distributed and interpreted between more employees (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 50). This is seen as an advantage for EG because by being aware of the effect culture has so early on, it can allow Fredrik Gorthon to decide what values the culture should be built on.

As model 6 (p. 48) indicates EG’s culture, being under development or not, has an effect on the corporate identity. It is therefore important to understand the role that culture plays on the
overall function of corporate branding. Whether it is strategically planned or not, Fredrik Gorthon sets the tone for how EG is understood by stakeholders in the way that he behaves, communicates and conducts his business. This means that in praxis Fredrik Gorthon is in the process of building up his own belief and value system, which is what will be carried on to future employers. It is Fredrik Gorthon’s desire to grow and recruit employees to EG, hopefully during 2013 (Interview Fredrik Gorthon 1.25.39). It is therefore important to understand how all the small things are part of shaping the understanding of EG and how Fredrik Gorthon’s behaviour, whether it is intended or not, shapes the corporate brand. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to investigate the culture aspect of the VCI model as thorough as the other elements of the VCI model due to a lack of empirical data and observations about the cultural dimensions in EG.

7.5.3 Image
The third and final part of the VCI model (p. 43) deals with the concept of image. The image has a big impact on both the construction of a dynamic identity as well as maintaining and developing the corporate brand. It is therefore important to involve stakeholders and listen to them, in order to create the best balance between ‘who are we’ and ‘what is their image of us’ questions (see model 6. p. 48). A good way of understanding image is by understanding that “stakeholder images provide a mirror in which the company see itself reflected in the eyes of others” (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 50).

During the different contacts and the data collection it was clear that the wholesalers/retailers, who were interviewed, all had a more or less good impression of EG regarding different aspects. Costas Pliatsikas, a Swedish retailer stated in an email interview that he had “all in all been almost 100 percent satisfied with the products from EG” (appendix H). Ben Silverston from Espresso Gear Australia said during his interview: “in terms of meeting my needs, jep, 90 to 95 percent of the time I am happy” (Interview Ben Silverston 29.25). This supports the fact that the wholesalers/retailers interviewed for this thesis have an overall good experience with the products. Furthermore, when they were asked individually to describe EG in a few words, they all
emphasized innovation (Interview Niels Hestbech 36.35, interview Ben Silverston 19.35) and good quality of product range (Costas Pliatsikas appendix H).

These statements correspond with Fredrik Gorthon’s own understanding of how he wants EG to be seen (interview Fredrik Gorthon 16.04). When it comes to the end-consumers who participated in the online survey 70 percent said they were ‘very satisfied’ and 30 percent ‘satisfied’ with EG’s products and 100 percent would recommend products from EG to others (appendix E). It is, however, important to note that only 30 percent of the end-consumers would define themselves as ‘loyal customers’. Meaning that 40 percent described themselves as ‘one time customers’ and the remaining 30 percent ‘occasional customers’. This might very well be an indication of the lack of added value and strong brand that is needed to create loyal customers. Successful brands provide the added brand value because customers believe that the product is reliable and the best and will fit them better than a competitive product (Chernatony et al. 2013: 19-20). Moreover, it can be the website itself that does not deliver satisfactory information, causing a lack of quality, which makes it unlikely that they want to visit again (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 241). The importance of value creation and online presence will be further elaborated on in part two of the analysis.

The only way to find out how EG’s stakeholders understand and sees it is by listening to what they have to say. In order for this to happen EG needs to get feedback from its stakeholders, which seemed to have never happened before now. Ben Silverston specified during his interview that Fredrik Gorthon had never requested feedback in the form of a customer satisfaction survey and that he (Ben) had not been good enough to inform Fredrik Gorthon about things that could be improved (interview Ben Silverston 42.19, 42.29). Furthermore, Niels Hestbech supports this by saying that he has also not been very good at giving feedback to Fredrik Gorthon (interview Niels Hestbech 10.15) but also here indications were that Fredrik Gorthon had never requested any form of feedback. Fredrik supports these statements by explaining that the only channel for feedback was a blog EG had but it was closed down (interview Fredrik Gorthon 1.10.06). During the second interview with Fredrik Gorthon the author outlined some of the findings regarding the issue of feedback. Fredrik Gorthon responded by saying: “the communication that we have (wholesaler/retailer-EG) is usually based on when they have a need, they contact me we exchange
a few emails maybe a phone call, the products get shipped from here and that’s it. They get an invoice a week later and there is no more contact and I don’t call them up and ask if they got them and how did you like them. And that is an obvious problem, absolutely I can see that” (Interview 2. Fredrik Gorthon 47.24)

Since image is about listening to the outside world’s overall impression of the company, it cannot be stressed enough how important it is to engage in a dialogue and listen to what people have to say about you. Naturally, EG is provided with a type of image insight when Fredrik Gorthon engages in dialogue with his wholesalers/retailers. As Niels Hestbech said, the reason for not providing EG with feedback is because he too runs a business and has an everyday that is stressful and requires strict prioritization (interview Niels Hestbeck 10.26). Feedback is necessary in order to get a better understanding of how a company is understood by its stakeholders. It is, therefore, important that managers, in this case Fredrik Gorthon, make use of feedback and initiate feedback contact, if it does not come naturally. Feedback can lead to understanding and can lead to the building of relationships, which can help enhance corporate performance (Ind 1997: 51).

7.5.4 The domino effect
When using the VCI model as an analytical tool it also helps to uncover the areas where there might be dysfunction in the corporate branding process (model 10). It is important to understand that these gaps are a natural part of a dynamic brand in constant movement but, nevertheless, they should be attended to. These gaps can help to outline what areas EG have to work on in the process of creating a corporate brand. The gaps are deduced on the grounds of the previous analysis and will guide the further analysis.

7.5.5 Possible gaps
Model 10 illustrates the gaps that often occur when working with corporate branding and shows the dysfunction that can occur.

The first possible gap that causes incoherence to the corporate brand lies between EG’s vision and
culture. According to Hatch & Schultz the gap occurs when the employees do not understand and support the strategic vision (2008:75). Being a one-man company Fredrik Gorthon is the only one, internally, who shapes the culture but as indicated in the vision analysis (p. 48) it is not clearly stated what EG’s vision exactly is. Normally, the gap appears when the management sets an aspiration that is too ambitious for the company to implement causing the employees not to understand or support the vision. In this case a gap exists from not having a clear formulated vision, which the author believes must cause the same effect when there is no clear vision to understand. Even though Fredrik Gorthon is the only person at EG working on the vision, it is still seen as a way for him to become clearer about his ambitions and easier integrate it internally. It can therefore not be easy to support or understand a vision that is either outdated or only exists vaguely.

Naturally, nothing in regards to corporate branding is easy, but when that is said this gap could be one of the ‘easiest’ to close since it is only Fredrik on the internal side of EG. It calls for reflection and most importantly clearer external communication from within.

Because corporate branding is a dynamic entity it often means that one gap rarely stands alone. Even though the image analysis (p. 50) defined that EG’s stakeholders are mostly satisfied with the products, there might still be grounds for a gap. The gap might not exist in its full form but through the interviews with wholesalers/retailers it came out that there have been occasions where EG has not delivered exactly what was promised. This can cause a gap between the image and culture since Fredrik Gorthon states both via his interview, his website and the cobweb model that he wants EG to be professional, deliver in time and provide products of good quality\(^6\) (Fredrik Gorthon 16.17 ) (appendix F). On the contrary, Ben Silverston informed during his interview that there had been occasions where he had received products in less than perfect condition. Ben Silverston said he felt like many things have changed for the better but that he still felt like EG had problems with quality management (interview Ben Silverston 27.32). Niels Hestbech informed that they had had to wait for products to be delivered to them longer than expected, which of course was not optimal (interview Niels Hestbech 35.29). It does give the indication of a potential gap between culture and image. What is being promised and what is actually fulfilled, has improved

\(^6\) http://www.espressogear.com/about-i-51.aspx
greatly over the last 6-18 months according to both Ben Silverston and Niels Hestbech (Interview Ben Silverston 20.39 & interview Niels Hestbech 13.58). However, it has been set to improve and Fredrik Gorthon is fully aware of the areas that need improvement, which corresponds with what both Ben Silverston and Niels Hestbech said. According to the cobweb exercise Fredrik Gorthon indicated that he wants to improve in the availability of products, his delivery service and his brand awareness (appendix F). The fact that EG moved their storage facility to Sweden is also meant to improve the availability as well as the delivery time (Interview Niels Hestbech 12.15).

Another cause for disruption in the corporate branding process lies between the vision and image. This type of gap occurs when the vision from EG is in conflict with the stakeholder images (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 75). Because the VCI model consists of three parts, it is only natural that if one is not in full function it will affect the others. Because EG does not have a clear communicated vision, it can be difficult for outsiders to understand where they want to go and confusion occurs. The fact that EG has changed their packaging several times has created confusion and inconvenience for the wholesalers/retailers (Interview Niels Hestbech 8.15). Furthermore, Ben Silverston said EG’s website has been changed 3-4 times over the last 18 months (interview Ben Silverston 14.25) and thereby the branding so many times (interview Ben Silverston 27.40).

This can be caused by not having a clear vision and strategy. Despite the fact that the people being interviewed have given EG credit for improving over the last months it is still issues that restricts the corporate branding process.

7.6 What is the status?
By using corporate identity elements and the VCI model the author has uncovered the status quo at EG. By analysing the different elements, possible gaps have been drawn out in order to illustrate areas EG needs to work on if a corporate branding strategy can be successfully implemented. The VCI model is a way to also support the concept of integrated marketing and corporate communication because it is build up by different elements that cause different types of communication that all need to be coherent in order to provide the impression of a coherent entity. EG is still in the process of creating a brand and could increase, and perhaps even speed up the process by attempting to align the different elements. Because a corporate brand is dynamic and paradoxical it is not suggested that by trying to integrate the elements of corporate branding
it immediately creates a strong corporate brand. Rather, it is the attempt to try to uncover and seek out the potential areas that needs work and then being aware of what helps balance a corporate brand.

