

MASTER THESIS IN GLOBALIZATION, BRANDS & CONSUMPTION &
INTERNATIONAL MARKETING & BRAND MANAGEMENT

‘The case Allsvenskan’

Brand building within smaller teams

(Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF, AIK & Kalmar FF)

Supervisor Ulf Elg 2013-05-24



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Preliminary acknowledgments

Our name is Rami Al-Salih and Gustav Hartman and we have conducted this Master thesis as a part of our Master of Science studies in Globalizations, Brands & Consumption respective International Marketing & Brand Management within the department of Business Administration at Lund University in Sweden. This research has explored the case 'Allsvenskan' and four teams within the field of branding.

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We hope that you find this master thesis useful and interesting

Rami Al-Salih & Gustav Hartman

Abstract

- Title:** 'The case Allsvenskan' – Brand building within smaller teams (Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF, AIK & Kalmar FF)
- Seminar date:** 29th of May 2013
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- Author:** Rami Al-Salih & Gustav Hartman
- Advisor:** Ulf Elg
- Keywords:** Brand equity, Sports, Football, Smaller teams, Communication tools, Sponsorship, Event, Stadium, Buying players, Aaker, Sweden
- Thesis purpose:** The purpose of this study is to investigate how smaller teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and smaller teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) Brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty)
- Methodology:** The research is based on the field of branding that requires a certain strategy, philosophy and methods in order to engage insights collected. This thesis will use a mix-method with an abduktive approach
- Theoretical perspective:** The research is mainly based on the field of branding and focuses on Aaker's (2010) theory regarding Brand equity but also the communication tools: Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying player
- Empirical data:** This research has collected data from a mix-method where the quantitative web-questionnaire supports the qualitative semi-structured in depth interviews with football clubs in Sweden and the belonging supporters
- Conclusion:** This study has come to conclusion that smaller teams use communication tools such as Sponsorship, Event and Stadium in order to strengthen their Brand equity. However the clubs did not active use Buying players. Aaker's (2010) Brand equity factors are applicable in the football industry within smaller teams and can be connected to the chosen communication tools

Table of content

1. Introduction	6
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Problem discussion	9
1.3 Purpose	11
1.4 Research questions	11
1.5 Disposition	11
1.5.1 Introduction.....	11
1.5.2 Theoretical Framework.....	12
1.5.3 Methodological.....	12
1.5.4 Empirical framework and Analysis	12
1.5.5 Conclusions.....	12
2. Theoretical Framework	13
2.1 Brands	13
2.2 Brand Building.....	14
2.3 Brand Equity.....	15
2.4 Aaker (Brand Equity)	16
2.4.1 Brand Name Awareness.....	16
2.4.2 Brand Associations	17
2.4.3 Perceived Quality	17
2.4.4 Brand loyalty.....	17
2.5 Keller’s Customer- Based Brand Equity model (CBBE)	18
2.6 Marketing communication tools	19
2.6.1 Sponsorship & Events.....	19
2.6.2 Stadium	21
2.6.3 Buying players.....	23
2.7 Choice of theory	23
3. Methodology.....	26
3.1 Research Philosophy	26
3.2 Mix method (Triangulation).....	26
3.3 Abductive approach	27
3.4 Research design	27
3.4.1 Embedded case study design	27
3.5 Qualitative interviews.....	29
3.5.1 Telephone interviews.....	29

3.6 Selection criteria for smaller football teams	30
3.6.1 Definition of a smaller elite football team	30
3.7 Research procedure – Smaller teams and respondents.....	30
3.8 Selection.....	30
3.8.1 The choice of smaller elite football teams	31
3.8.2 Malmö FF	31
3.8.3 Kalmar FF	31
3.8.4 AIK.....	31
3.8.5 Helsingborgs IF.....	31
3.9 The choice of respondents within the teams	31
3.10 Selection criteria for the belonging supporters.....	32
3.10.1 Definition of being a football supporter	32
3.11 Research procedure – Supporters.....	32
3.11.1 Face-to-face interviews.....	32
3.11.2 The choice of supporters	33
3.12 Quantitative web survey.....	33
3.12.1 The process of the quantitative web survey	34
3.13 Structure of the interview guides and web survey questionnaire	35
3.14 Data collection.....	35
3.15 Delimitation.....	36
3.16 External validity.....	36
3.17 Reliability.....	37
4. Empirical result and Analysis	38
4.1 Teams	38
4.1.1 Sponsorship	40
4.1.2 Event.....	41
4.1.3 Stadium	42
4.1.4 Buying player	43
4.1.5 Ranking.....	45
4.1.6 Connection to brand equity	46
4.1.6.1 Awareness	46
4.1.6.2 Associations.....	47
4.1.6.3 Perceived quality.....	48
4.1.6.4 Loyalty	48
4.2 Supporters of the investigated teams	49
4.2.1 Sponsorship	49