What seems to be the most important aspect missing is communication, especially external. The author believes that it is not possible to communicate coherent and clear externally if the internal elements are not understood because corporate branding is about aligning vision, culture and image (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 68). If not, it causes unclear communication that most likely will be interpreted differently by stakeholders because EG does not provide the information to help inform who they are (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 77).

7.7 Riding the waves
On the grounds of the first part of the analysis the Cycles of Corporate Branding model will be used as a way to provide the reader with an illustration of where EG is placed (Schultz & Hatch 2003 in Schultz et al. 2005: 184). The model has been found useful since it can help indicate where EG is placed in a corporate branding cycle.

There are five cycles and they each represent the different stages in the formation of a corporate brand. Each stage has key problems to attend to as well as key processes and challenges of change. The key problems for all five cycles are elaborated on in model 11 below (further overview see appendix I).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle 1</th>
<th>Cycle 2</th>
<th>Cycle 3</th>
<th>Cycle 4</th>
<th>Cycle 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stating:</strong> who you are and who you want to become</td>
<td><strong>Organizing:</strong> linking elements behind identity</td>
<td><strong>Involving:</strong> all relevant stakeholders</td>
<td><strong>Integrating:</strong> all expressions of your brand</td>
<td><strong>Monitoring:</strong> results through performance measurements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key problem:**
- Fragmented company-wide brand expression
- Lack of coherent brand organization and execution
- Generate shared mindset among employees and customer involvement
- Make full move from product to corporate brand behaviour
- Ensure operation ownership to all units: the brand is everywhere

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**Based on the findings from the analysis so far, it seems most likely that EG lies somewhere in the first cycle (model 12). Because EG has not initiated corporate branding before, it is natural that it will be placed somewhere in the beginning. As described in the work with the VCI model there are issues that create or created gaps, which makes the formation and work on corporate branding restricted. As mentioned in the analysis of the current identity it was deduced, that EG needs to be more expressive and aware of what kind of identity it wants to have. This corresponds with the main processes recommended in the first cycle (appendix I). However, an identity does not need to be started from scratch since Fredrik Gorthon has an idea of who he wants EG to be and it has, to some extent, reached stakeholders. What more seems to be keeping EG in the stating cycle is the lack of clarity, consistency and communication. The reason for this is most likely a lack of time and resources in order to understand the elements that can be used to shape a corporate brand.**
The cycles are thereby also a way to provide the information EG needs in order to understand how to move through the cycles.

It is important to state that the cycles function as a normative framework for the strategic management of corporate brands. The sequence of the cycles is based on the studies made by Hatch and Schultz from several corporations. It conceptualizes the intentions and direction which are often found in corporate brand implementation (Schultz et al. 2005: 184). This means that companies might experience branding processes that are less straight forward than model 11 indicates and a company might start in a different cycle because of how corporate branding works in practice. However, it is found to be very fitting for EG and again the use of this model is to illustrate to the reader where the company is positioned as well as to support the conclusions from the previous analysis.

8.0 Reputation advantages
In the previous part of the analysis it was determined that EG do possess some of the elements for working with corporate branding. However, one of the main concerns was the lack of consistent communication between EG and their stakeholders. As previously mentioned (chap. 5) the way companies should communicate has changed due to a variety of factors. Many companies today have realized that it is no longer enough to communicate in fragmented pieces but instead focus on a coherent holistic communication system. There is a greater expectation from stakeholders today, than before, and a corporate reputation can help measure how successful a company is at fulfilling these expectations (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 208) Naturally, this is not an easy task to fulfil but the author sees it as a way for EG to strengthen the position and stakeholder relationships because a company with a good reputation has a competitive advantage within their industry (Fombrun & Shanley 1990: 235). The reason for this is that a reputation is an intangible asset that adds value to the worth of the company (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 4).

When working with corporate branding, studies have showed how a good reputation can have an impact on long-term credibility and strategic competitiveness (Schultz et al. 2005: 43-44). So as a continuation of the previous part of the analysis, this section will focus on why reputation management is an important aspect to focus on when working on improving EG’s communication.
8.1 Reputation management

According to Doorley and Garcia: “A reputation is a sum of a company’s images which is based on performance and behaviour combined with communication” (2007: 4). If we look closer at these three elements EG has increased their performance by creating a surplus in the latest annual statement (appendix D). This indicates that business has improved and sales have gone up, which supports one of the elements for a good image creation. Secondly, the behaviour of the company is also good in the eyes of the stakeholders. Costas Pliatsikas, stated that EG is a very professional and service minded company (appendix H). Furthermore, Niels Hestbech indicated that the behaviour had changed over the last six months and that he was hopeful (Interview Niels Hestbech 35.43). Ben Silverston concurs to this by saying he thinks that a lot seem to have been improved over the last 18 months (interview Ben Silverston 20.39). These statements support the notion that the wholesalers/retailers have seen improvement in behaviour within the last year.

But in order to create a strong reputation it is not enough, the element of expressive communication is just as big of a factor, because a good reputation is built via perceived authenticity, sincerity and added value derived from communication (Fombrun & van Riel in Schultz et al. 2005: 45).

A positive reputation has a positive effect on a company’s ability to do business. Since reputation is the sum of performance, behaviour and communication it is evident that an effective corporate communication strategy is integrated. Furthermore, it shows how vital it is for EG to maintain and foster relationships with all stakeholders in order to succeed and have a strong reputation (Doorley & Garcia 2007: 22).

This means that it is simply not enough to possess the good behaviour and performance if you do not communicate with your surroundings. Even if EG has the qualities of establishing a good reputation it is difficult to evolve if it is nothing is expressed. As the VCI model shows (model 4, p. 43), reputation is dependent on both internal and external elements of corporate branding in order to be successful. Images are said to be short-term impressions of a company, which can be influenced rather ‘easy’, whereas a reputation is built on long-term impressions and experiences with the company (Fombrun 1996 in de Pelsmacker 2010: 26). This is why a reputation is important because it is one of the few resources of a company that can give sustainable competitive advantage.
This is due to its non-tradable, non-substitutable, non-inimitable and rareness (Barney 1991 in Merrilees & Fry 2002: 214). Therefore, a good reputation can be profitable for EG. However, a reputation is not acquired easily, but rather through socially complex interactions (Merrilees & Fry 2002: 214). Corporate branding is suggested in this case as a tool for reputation building because it can help stakeholders tangibilize the company through meaning transfer (Kotha et al. 2001 in Merrilees & Fry 2002: 215).

Merrilees and Fry set up the notion that the two most important influences on corporate reputation formation is interactivity and trust because a reputation is built on peoples’ admiration, dependability and perception of a company being special (2002: 222). Interactivity is a communication based two-way relationship between company and stakeholder and trust is a key factor in any company’s reputation. This indicates that reputation building is a complex entity because it consists of intangible forces but it can, however, help strengthen the corporate brand via communication initiatives like interaction and relationship building.

8.2 Express yourself
As outlined in the previous analysis EG does not use communication strategically enough. So far what has been communicated are either outdated or sporadically without a coherent sense behind the messages. In order for a good reputation to be build EG needs to be more expressive, clear and consistent and according to Fombrun and van Riel, by being expressive it creates perceptions of transparency and trust in the company, which then creates a stronger more resilient company (2007: 212). Fredrik Gorthon stated during the interview that his external communication today is not working very well and it is not by any means perfect and there should be a lot more information on the way out (interview Fredrik Gorthon1.11.35). He reflected on the fact that he had noticed competitors or friends, within the same industry, who are doing more to interact with their stakeholders and thereby initiates more two-way communication (interview Fredrik Gorthon1.12.03). “We are not there and it is not working as I want it to work” (interview Fredrik Gorthon 1.12.15). This clearly shows that EG is not as expressive as it could be, which according to Doorley and Garcia is a constituting factor for building a good reputation (2007:4).
Bromley outlines three levels of information processing that affects a stakeholder’s impression of a company. These levels are what determine a company’s reputation (2000 in Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 46).

I. Information processing at a primary level (personal experience)

II. Information processing at a secondary level (based on friends/family/colleague have to say about company/product)

III. Information processing at a tertiary level (mass media information)

According to these levels of information processes, the largest influence on reputation takes place at the primary level. However, people do only assimilate a limited amount of direct information and the majority of information that people absorb comes indirectly from the secondary level and tertiary level (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 46).

For the end-consumers, who participated in the online survey, the majority of them declared that they had come to know about EG via the Internet, which could correspond to the primary level. Personal experience is an important factor but it could also mean that they actively went and looked and came across EG. Only 20 percent of the end-consumers had been recommended or heard about EG via friends, colleagues etc. (secondary level) and no one had come to hear about EG via mass media (tertiary level) (appendix E).

For the wholesalers/retailers the scenario looks similar. Ben Silverston searched the Internet himself and found a very old reference to EG and established a contact to Fredrik Gorthon (interview Ben Silverston 2.44). Niels Hestbech took over the contact to EG from the previous company, who did not have the best experience with EG at the time. Despite this fact he maintained the relationship (interview Niels Hestbech 12.15). Costas Pliatsikas knew Fredrik Gorthon from a previous work relationship and created the contact when Fredrik Gorthon started working for EG (appendix H). Here, the level of information process is a mixture of primary and secondary level.

Overall this indicates that a lot of the information that the two stakeholder groups have processed did not come directly from EG. In very few cases EG were recommended by others, who have had previous experience with them.
This does not mean that EG is not perceived well in the eyes of the current stakeholders, though it questions the fact as to whether they have an actual reputation or not. If we understand reputation as a mixture of image and communication then there can be grounds for a reputation amongst the wholesalers/retailers because they have contact with EG. It is another thing when it comes to the end-consumers, since they are not in direct contact with EG. Despite the fact that 90 percent of them said that a purchase made them visit EG’s website only 30 percent are signed up for an online information service (appendix E). Moreover, every end-consumer has been satisfied with the products they have purchased and would recommend EG to others but only 30 percent would consider themselves as being loyal customers (appendix E). It thereby indicates that EG could benefit from communicating more with its stakeholders, especially end-consumers, because good communication helps build relationships (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 211). Companies build strong ties to stakeholders by expressing themselves fully and corporate communication can therefore help EG create appealing images with its stakeholder groups, build a strong corporate brand and develop reputation (Dowling, 1994; van Riel, 1995; Fombrun, 1996; in Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 36).

8.3 Relationship building through communication
One of the main things that have changed in communication is the switch towards more relationship and personalized communication. The purpose of a corporate brand is to personalize the company as a whole in order to create value from the company’s strategic position, organization, activities and product portfolio (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 4). According to Fredrik Gorthon there has not yet been worked strategically with communication and branding causing a shotgun approach which does not create a coherent impression of the company (interview Fredrik Gorthon 50.08). The problem for EG, using a shotgun approach is that people today are more likely to respond and find value in personalized communication (Orzan & Platon 2012: 242). Because Fredrik Gorthon is the only person working at EG he has not had the time or the resources to work more strategically with a branding strategy. Nor has he followed up on the initiatives he has executed to see how they have worked (Interview Fredrik Gorthon 50.25). Despite the obvious time and resource problem it is still important for EG to implement a strategy in order to grow. A strong corporate brand can come from personalizing EG to its stakeholders. This helps create value, which is needed in order for EG to differentiate and create a connection between
themselves and their stakeholders (Sandstrøm 2003: 15). According to Fombrun & van Riel one of the only sources of differentiation for a company consists of the way its products and services are experienced by customers (2007: 107). This supports the notion that in order for EG to foster growth, focus needs to be put on creating value, which can happen if EG focuses more on interacting and listening to their stakeholders and communicating coherent and consistently.

Furthermore, the difficulty when dealing with value creation is that it is an intangible asset. But focusing on building relationships with stakeholders can be a way for EG to create relationship value via integrated strategic communication activities. It can help create competitive advantages from a good image that cannot be copied by competitors in the same way a product can (Ind 1997: 6).

Value creation in companies today is, according to Dooley and Garcia, based on brand equity and reputation, which means that without relationships to the various stakeholders the company will never extract the maximum value of the brand (Dooley & Garcia 2007: 273). Despite being a small company that might not have the same amount of stakeholders, as big international companies, EG can still gain just as much from daily life communication. A small company has the exact same need to establish and develop credible and trustworthy relations to their stakeholders and it contributes in shaping a strong and coherent corporate brand (Sandstrøm 2003: 140).

8.4 Preliminary conclusion
On the grounds of the first part of the analysis the status quo of the internal and external communication situation has been deduced. The author used corporate branding and reputation management to illustrate, to the reader, the focus of the analysis as well as investigating the areas chosen for the purpose of forming a corporate brand.

Conclusive for the first part of the analysis is that EG needs to improve both internal as well as external communication activities in order to better lay the grounds for a corporate brand. Most visibly it was
discovered that EG is too silent in their communication activities and calls for more relationships building and value creation. So, even though there were found more than one possible gap in the VCI model, the focus for the further analysis will be placed on the gap between vision and image. The VCI model (model 13) is made to fit to the current situation at EG and shows the focus areas that will guide the second part of the analysis. However, despite this focus it does not imply that there are no gaps between the other two components. Notice the grey lightnings indicating that there are grounds for gaps, as stated earlier on, however due to the scope of the thesis focus will be put on the areas marked with red. These areas are the ones, assessed by the author, as the most interesting ones to analyse further because they deal with the external communication (image and reputation) as well as part of the internal communication (identity and vision). Furthermore, the author did not assess that there were sufficient cultural information due to lack of empirical data. Moreover, the empirical data revealed external communication issues as well as a lack of stakeholder relationship focus. The focus for the next part will therefore be on the enhancement of stakeholder relationship via value creation online. However, when working with corporate branding the author concurs to the fact that internal and external instances are a dynamic interplay and can never completely be separated.

9.0 Brand equity
We are now turning towards the more operationalized part of the analysis. On the basis of the first part it has been deduced that a focus on value creation and optimizing communication can help answer the research question, as well as give EG some concrete tools. Equity is understood by the author as a set of assets and liabilities that are linked to the brand, that adds to the value that comes from the product or service (Christodoulides 2006:802). The first part focuses on the formation and importance of value between EG and its stakeholders.

9.1 Value is valuable
As we know a brand is an intangible asset. Because it is no longer enough to just have a product or service, companies have become increasingly aware of the importance of creating value around their brand (Keller 2002: XI). Value is nearly impossible to copy and gives more loyal stakeholders because the brand stands out in the mind of the stakeholder due to that extra value.
The author concurs with Erdem and Swait who believes that despite the fact that technology has provided stakeholders with more possibilities and information, there is still an asymmetrical information structure in the market (1998: 131). Said in a different way, the company possesses more information about themselves than their stakeholders do (Fombrun & van Riel 2007: 109). Therefore, it is important to communicate with stakeholders in order to build up and maintain credibility, which according to Erdem and Swait is the main determinant of brand equity (1998:131). Companies know the quality of their products better than their stakeholders and especially for online companies people cannot experience the quality of the products or product credence. Hence, it is vital that EG makes it a priority to create a way for it to credibly inform about the quality of the products (Erdem & Swait 1998: 134). Especially, because building brand equity is a key determinant for competitive success for Internet companies (Christodoulides et al. 2006: 800).

9.2 Espresso Gear equity
For the purpose of investigating the current equity formation at EG a model has been constructed by the author. It is inspired by a model by Erdem and Swait (1998) and Page and Lepkowska-White (2002) both illustrating brand equity. The reason for this combination is that as a combination the model portrays the ‘internal’ aspects of developing equity inspired by Erdem and Swait, meaning the initiatives EG needs to be aware of. These are consistency, clarity, credibility and brand investments. Awareness and image is seen as the external outcome of the internal processes, and are taken from Page and Lepkowska-White’s equity model. Combined, the model is working to gain loyalty. Because both original models have loyalty as an outcome of brand equity the author found it useful, for this case, to combine the two in order to portray a model on how EG can understand the process of creating equity. The author has inserted arrows from clarity and credibility to both awareness and image because both clarity and credibility are components that help create awareness and image. Furthermore, the author sees loyalty as being both influenced by image and awareness but also an influence on these two, which is why the arrow is double sided. In the following, the four components of the internal process as well as the external components and loyalty, will be analysed individually to uncover where there might be inconsistencies. This way it will help deduce the areas that are currently affecting EG’s brand equity building in order to increase the loyalty among stakeholders.
Erdem & Swait have developed the term ‘brand signal’, which is composed of a company’s past and present strategies and activities associated with the brand (1998: 135). A brand signal can be a variety of things, though common for a brand signal is, that it possesses consistency, clarity and credibility in order to diminish ambiguity and make sure that each brand investment reflects the intended corporate brand (Erdem & Swait 1998: 137).

As with any model it has its limitations and can be criticized for not being tested before, as well as being a combination of two models made to fit the authors understanding of what brand equity is. Furthermore, the two perspectives can, in the eyes of others, be too contradictory and focus on two different things within the field of brand equity, making them in a model, limited in use. On the contrary, the scientific belief of this thesis is social constructionism, which means that the understanding of brand equity is based on subjective interpretations from the author. Furthermore, the research design indicates that by being deductive the author is testing already existing theory but find it more valid for the analysis to combine two models in order to try to extend the existing theory to achieve the best result for the case study. This way the model can become a valid tool for this specific case but is not necessarily meant to work as a general tool for building brand equity.
9.3 Consistency
As determined in the first part of the analysis, EG does not communicate consistently enough. Due to the shotgun branding approach, the use of communication is fragmented, which does not help the formation of a corporate brand. Furthermore, the packaging of EG’s products have caused inconsistency in the brand signal because it has been altered several times (interview Ben Silverston 27.41) also causing an inconsistency in the perception of EG. This is most likely caused by a desire to optimise the packaging but by having changed it, it has caused an inconvenience for the wholesalers/retailers instead (Ben Silverston 27.45, Niels Hestbech 8.15). The different types of packaging that are either sent to end-consumers or displayed in a shop contributes to sending unclear signals about EG as a company. Moreover, when the website has been changed 3-4 times and display messages that are contradictory to EG’s operations, this too contributes to the inconsistency. A good way to stay consistent could be the use of a slogan because it delivers a message that can be consistent over time (Erdem & Swait 1998: 137). As discussed in the first part of the analysis EG does not use a consistent slogan and there are doubts among the interviewed as to whether or not they use one. Despite these critic points there is an overall good understanding of the brand attributes from the interviewed wholesalers/retailers which does imply some type of consistency. However, there is a wish for more consistency in the future (Niels Hestbech 09.49).