4.2.2 Event.....	50
4.2.3 Stadium.....	51
4.2.4 Buying players.....	52
4.2.5 Ranking.....	52
4.2.6 Connection to brand equity.....	53
4.2.6.1 Awareness.....	53
4.2.6.2 Associations.....	54
4.2.6.3 Perceived quality.....	55
4.2.6.4 Loyalty.....	55
4.3 Web- survey.....	56
4.3.1 Sponsorship.....	56
4.3.2 Event.....	56
4.3.3 Stadium.....	56
4.3.4 Buying players.....	57
4.3.5 Ranking.....	57
4.3.6 Connection to brand equity.....	58
4.3.6.1 Awareness.....	58
4.3.6.2 Associations.....	58
4.3.6.3 Perceived quality.....	58
4.3.6.4 Loyalty.....	59
4.4 Comparison and discussion.....	59
5. Conclusion.....	61
5.1 Suggestions to further research.....	63
6. Reference list.....	64
6.1 Books.....	64
6.2 Academic articles.....	64
6.3 Internet.....	68
7. Appendix.....	69
7.1 Interview questions (Clubs).....	69
7.2 Interview questions (Supporters).....	70
7.3 Web-Survey.....	71
7.4 Quotes.....	75
7.4.1 Clubs.....	75
7.4.2 Supporters.....	77

1. Introduction

The first chapter of this master thesis seeks to give the readers an expanded understanding of the chosen topic in general in order to understand how this subject is vital and needed to be further explored. The authors will provide a theoretical background to the readers by showing what has been done previously in this specific field. The introduction part will then phrase a few research questions and address its purpose, which will be the base of this study. Finally the authors will provide the disposition and the delimitations regarding this research.

1.1 Background

The corporate brand is a very powerful marketing tool and according to Ishida & Taylor (2012) a company's most valuable asset. The corporate brand helps companies to separate from each other and emphasize your advantages from your competitors. Having a great corporate brand brings emotions from customers towards the company and also helps to maintain and create new relationships. The brand is an intangible asset that contributes an image for the company and, most important, allow and make the company to carve out a niche that stands out in the crowded marketplace. (Rosso, 2011)

Brand equity is a concept that many researchers refer to when building your corporate brand and there are a lot of definitions as well (Wood, 2000). However one thing that the researchers have in common is that brand equity considers being a relationship between the consumers and the brands. According to Wood (2000) the concept highlights a long-term focus within brand management. In the field of strategic brand management it takes more than branding when building a brand. To create and maintain relationships and also add more value to the company's brand equity, companies need to communicate with the audience in the marketplace. Although traditional communication is a very necessary and important part when building a brand, but it is not enough. The company needs to involve other aspects as well, such as advertisement, Internet site, sponsoring, channel management, word of mouth and the organization's ethics. (Kapferer, 2012)

Due to the growing numbers of sales and communication channels which customers can buy and be influenced of, companies and managers need to understand how and why customers are buying from a particularly channel (Valentini et al, 2011). Making decisions of which marketing channels a company will use is difficult and there are many aspects to consider such as identify the existing situation of the company and which strategy you will be using (Banyte et al, 2011).

In the field of strategic brand management, building strong brands with great equity have been on the agenda for a long time for many researchers. One of those researchers is Kevin Lane Keller and in his customer-based brand equity (CBBE) model he describes six brand building blocks (Salience, Performance, Imagery, Judgements, Feelings and Resonance) to create brand equity. This brand building process is seen in a pyramid where salience is at the bottom and the last block is resonance. (Keller, 2001) Another guru in strategic brand management is David Aaker. Aaker (1996) agree with Keller (2001) regarding that brand equity is a concept highly connected with a brand's success. However, Aaker (1996) claim instead that there are four dimension that a company need to manage to reach strong Brand equity: Loyalty, Perceived quality, Associations and Awareness.