9.4 Brand investments
In order for a company to establish a strong brand presence it requires invested time and resources. Until now EG has not invested a lot into the build-up of its brand, however, they are part of a two major events associated with the organization called Speciality Coffee Association of Europe (SCAE). EG participates in a trade fair and a competition show each year (Fredrik Gorthon 50.54). This is where EG so far has invested in advertising by being in magazines that are being sent out with the competition. Furthermore, EG has made trophies for the winners of a competition and placed products in a goodie bag (Fredrik Gorthon 51.18, 51.39, 53.51). These investments have let the coffee speciality industry know about EG and are all good ways to create awareness but as Fredrik Gorthon realized during the interview, it might not be enough to only advertise to the professionals of the industry because they are not the ones buying the products (Fredrik Gorthon 54.25).
A different brand investment is the effort Fredrik Gorthon puts into the products being innovative and good quality. Here there seems to be no doubt that this investment has paid off since both the interviewed wholesalers/retailers and the end-consumers agree that EG makes innovative products of good quality (appendix E) (Ben Silverston 29.28, Niels Hestbech 31.09, Costas Pliatsikas appendix H). However, both Fredrik Gorthon and his wholesalers/retailers give indications that there has not been put enough effort into communicating the initiatives as good as there could have been. Ben Silverston suggests better use of social media and more work in language and wording as brand investment possibilities (Ben Silverston 28.15) and Niels Hestbech says that despite improvements over the last six months, he still think EG lives a bit too silently (Niels Hestbech 34.50).

9.5 Clarity
Clarity in the brand equity framework is closely linked to consistency because if a brand signals consistency in all communicative and marketing activities, it will also provide clarity for the stakeholders in regards to the promises the company makes (Erdem & Swait 1998: 138). If there is clarity in the information being distributed by EG it will, according to model 14 (p. 66) provide stakeholders with an indication of EG being trustworthy and credible. These factors are especially important when EG conducts their business online and there might be considered risk involved when purchasing products that cannot be tested beforehand (Erdem & Swait 1998: 138).

When working on creating a strong corporate brand it is vital for a young company, like EG, to work hard to keep up the promises that are being made because this helps to enhance the equity formation (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002:241). As an example, EG wants to deliver innovative products of good quality, which seems to be clear for the stakeholders who took part in the study. However, it then does not contribute to the equity formation when Ben Silverston describes how he has had problems with the quality of the products (Ben Silverston 27.30). The issue of quality of products were only brought up by Ben Silverston, which does not mean it is not true it merely shows how different aspects are valued by the different stakeholders. Furthermore, it shows the importance of feedback as stated earlier in the analysis and this will also be commented on when given future recommendations.
By being clear in all communication activities, also helps support and build up credibility towards a company. Because EG is not yet an established brand, it is important to obtain credibility in the eyes of the stakeholders. Loss of clarity, and thereby credibility does not give stakeholders a reason to be loyal because it provides imperfect and asymmetric information that can cause stakeholder uncertainty about the product attributes (Erdem & Swait 1998: 138). Such a thing as product descriptions can provide a feel of clarity because each product is described on the website in a unanimous tone, which both provides consistency and clarity. This means that the main elements of the corporate brand; visual style, tone of voice, values etc. need to come through the Internet (Ind & Riondino 2001: 12). This also provides wholesalers/retailers with an idea of the tone EG would like to use and even though the product descriptions might be altered to fit the different websites, EG indirectly sends signals stating what their products can offer. As an example Niels Hestbech experienced buying a milk pitcher from EG and this particular pitcher could not be used with the Attento thermometer, which normally is placed on the pitcher to measure temperature. The pitcher was made with a non-stick Teflon surface making it impossible for the thermometer to stick (Niels Hestbech 28.48).

This information was not provided by EG upfront and could have caused loss of credibility if an end-consumer purchased these two products without having been provided with clear information. Furthermore, it can cause a lack of credibility from the wholesaler/retailer who have purchased the products directly from EG without the clear information. Fredrik Gorthon was informed about this during the second interview and did not seem to be aware of this and stated that it was good information and that he should probably call Niels Hestbech (interview Fredrik Gorthon 50.26).

9.6 Credibility
The fourth element deals with the importance of credibility. As the model 14 (p. 66) illustrates, credibility of a company is an important factor when wanting to create loyal stakeholders.

The information that the company expresses needs to be perceived as credible in order for stakeholders to provide loyalty to them, which is why credibility is the most important characteristic (Erdem & Swait 1998: 137).
Because information is asymmetric and imperfect it is extremely important that the information that EG expresses is perceived as truthful and dependable. The reason for the emphasized importance of credibility is that the imperfection and asymmetry of information creates stakeholder uncertainty about product and company attributes (Erdem & Swait 1998: 138). That is why, it is suggested that EG is informative and keep the promises that are being made, especially since EG still is not a fully established brand in the industry (Erdem & Swait 1998: 137). From the interviews and online survey the majority of the respondents indicated that EG is seen as having credibility among the stakeholders. The end-consumers all stated that EG stands for good quality, design and innovation and all of them were satisfied with the products they purchased (appendix E). Also the wholesalers/retailers all gave an indication of EG as being trustworthy. Niels Hestbech stated that even though EG’s products have competitors who they could take in, they do what they can to be loyal to EG and feel like it is their duty (Niels Hestbech 18.20). Ben Silverston concurs by saying that he thinks the branding EG has done so far has been good and in some cases better than his competitors (Ben Silverston 30.45).

To turn back to brand equity formation (model 14, p. 66), it seems that EG is perceived by their wholesalers/retailers as being truthful and for the main part living up to their promises. The few areas that have been pointed out like product quality, website communication and delay on deliveries are areas where the interviewees have seen improvement. They are willing to give EG the benefit of the doubt because they understand the difficulties of being small. EG makes up for it by making products that are different and innovative. On the contrary, despite the fact that the survey showed satisfaction from end-consumers, it is important to state that only a few of them considered themselves to be loyal customers (appendix E). Brand equity is about establishing loyalty in order for people to return and purchase again. It can therefore be questioned whether or not EG creates enough or any value to the end-consumers since very few of them are returning.

9.7 Awareness, image and loyalty in an online setting
According to the brand equity formation model (p. 65) the four elements, should, in a perfect situation, help to create the awareness and image needed to obtain loyalty among stakeholders. Keeping in mind that the information exchanged between company and stakeholder is asymmetric, it underlines the importance for a company to inform people about them. EG only
operates online and due to the mass amount of information online, it is vital to be present and coherent in all communication. Furthermore, it is important to create awareness because customers are more likely to consider a purchase when they know of the brand because they perceive the familiar to be reliable (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 232).

In the online survey 90 percent of the respondents stated that a purchase of EG products had made them visit the website (appendix E). On EG’s website there are possibilities to sign up for a newsletter, Facebook and twitter in order to be kept updated. This can help increase both awareness, image and thereby loyalty (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 232). However, despite the visit to the website only 30 percent were signed up for any kind of online information service (appendix E). Moreover, both Ben Silverston and Niels Hestbech declared the importance of using social media and newsletters as a way to interact and keep stakeholders informed (Ben Silverston 28.17, Niels Hestbech 33.46). But when Ben Silverston was asked he did not know whether or not he was signed up for a newsletter (Ben Silverston 39.47) because he had not received any and Niels Hestbech only subscribed to the newsletter and no other information service (Niels Hestbech 34.31). This supports the argument that there needs to be consistency in the newsletters if this service is what most of the wholesalers/retailers are signed up for in order to receive information.

Page and Lepkowska-White states that for an online company to obtain a positive image it is important that the company provide their visitors with a site that is easy to navigate, reliable and fast (2002: 233). For EG this can be one of the reasons why the end-consumers, so far, do not characterize themselves as loyal. According to Assael brand loyalty is defined as a favourable attitude towards a brand resulting in consistent purchase of the brand over time (1992 in Alwi 2009: 4). This supports the lack of loyalty among end-consumers due to a lack of added value.

During the interview with Ben Silverston he was asked, which services he was signed up for and was unsure whether or not he ascribed to the newsletter (Ben Silverston 39.01). When navigating on the website he could not immediately find the newsletter subscription box, which easily could have happened to more people than him (appendix J,I) This indicates that there might be navigation issues on the website, which can cause fewer people to sign up for the information services. According to Page and Lepkowska-White the experience that stakeholders have with a company’s website strongly determines, not only their opinion of the company, but also their
intentions to visit the site again (2002: 233). The importance of a clearly navigated website will be analysed more thoroughly in the following when we turn to look at online branding.

To complete the explanation of the brand equity formation model (p. 65) one can say that the communication, meaning the initiatives made by EG, should help to create and establish awareness and image and create equity resulting in loyal stakeholders. In order to further investigate aspects of equity formation, we will now look closer into elements of online branding estimated to help create value.

10.0 Online branding
It is believed that when a corporate brand is controlled online, it can have a strong positive effect on brand loyalty (Alwi 2009: 4). It is however important to acknowledge that despite the fact that the Internet has introduced a range of possibilities, it has also brought new demands with it. In order to be a successful online company, it calls for value creation and reputation that helps stakeholders tangibilize the company via meaning transfer, which can happen if the company realizes and utilizes the full potential the Internet offers (Merrilees & Fry 2002: 215).

10.1 Interactivity
One of the most important elements in equity formation is interacting with your stakeholders, especially when there is no physical interaction like when visiting a store (Ind & Riondino 2001: 13). Currently, EG initiates very few ways to interact with stakeholders, which could explain the lack of loyal end-consumers and followers on social media platforms. The Internet is an interactive medium that can facilitate dialogue and over time create strong relationships and a satisfying brand experience, which foster repeat purchase (Neelotpaul 2010: 15). EG has no interactive service on their website since they closed down their blog due to lack of feedback or response from visitors. When Fredrik Gorthon was asked how much he had attempted to encourage dialogue or feedback, via the blog, he said he had not really done that (Fredrik Gorthon 1.10.04). Fredrik does write on the website under ‘about’ that anyone are free to call or email but as a first time visitor you have to look around and the chances that someone will write an actual email is slim because websites need to be easy navigable (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 236).

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7 www.espressogear.com/about
It could be done easier for the visitor by placing a box that said “tell us your opinion”, so people would have the opportunity to leave a comment on the website and not go through the trouble of sending an email. This way EG would invite the visitors to engage directly in interaction as well as indicating clearly that EG listens and value the exchange of meaning. Thereby, a unique and personal exchange between EG and stakeholders would be created (Neelotpaul 2010: 15).

Furthermore, despite the fact that EG have a Facebook and a twitter account it does not encourage much dialogue either. The majority of the posts are uploaded very sporadically and is seen as a static way of sharing information. Often the posts are not accompanied by much text that invites followers to respond or interact (appendix J, II).

Even though EG does not sell products directly to end-consumers it is important for EG to embrace the possibilities for interactivity that are available online because it allows for dialogue and thereby improving the quality of the exchange of communication and information between EG and its stakeholders, creating grounds for stronger relationships (Ind & Riondino 2001: 12). By optimizing the information sharing platforms it can help serve both the wholesalers/retailers with useful information as well as the end-consumers. It is however necessary to underline the importance of dedicating yourself to interactivity because it needs to be coherent and consistent. If not, it can cause loss of credibility instead of added value.

10.2 Online presence

10.2.1 Website
For EG the website is the primary way to communicate their brand online. The website functions as a brochure, a store and a sales person, and is expected to provide the visitor with up-to-date information as well as a clear indication of who the company is (Neelotpaul 2010: 13). To refer to the brand equity formation model (model 14, p. 66), a website can help create the consistency, clarity and credibility needed in order to build value around EG’s corporate brand. Currently, EG’s website is mainly working as a display window, which provides an overview of products and some company information. An essential thing when operating only via a website is for it to be easy to navigate and clear (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 233). The overall functional value of the website is present. The layout is consistent with the logo figuring on every page. However, there
are a few points that are affecting the consistency of the website such as spelling mistakes and outdated information. Research conducted by Cognitiative (1999) found that outdated information (on a website) is a primary factor of site defection and lost business (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 237). This might be taking it to the extreme but nevertheless it supports the argument that when people visit EG’s website they might attribute less credibility due to these facts. Furthermore, it undermines the value of providing quality since it should not only count for the products. Quality should be present in all areas of the company. EG’s website can act as more than just a product brochure and be the means to create awareness by also using their website to share information that have been written about them by a third party (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 235). By directing visitors to what others have written about EG can help increase the credibility and thereby also image and awareness (model 14, p. 66) because it is seen as more reliable coming from a third party (Ind & Riondino 2001: 14).

Another issue is the matter of clearly displaying other information services to visitors. As previously mentioned the online survey showed that 90 percent of the end-consumers had visited EG’s website after a purchase, however only 30 percent were signed up for information services (appendix E). One reason for this could be that it is not clear enough what services EG provide because the Facebook, twitter and newsletter symbols are placed far down on the left side in very small writing and it does not contribute to provide easy navigation and clarity (appendix J,I). By placing the icons better it could possibly increase visitors signing up because they do not have to look for it. Page and Lepkowska-White concurs by stating that a study conducted by Cognitiative (1999) found ease of site navigation to be the stakeholders number one reason for liking and being loyal to an online company (2002: 237). What is mainly the problem with the ‘brochure ware’ website is that it often is very static and often do not capture the potential benefit offered by the Internet, particularly in terms of interactivity (Christodoulides 2009: 141).

Fombrun and van Riel explain how it is important to use the company website to tell a story about the company in order to make it clear who the company is. By making consistent use of a logo and overall visual coherence is also a strategic way to enhance the platform on which the company creates its reputation.
10.2.2 Social media
An estimated number of 1.2 billion people are using Social Media applications and nearly 20 percent of overall time spent online is spent on social networking sites (Orzan & Platon 2012: 238). This further supports the argument that EG should do more in order to optimize their online presence.

For a company a way to interact with stakeholders is via social media. Here, there is the possibility to customize information to stakeholders. This is why many companies today realize the importance of not only having a website but to increase their online presence (Orzan & Platon 2012: 236). In the words of American research firm MarketingSherpa: “Social Media moved from the notion of novelty to the one of necessity, and it should be perceived as an integrated element of the business communication strategy” (Orzan & Platon 2012: 236).

Since EG is present in a variety of countries and therefore distributes their products globally, social media is a great way to gather stakeholders and interact with them. EG is present online via a Facebook profile, a twitter account and their website. According to Fredrik Gorthon, EG has a Facebook page but do not use it that much (Fredrik Gorthon 1.15.03) and the twitter account was used more in the beginning but the same thing happened as with the Facebook page (Fredrik Gorthon 1.15.50). The problem by not maintaining the social media platforms is that if they lack consistency in information sharing and interaction this can lead to loss of interest and credibility among followers (Orzan & Platon 2012: 237). The social media platforms are a great way to increase awareness and guide users to other information aspects like a website or newsletter subscription. Emphasis should be put more on the branded experience that can happen online. Brands that equate their products with an interactive experience like associations or feelings will likely be more effective than brands based on facts about a product (Neelotpaul 2010: 14).

This can happen via social media platforms but it also requires an effort in order to catch people’s attention. More original and engaging content could be a solution and in social networks, this solution is extremely convenient and easy to implement (Orzan & Platon 2012: 242).
10.3 Preliminary conclusion
The Internet has brought great potential to the concept of branding and communicating. Compared to ten years ago the communication possibilities have grown and new ways for interacting and building relationships between a company and its stakeholders have risen.

EG is a small online company that, as any other company, desires to grow bigger. Throughout the analysis the author has uncovered a number of internal and external factors that are influencing the corporate brand building potential. It was uncovered that EG need to focus more on communication strategies and optimize the communication service availability, in order to build value via interaction and relationship building with stakeholders. It is important that EG realises that the Internet is more than just another communication channel. It is a distribution and communication channel that facilitates interaction, community building, openness and trust and has the potential to alter the relationship between a brand and its users (Ind & Riondino 2001: 18).

11.0 Future recommendations
We now turn to the author’s recommendations for EG on the grounds of the findings in the analysis. The analysis was set of with a thorough investigation into the elements of identity, vision, culture, image and lastly reputation. This was done to introduce the reader to the components of corporate branding as well as look into these elements at EG. This was decided on because the author believes that EG could benefit more from communicating as a corporate brand than as individual product brands.

As described earlier, EG has so far never used communication in a strategic manner and it has been very fragmented. The author set out to investigate how EG could increase the brand by using corporate branding elements and thereby streamlining the communication online. On the grounds of the first part of the analysis it was found that the focus for the second part should be on how EG could increase the value formation with their stakeholders, in order to increase the relationships with them. Moreover, the importance of focusing more on the online information channels was investigated because it is ways that can help create the building blocks for a good corporate brand.
11.1 Give more to get more..
Throughout the analysis the importance of engaging in dialogue was stressed several times. It is vital for the dynamics of identity to listen to what your stakeholders have to say about you. Furthermore, this is what helps build up a solid reputation which is an important asset in today’s world where a reputation can be the thing that distinguishes one company from another.

During the different interviews it became clear that EG, so far, has spent no time collecting feedback from any of their stakeholders. During the last interview with Fredrik Gorthon, this was brought up and he realized that the only way he so far had communicated with his wholesalers/retailers was when they contacted him regarding an issue. Otherwise, the only other communication was the standard order of products. Furthermore, he stated that he had never followed up on delivery satisfactions (interview Fredrik Gorthon 2, 47.24). Requesting feedback from direct customers is extremely important because it can provide EG with valuable information about concerns or issues the different wholesalers/retailers might have (Hatch & Schultz 2008: 81). Moreover, it contributes to build a stronger relationship because Fredrik Gorthon shows that EG is interested in listening to what the stakeholders have to say. Despite the fact that the wholesalers/retailers who were interviewed showed a satisfaction with EG they did raise concerns when asked about issues Fredrik Gorthon had no knowledge about. Due to a lack of requesting feedback EG has been missing out on information that could help increase the service and products and thereby the relationships. One way to do so could be via a biannual or yearly survey that can be sent out to all EG’s direct customers, the wholesalers/retailers. This way it is done at a specific time, every time, which shows consistency, clarity and investment in the brand, all elements to help create equity. However, it could be difficult initially to get everyone to answer a survey because, as the author also experienced, everyone is very busy. On the other hand, the wholesalers/retailers do have an already established contact with Fredrik Gorthon, which could help them feel more loyal towards giving feedback. Moreover, the concerns that Ben Silverston and Niels Hestbech raised did not appear to be something they would not comment to Fredrik Gorthon, if he would have asked for feedback. Furthermore, feedback can help to provide Fredrik Gorthon with indications on what new products his wholesalers/retailers might feel like they are missing. It can lead to insight and inspiration, as well as showing that EG takes opinions or suggestions from the stakeholders.
To provide EG with an example as to how such a feedback scheme could look like, the author has provided a guide from Adam Jolly (2001) on how to measure reputation. The survey is first based on six general reputation drivers by Charles Fombrun, the next one deal with sector specific reputation drivers and the last one reputation drivers specific for the company (appendix K). This works only as an example but the author found it useful because it helps measure a reputation as well as provides EG with clear feedback on how the performance of the company is seen from the outside. Either way, EG is highly recommended to start engaging more in dialogue with their direct customers in order to receive feedback, which can come from both wholesalers/retailers but also indirectly from end consumers.

11.2 Even the smallest thing makes a difference..
Besides initiating more dialogue between EG and its wholesalers/retailers it is just as important to start focusing on the end-consumers. Despite the fact that EG does not sell directly to the end users of the products the author strongly believes EG can benefit more from trying to create a relation between them. Fredrik Gorthon stated that some wholesalers base their purchases on what their end-consumers tell them they want (interview Fredrik Gorthon 55.48). This alone is a reason for starting to focus on how to create brand awareness amongst this group via the online channels.

Up until now Fredrik Gorthon has made few attempts to try to get EG’s followers to interact more via Facebook or twitter. Especially Facebook offers many possibilities for EG to create a space where interaction can occur. Because EG is still rather small and needs to raise awareness one possibility could be to create a competition on Facebook where the winner enters the competition by liking EG’s Facebook page as well as shares the competition on their wall. This way it can help generate more buzz and awareness because the people who are already fans of EG are coffee enthusiasts and most likely have similar friends on Facebook. EG could request a so-called Facebook badge, which is a service that shows the visitor of EG’s website who of their current Facebook friends are already signed up to follow EG. This can assist in creating word of mouth, which is considered to be a very powerful non-market communication tool (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 235). Furthermore, people who are unfamiliar with a company will often times trust a
third party recommending or referring them to a website or Facebook page over the company itself (Page & Lepkowska-White 2002: 235).

Another important information service that needs to be maintained better is the newsletter. Both Niels Hestbech and Ben Silverston mentioned the newsletters as a good way for them to receive information and the latest news. However, Fredrik Gorthon explained that there has been no consistency in the newsletters being sent out and the author also subscribed to the newsletter and has not received one yet. EG could improve greatly by deciding on how many times a year the newsletter should go out and then being consistent in doing so. When people sign up for the newsletter service they can be informed that the newsletters go out, for example, four times a year and the next issue comes out in 1 month. This way EG is informative and clear in the communication which provides the receiver with better information than if they sign up and never receive anything. This can instead lead to loss of trust and credibility enabling the possibility for reputation building.

11.3 If you keep quiet how do you expect people to know you?
As clarified in the analysis, one of the reasons why EG is not clear in the communication and branding, is unclear understanding of who EG is and who they want to be. This was mainly found due to a lack of reflection and time spent by Fredrik Gorthon on this matter. Everyone who took part in the survey and interviews understood the characteristics of EG being innovation, design and good quality. However, very few of the end-consumers would consider themselves as loyal and there were very few who had returned or started subscribing to an information service. If Fredrik Gorthon would invest some time in reflecting on how he would like EG to be perceived, it could help to tighten up the information on the website, helping to send a more clear identity message. The website is the only way, besides social media platforms, to get to know EG and it should be welcoming and easy to navigate. There is also the issue of trying to attract visitors to the website, in order for them to sign up for information services, when they buy an EG product. A way to offer an extra service and thereby provide the user with a feeling of added value is by placing an information inside the packaging of a product offering them to visit the EG website where they can find videos on how to maximise the use of this specific product. This can help

8 http://www.espressogear.com/guides-i-55.aspx
draw visitors to the website, while providing the end-consumer with the feeling that EG offers an added service besides the product itself.

11.4 Can this really work?
The eternal question is then, can this really work? Unfortunately, the answer for this is not a simple yes or no. The author believes that a more strategic approach to communication and branding can indeed assist EG in improving their current brand reputation. However, it requires time invested in order for it to take off and this is where the essential problem lies. Managing a one-man company is hard work and it is only natural that it is difficult to divide the time. EG has grown over the last year, which has created more workload on Fredrik Gorthon, causing him to neglect external communication (interview Fredrik Gorthon 1.11.34). However, the author believes that despite the lack of manpower there are still initiatives Fredrik Gorthon can implement in EG to try to streamline the communication and create better relationships with stakeholders.

By moving towards a more corporate branding strategy EG can start out with better maintaining the direct relationships with the wholesalers/retailers. This can be done by becoming better at requesting feedback which also, indirectly, can provide Fredrik Gorthon with a feel of the end-consumers’ preferences.

Moreover, the author believes it is important that EG now initiates regular newsletters because they provide information about the company and latest news. This can be a start to work with a more corporate branding approach because a main focus is to create long-term relationships with stakeholders. It is important for the reader to understand that even though the author believes EG can benefit more from a corporate branding approach, it does not mean that the universal recipe has been given here. Corporate branding is a complex and dynamic approach to branding and EG has just laid the grounds for the beginning. As the corporate branding life cycle shows (model 12, p. 56) EG is placed in the first cycle and it takes time and effort to move to the second one. The corporate branding life cycle can be seen as a visual aid to help monitor where EG should place focus now and in the future. The author does see the possibilities for EG to improve, if the initiatives recommended will slowly be integrated. It is believed that despite being a young company with many aspects needing attention, it is vital that the intangible assets of corporate branding will gradually be integrated because the author believes it is just as important to attend
to this, since it can help increase the knowledge of the company, which can lead to value formation and relationship building giving EG an advantage in the market.

However, corporate branding is a dynamic process and there will never be a finish line because it is a constant evolvement of reflecting and reinterpreting the brand EG. This can only be done if Fredrik Gorthon makes a commitment to focus on branding and integrated communication on a more strategic level. The author, furthermore, believes that in order for EG to implement more initiatives it requires another person to the company. This can divide the focus areas between two and give more consistency to the initiatives EG makes. It is vital that EG does not set out initiatives to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, unless they can handle the responsibilities that come with it. If this is not the case right now the author would recommend waiting, especially with engaging end-consumers until Fredrik Gorthon has extra manpower. Even though it might slow down the corporate branding process, the author believes, it is better than doing something halfway. It can instead harm the brand and EG’s reputation because of loss of credibility. Conclusively, the author do believe it is possible for EG to create a corporate brand and create more value for the stakeholders, if Fredrik Gorthon initiates the recommendations. However, it is a difficult task and will take time but by doing so, the author strongly believes, that they can become a stronger player in the coffee specialty market.
12.0 Methodical reflections
The universe in which the thesis has been written is rather small and therefore leads to conclusions that are based on empirical data that are somewhat restricted. This is due to the fact that EG is a young company, who currently operates in the small. Furthermore, the author began this case study with the intention to gather more data but was faced with the difficulty of reaching wholesalers and retailers because they were very busy or not interested. Some of them even had other jobs and worked in the coffee speciality industry as a side business. The intention was to have a broader set of interviews with this stakeholder group because they are the ones who are in direct contact with Fredrik Gorthon and could therefore shed a light on the interaction and communication. However, it was only possible to gather two semi-structured interviews and one email interview. In terms of the end-consumers the findings were all gathered from an online survey, which only provides static answers to the questions asked. Despite the fact that the author provided an elaboration box after each question, it led to more or less no complementary answers. In an ideal situation, it would have been more fruitful to have interviews with the end-consumers, since they could have provided a more nuanced set of answers from an interview than a survey. Overall it could have been interesting to interview more wholesalers/retailers and end-consumers because it could have led to more diverse data, creating a stronger ground for the conclusions.

Because EG conducts their business globally it made it difficult to personally interview the participating parties. Despite the fact that the online survey and the interviews via Skype allowed for a diverse group of respondents it also prohibited from face to face interviews. It could have deduced a stronger outcome since the author would have been able to also interpret body language and facial expressions.

A possible way to try to retrieve more information from the empirical data could have been via the use of semiotics or discourse analysis. A semiotic approach could provide a deeper analysis of the signs and symbols from the data because it would include an investigation into the actual use of wording. Moreover a discourse analysis could investigate the topics or the social frame that appeared in the empirical data and uncover the use of language. However, due to space restrictions in the thesis it was not possible to carry out.
The author hereby recognizes the conclusive limitations the empirical data has provide and has tried, to the extent possible, to use triangulation in order to validate the data. However, being as it is a case study the wish for a bigger amount of data was present and has restricted the validity of the findings and conclusions.
13.0 Discussion
In this section of the thesis the findings and actual achievement of the research question will be discussed.

The research question the thesis has sought to answer was: “How can elements from corporate branding be applied to the one-man company Espresso Gear via optimized online communication and increased stakeholder value in order to foster a stronger brand position”?

The findings indicated that elements from corporate branding could be useful as a tool for EG to focus more on communicating and branding as a company and not solely on products. The VCI model provided useful insight into the internal as well as external communication aspects of EG and the relations to the stakeholders. However, due to the limited amount of internal data it did not provide the same amount of information as initially hoped. The findings further indicated that there indeed are room for improvements both in regards to external communication and stakeholder dialogue but that in order for it to be properly implemented Fredrik Gorthon cannot do all himself. This limits the extent of the possibilities and thereby the answering of the research question because EG will, for now, continue to be a one-man company. It is therefore seen as possible for EG to use elements from corporate branding, in order to better understand the integration and optimization that is needed to become a stronger brand within the coffee speciality market. However, until Fredrik Gorthon has an extra set of hands it does not seem possible that all the suggested recommendations can be implemented.

In terms of the analytical framework, selected to assist in answering the research question, it could be interesting to test its more generalizable function for other young companies. It could be argued that the framework of VCI and reputation might be tools that have restrictions when it is used on a one-man company because the theory often entails companies with bigger organizational structures that are part of corporate branding and reputation formation. The VCI model equally covers the internal and external parts of a company and states that is what constructs a corporate brand. When working with a one-man company some of the internal structures and paradoxes within identity and culture that occur in bigger companies might not, yet, be present enough to properly examine with the VCI model. Corporate branding entails a cross disciplinary function within a company because it includes many different communicational
aspects of a company which EG does not have and can cause a limitation to the maximal use of the theory. Moreover, the theory on reputation could have been more extensively used if EG would have had a stronger reputation to investigate. Most of the theory on reputation does concern management of an existing reputation, whereas for this case, the importance of building a reputation is analysed. Furthermore, very little of the theory used has been stated as being used for smaller companies like the one in the thesis, which can make the theory, in some cases, to ‘big’ to fit the smaller areas that are present in a company with one employer.

However, the Corporate Branding Life Cycle did provide an overview of the cycles a company goes through which supports EG being in the first stage of the cycles.

Discussions can also be made in regards to the equity formation model constructed by the author. Seeing as it is a model combined by two different models, on how to create equity it would be interesting to test the model on more than just the specific case study, in order to test the general usability. Because the model has been constructed to best assist the author in how to create equity it can be argued that it is limited to the use of the specific case. Thereby, it limits the generalizable use because it is a model that has not been tested besides for this thesis. Because of the limited data it could be fruitful to test the use of the model on cases with more empirical data.

Due to the limited empirical data it can also be argued that the theoretical framework for the analysis has not been tested to its full potential and it could be interesting to further test the validity of the framework on other similar cases, in order to better determine the functionality. It would therefore be interesting, in the future, to investigate the generalizability of the theoretical framework.
14.0 Conclusion
The thesis has sought to investigate “how elements of corporate branding can be applied to the one-man company Espresso Gear via optimized online communication and increased stakeholder value in order to foster a stronger brand position”.

In order to best answer the research question the author has used theory from disciplines of corporate branding, reputation management, brand equity and online branding. Via corporate branding it was deduced that EG mainly struggles with difficulties in defining a clear identity and vision, causing the lack of clear and consistent external communication, restricting image and reputation building. For this purpose the Corporate Branding Tool Kit by Majken Schultz and Mary Jo Hatch was applied, both as an analytical tool but also to assist in uncovering the areas that needed further focus. The Corporate Branding Life Cycle illustrated that EG is in the first cycle in creating a corporate brand and focus needs to be put on internal reflection, as well as building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders. For this purpose brand equity came into play by constructing a model to help analyse and portray the key factors that are at present, when wanting to create added value, in order to obtain loyal customers. Because EG is operating online the use of website and social media were analysed with focus on interacting with stakeholders.

It was concluded that EG does very little to engage the stakeholders in dialogue and that restricts, especially the end-consumers, in feeling a sense of loyalty towards EG and the products. Furthermore, very little proactive communication comes from Fredrik Gorthon towards his wholesalers/retailers, causing issues like products quality and customer satisfaction to never reach EG. Moreover, the navigation ease and overall function of website and social media platforms are not attended to enough. Seeing as these are where stakeholders most often have encounters with EG more should be done to increase consistency and clarity. Based on the findings in the analysis the author suggested recommendations such as feedback surveys to wholesalers/retailers, competitions via the Facebook page, including information in product packaging to inform about product usage videos on the website, to provide an extra service and optimizing the website layout to clarify the information services that are available.

If EG chooses to follow the suggested recommendations it is believed that it can assist in increasing the awareness and brand position. However, limited amount of empirical data has
affected the possible validity of the conclusion because of the restricted diversity of data. Nevertheless, the research question is still answered, to a certain degree, because it proved viable to apply elements from corporate branding on to EG. What could be interesting to do further on would be to gather a broader set of empirical data to verify the validity of the conclusions as well as test the general use of the theoretical framework.
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16.1 Appendix A – Company presentation
KITCHEN GEAR

ESPRESSO GEAR

Stainless Steel Pitchers | Cupping Spoons | Coffee Cups
Plates | Drinking Glasses | Utensils | etc.
We produce gear for the espresso industry.
what is gear?

"non-machinery equipment used to prepare coffeedrinks"

let me explain
product portfolio

to understand our core product, you need to understand "tamping"

tamp (tmp)
tr.v. tamped, tamp-ing, tamps
1. To pack down tightly by a succession of blows or taps.
2. To pack clay, sand, or dirt into (a drill hole) above an explosive
BARISTA TAMPER | LUCE TAMPER | PRIMO TAMPER
ATTENTO THERMOMETER | KNOCKBOX | CLICKMAT™ | TAMPERMAT
BARISTA TAMPER | LUCE TAMPER | PRIMO TAMPER
ATTENTO THERMOMETER | KNOCKBOX | CLICKMAT™ | TAMPERMAT
Business idea

Att uppföra, designa, producera, och sälja köksverktyg som sticker ut från mängden. Fokus är på espresso utrustning som används vid produktion av espressorelaterade drycker genom privata samt professionella baristor. Kunder är i första hand distributörer och butiker av köksutrustning i hela världen.

and more

LASER ENGRAVING, PITCHERS ETC.
Mission Statement

Företagets vision är att vara en av de ledande producenterna av espressotillbehör i världen vid 2015. 2020 skall Espresso Gear AB även vara en välkänd aktör inom produktion av köksutrustning.
Today

- Omsättning: 500'000 SEK (avser period 2009)
- Varav export: 425'000 SEK
- Antal anställda: 1 st
- Grundades: 2007
- Organisationsnr: 556729-8624
- Postadress: Bildalsvägen 2
  S-436 55, Hoffás
  Sweden
- E-post: fredrik@espressogear.com
- Webbsida: www.espressogear.com
- Åtgär: Fredrik Gorthon 70%
  Lars Wallin 10%
  Göran Holmberg 10%
  Lars Borchardt 10%

Core values

Humor
Kvalitet
Hållbar Utveckling
Smarta lösningar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mål</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>500 000</td>
<td>1,5 milj</td>
<td>5 milj</td>
<td>10 milj</td>
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<tr>
<td>Export Trade</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>95 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigating new markets</td>
<td>2st</td>
<td>10st</td>
<td>20st</td>
<td>30st</td>
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<tr>
<td>News</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kitchen Gear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Egenskaper</td>
<td>Fördelar</td>
<td>Nytta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>vackra</td>
<td>köpbegär</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skiljer sig från konkurrenter</td>
<td>roligare att äga än en generisk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>igenkännning</td>
<td>lått att se att det är Espresso Gear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kvalitet</td>
<td>Häller längre</td>
<td>Behöver inte stänga och köpa ny</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>billigare i långden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monterbar</td>
<td>Passar alla storlekar på händer</td>
<td>tjeger som killar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flera storlekar</td>
<td>Passar alla maskiner på marknaden</td>
<td>även udda maskiner</td>
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</tr>
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### Timeplan

**wholesalers requirements**

Företagets krav på den prioriterade partnern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr</th>
<th>Partnerkrav</th>
<th>Skall</th>
<th>Bör</th>
<th>Önskvärt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Seriositet</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Andra varumärken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Täckning (hur många befintliga kunder)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Personkemi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Motivation och mål</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ej konkurrerande produkter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Finansiellt välutrustad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Viktiga urvalsfaktorer för varje ny marknad (makro-nivå) är:

- Dricker dom Espresso Kaffe?
- Säljs det Espresso maskiner
- Café marknaden mogen (vilken fas)
- Finns distributörer?
16.2 Appendix B – Correspondence
Appendix B I – Email correspondence, Fredrik Gorthon

fredrik (fredrik@espressogear.com)Add to contacts 9/4/2012
To: maria johansen
Hi Maria,

Thank you once again for your mail.

I am honored that find Espresso Gear worth looking in to.

As you probably already know, we are still a small company with only one employee (me) and an annual turnover of approx. 1 mil. SKR.

However, we are expanding and just double our last years numbers. There are many angles and issues that could be looked upon, and I will greatly appreciate any potential recommendations and thought that you would arrive at if you choose to continue with our company. If I would think of any challenges that we face and that would be interesting to get a outsiders opinion about it would be; International sales, (What buyers to focus on? Price concept? Geography etc.) but also branding and marketing strategy that today we use with a shotgun approach, all over the place.

Off course there are more areas that we could look at, after discussion.

Time is valuable, when working alone. However, I will do my outmost to accommodate you and whatever you need. E-mail, skype and person to person meetings are fine with me.

In short, If you feel you are honestly interested in Espresso Gear as you thesis project, I will be happy to accept you and looking forward to cooperate.

Sincerely,
Fredrik

Fredrik Gorthon: Managing Director at ESPRESSO GEAR
contact | fredrik@espressogear.com - +46 707 68 68 86
| Blog | Newsletter | Facebook | Twitter
16.3 Appendix C – Interview guides
C I – Fredrik Gorthon, 1.

1. Introduction to the thesis

2. Introduction
   - Position in company
   - Background
   - Company presentation

3. Organisation
   - Stakeholders
   - Expectation from stakeholders
   - Interaction with stakeholders
   - Client variation
   - Core product
   - USP
   - Current values and vision
   - Slogan

4. Strategy
   - How new clients are retained
   - Current branding strategy
   - Financial means for strategical recommendations

5. Communication
   - Value chain communication
   - Brand communication
   - Shareholder communication
   - Advertisement
   - Information types when purchasing products
   - Interaction via website
   - External communication
   - Social media
   - Newsletter

C II – Fredrik Gorthon, 2.

1. Presentation of analysis area
   - Corporate branding
- Reputation

2. Presentation of key focus
   - Value creation
   - Interactivity
   - Relationship

3. Recommendations
   - Feedback
   - Information services
   - Packaging information

C III – Wholesaler/retailer

1. Introduction to the thesis

2. Demographic question,
   - Wholesaler or retailer?
   - Where are you located?

3. Espresso Gear
   - Work relationship with Espresso Gear
   - Product purchase
   - Describe Espresso Gear in a few words
   - What products are sold
   - Which are the key products
   - Product satisfaction
   - Product information
   - Packaging

4. Communication
   - How was contact established the first time
   - How is contact maintained
   - Feedback possibilities
   - What online media platforms are used to follow Espresso Gear
Årsredovisning
Espresso Gear AB
566729-8824
Räkenskapsåret
2011-05-01 – 2012-04-30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekonomisk översikt</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resultaträkning</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balansräkning</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stålda säkerheter och ansvarsförbindelser</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redovisningsprinciper</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noter</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underskrifter</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Undertecknad styrelseledarnot inrymmer, tills att dessa
kopia av årsredovisningen och balansräkningen
försedd med på en besked om 10 oktober 2014.
Ekonominisk översikt

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<td>31 530</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>27</td>
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Dispositioner beträffande vinst

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<tr>
<td>Balanserat resultat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Årets resultat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Totalt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disponeras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanseras i ny räkning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summa</td>
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Vad beträffar företagets resultat och ställning i övrigt, hänvisas till följande resultater och utredningsresultat med tillhörande bildlutskommmentarer.
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<td>-170 493</td>
<td>-416 669</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-378 980</td>
<td>-69 443</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Personalkostnader</td>
<td>-73 743</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Övriga rörelsekrav</td>
<td>-23 411</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rörelseresultat</td>
<td>191 533</td>
<td>-1 985</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resultat efter finansiella poster</td>
<td>193 581</td>
<td>-21 443</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Bokslutsdispositioner</td>
<td>-49 000</td>
<td>15 093</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Resultat före skatt</td>
<td>142 581</td>
<td>-6 347</td>
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<td>-9 347</td>
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<td>201 835</td>
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<td>480 353</td>
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<td>bundet egent kapital</td>
<td>125 000</td>
<td>125 000</td>
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<td>övriga långfristiga skulder</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>leveransförbindelser</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Noter

Not 1
Löner, ersättningar och sociala kostnader
Balans i kr  Not 2011-05-01 - 2010-05-01 - 2010-04-30
Löner och ersättningar
Lön till verkställande direktör  40 300 - -
Totala löner och ersättningar  40 300 - -
Sociala kostnader
Pensionskostnader för verkställande direktör  14 330 - -
Övriga sociala kostnader  12 560 - -
Totala sociala kostnader  26 890 - -

Not 2
Bokslutsdispositioner
Balans i kr  Not 2011-05-01 - 2010-05-01 - 2010-04-30
Förändring av periodiseringsfond
Avsättning till periodiseringsfond  -48 900  -48 900  15 093
Uppgång av periodiseringsfond  -48 900  -48 900  15 093

Not 3
Eget kapital
Balans i kr  Aktiakapital  Reservfond  Fritt eget kapital
Balans vid årets början  125 000  0  257 595
Årets resultat  104 596  104 596
Vid årets slut  125 000  0  362 591

Not 4
Periodiseringsfonder
Balans i kr  Not 2011-05-01 - 2010-05-01 - 2010-04-30
Periodiseringsfond, avsatt vid taxeringen 2013  48 000 - -
Summa  48 000 - -
Underskrifter

Göteborg 2012-10-10

Göran Holmberg
Styrelseordförande

Fredrik Gathon
Verkställande direktör

Lena Wallin
Styrelsemedlem

Ole Jakob Chou
Styrelsemedlem
16.5 Appendix E – Online survey

Demographic information (insert your email if you wish to be part of the competition to win a product from Espresso Gear AB (Sweden))

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company or private person:</td>
<td>Expand 100% 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address 1:</td>
<td>0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address 2:</td>
<td>0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/Town:</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country:</td>
<td>100% 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Showing 10 responses

Sweden 2/10/2013 10:21 AM View respondent’s answers
Australia 2/10/2013 1:19 PM View respondent’s answers
Australia 26/2013 4:54 AM View respondent’s answers
Australia 25/2013 2:17 PM View respondent’s answers
England 1/9/2013 11:50 AM View respondent’s answers
SWEDEN 2/9/2013 1:40 PM View respondent’s answers
Sweden 2/9/2013 2:21 PM View respondent’s answers

Email Address: Expand 100% 10
Phone Number: 0% 0
Total Respondents: 10
How did you come to know about Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) and their products?

Answered: 10   Skipped: 0

- **Via the Internet (search, blogs, forums)** - 86% (8 responses)
- **Recommendation (word of mouth, friends, business partners)** - 20% (2 responses)
- **From my retailer** - 0% (0 responses)
- **Advertisement (magazines, billboards, fairs)** - 0% (0 responses)

**Total** - 10 responses

Other (please specify) (0)
What information is important for you to have in order to decide on purchasing a product from Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) or competitors?

Responses (10)

Categorize as...  Filter by Category  Search responses

Showing 10 responses

Good pictures, full information about the product.
2/19/2013 10:21 AM   View respondent's answers

Good Product I cannot find anywhere but from your store.
2/19/2013 1:19 PM   View respondent's answers

Shipping cost!
2/6/2013 4:54 AM   View respondent's answers

How good the product is and the cost factor
2/5/2013 2:17 PM   View respondent's answers

Reviews from customers
1/30/2013 11:50 AM   View respondent's answers

Both text info and pictures.
1/29/2013 2:49 PM   View respondent's answers

What minimum amount that needs to be purchased in order for the order to be accepted.
1/29/2013 2:21 PM   View respondent's answers

Fill a niche not catered to by others; eg. attento thermometer
1/29/2013 12:04 PM   View respondent's answers

A good description on the product and how it can help me in my work if I purchase the item!
1/29/2013 11:07 AM   View respondent's answers
How would you define your relationship to Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) and their products?

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyal customer (purchases more or less only Espresso Gear AB products)</td>
<td>30%  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional customer (purchases every once in a while)</td>
<td>30%  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One time customer (only purchased one time)</td>
<td>40%  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How satisfied have you been with your Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) products?

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you think the products purchased from Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) have provided you with sufficient information about the products and company?

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, please elaborate further</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, please elaborate further</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have a purchase of Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) products made you visit their website?

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Which of the following online services are you signed up for provided by Espresso Gear AB (Sweden)?

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 10
Would you recommend Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) products to others?

Answered: 9  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, please elaborate further</td>
<td>100% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, please elaborate further</td>
<td>0% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0% 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify) (3) Hide

Professional looking, sleek, well made.
1/30/2013 11:59 AM  View respondent's answers

Attento thermometer
1/29/2013 12:04 PM  View respondent's answers

Test
1/29/2013 10:52 AM  View respondent's answers
Which of the following would you say characterizes Espresso Gear AB (Sweden) and their products? Please feel free to answer more than one.

Answered: 10  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good quality</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair price</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique products</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 10
16.6 Appendix F – Cobweb exercise
16.7 Appendix G – Packaging

GI – Slogan on packaging
G II – Packaging
16.8 Appendix H – Email interview Costas Pliatsikas

1. Introduce yourself (retailer, wholesaler, name etc.)

My name is Costas Pliatsikas. (Barista of the year 2007 and Latte Art Champion 2006). 36years old. Live in Umea-Sweden with my wife and 2 boys. I am an importer and coffee roaster but i am also working as barista(part time). Have been working with coffee for over 20 years.

Together with my wife Linda I own Costas Roastery in Umea-Sweden.

And also Costas Reastaurang and Cafe in Umea-Sweden.

2. How and when did your work relationship to Espresso Gear begin?

I know Fredrik since 2004. We have been working with the Beige project together. He is a fantastic guy!! So when he got in Espresso Gear i have been in contact with each other.

3. How do you communicate with Espresso Gear (email, telephone, Skype etc.)?

Email and telephone.

4. How often are you in contact with Espresso Gear?

The last couple of month approx. 1to2 times per month.

5. How would you describe the company Espresso Gear in a few words?

Good proffessionals, fantastic range of products with some very unique items, service minded and serious!

6. What would you say it takes for a product to sell well?

It should be unique as product or as design(if possible) with right or ,if possible , higher value for what it costs.
Availability.
Strong trademark.

7. Have you all in all been satisfied with the products from Espresso Gear?

Yes! Almost 100%

8. Are you currently signed up for their Facebook page or newsletter, why/why not?

Yes, both i think. Is a very effective way of getting updated with whats happening in Espreeso Gear.
### 16.9 Appendix I – Corporate Branding Life Cycles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Problems</strong></td>
<td>Fragmented company-wide brand expression.</td>
<td>Lack of coherent brand organization and execution.</td>
<td>Generates shared mindset among employees and customer involvement.</td>
<td>Make full move from product to corporate brand behavior.</td>
<td>Ensure full operation ownership to all business units; the brand is everywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Process:</strong></td>
<td>Stating the identity and vision of the corporate brand: Who are we as an organization and who do we want to become?</td>
<td>Linking vision to culture and image practices: How can we reorganize behind the brand?</td>
<td>Involving stakeholders through culture and image: How can we involve internal and external stakeholders in the brand?</td>
<td>Integrating vision, culture and image around a new identity: How can we align the organization behind the brand?</td>
<td>Tracking corporate branding gaps and brand performance. What are the critical factors in our internal and external brand performance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Branding Toolkit</strong></td>
<td>Brand positioning embedded in culture and identity vs. brand hyper-activation driven by image.</td>
<td>Brand policing directed by programs and manual vs. brand turf generated by functions and markets.</td>
<td>Brand commitment and identification vs. brand overload and process exhaustion.</td>
<td>Brand isolated in headquarters vs. brand fragmented by local subsidiaries.</td>
<td>Brand obsession with quantitative measurement vs. intuitive follow up on brand performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Crisis</strong></td>
<td>Needed to create vision among top managers.</td>
<td>Need to conduct full organization wide execution.</td>
<td>Need to involve all internal subcultures.</td>
<td>Need to generate local brand owner ship and involvement.</td>
<td>Need to insist on cross-functional knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lever Key Activity:</strong></td>
<td>(Re)articulate core values and define identity behind brand.</td>
<td>Reshape organization, managerial structure and processes.</td>
<td>Engage employees in execution and involve consumer images.</td>
<td>Create brand balance between global coherence and local buy-in.</td>
<td>Set up relevant monitoring systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Organization</strong></td>
<td>Top management guidance; internal task force; External visual identity.</td>
<td>Top management execution of cross-functional structure and process changes.</td>
<td>Internal organizational development process; Consumer reactions (focus groups; communities).</td>
<td>Organization wide execution of structure and local process; Local stakeholder involvement.</td>
<td>Monitor unit including internal and external knowledge; Organization wide distribution of knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
16.10 Appendix J – Information services

J I – Information service visibility
J II – Facebook posts
### 16.11 Appendix K – Reputation survey

Reputation Score (where 1 = poor and 6 = excellent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General reputation driver</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional appeal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products and services</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace environment</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision and leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sector specific reputation drivers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable use of water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair prices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reputation drivers specific to this company</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative new products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to local economy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing new markets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>