According to Pelsmacker et al (2010) promotion or marketing communication (MC) is one of the main pillars of the marketing mix (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) and it involves all

instruments by means of which the company communicates to their target group and stakeholders. MC includes many different communication elements and a few of them are advertising, public relations, sponsorships, sales promotions, point-of-purchase, personal selling and electronic communication. Pelsmacker et al (2010) continue by claiming, if a company are going to use many different communication elements, the one thing that the company have to keep in mind is “*good marketing is integrated marketing*”(p. 3). In other words the company need to have consistency and synergy so all the company’s marketing is combined and not conflicting with each other. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Creating an extraordinary experience for the customers in-store has been studied by many researchers and has a direct connection to satisfaction and loyalty from the customers towards the brand (Ismail et al, 2011; Ishida & Taylor, 2012). Ismail et al (2011) studied the subject closer and according to them there are many factors that are included in the customer’s experience, such as employees, advertising, brand name, services cape, price, word-of-mouth and core service.

Corporate sponsoring is a valuable brand building tool typically communicated through special events and sports that connect the company to the event and the audience (Kelly et al 2012). According to Eaton (1999) companies enter into sponsorship arrangements for many reasons. Two of the most common reasons are to build and/or increase brand awareness for the company and establish, change, or strengthen brand image. (Eaton, 1999)

Research about sponsorship has been made by Zauner et al (2012) as well, where they connected sponsorship with social media and receivable brand value for the sponsor company. Kelly et al (2012) however, did research about sponsored-linked advertisement (SLA) and its value in understanding how brand and corporate advertisement links to sponsorships and events. The researchers continue by saying that there are two special categories of advertiser: The ones that are officially linked to the event and those who seek association with the event but do not have a legitimate link. The second category is defined according to Kelly et al (2012) as ‘ambushers’. According to Cornwell (2008), due to the rapid growth of sponsorships-linked marketing the last two decades, there is still a lack between strong understandings of how sponsorship works in the minds of the consumers and how it might be made more effective.

Regarding consumer behaviour and marketing, there are many concepts that are co-occurrence. One of these concepts is Customer-Brand Engagement (CBE) (Gambetti et al, 2012; Vivek et al, 2012; & Hollebeek, 2011). This concept is relatively new and is embedded in relationship marketing and emphasised as an important driver of both consumer decision-making process and brand equity (Gambetti et al, 2012). According to Hollebeek (2011) CBE also involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural in direct brand interactions. Vivek et al (2012) have done further research about customer engagement and argue that it is of vital importance to understand individuals’ interactions and connections with the brand, regardless whether they are considering purchasing the brand or are purchasing the brand.

The sport industry however, has over the last decades evolved to be one of the vital markets and industries in terms of both culture and economy. Sport teams have, comparing to leading international companies, generated similar sales and therefore increased the role of marketing of such industries (Hattula et al, 2011). The worldwide sport fan and spectator industry has grown significantly the last decades and it is still growing. Regularly millions of people view sport events either through media or in-person. These fans are mostly excited about their fan

committing. Being a part of such sport club could lead to an increased meaning to a fan's life (Koenigstorfer et al, 2010). Regarding football (soccer), the sport has long been the world's most popular sport activity, at least since the nineteenth century. The global sport spans in differentiated cultural countries and communities. It is estimated that 1.4 billion individuals have an interest in that particularly sport and approximately 250 million active practice football. (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004) Football has over the past years grown not only in term of money but also as a culture and community that bond people from different countries, religion and communities. For more than one century this specific sport have triggered a lot of passion and created a huge social phenomena. (Derbaix et al, 2002)

Sport in general has long been a local affair and matter but has been able to expand its markets and boundaries due to increased technology and increasing exchange across countries. According to Richelieu & Desbordes (2009), the value of a brand has made this phenomenon possible. The brand is composed of different benefits such as the result of the team, emotions of the fans during a game at a stadium and the feeling of belonging to a particularly club. In another paper Richelieu et al (2008) argues that a club must act in a certain way in order to achieve global status and to build a brand. Through these three different stages: from local to regional, from regional to national and finally from national to global. These steps include specific measures such as tours and tournaments abroad; opening stores abroad and international collaborations. The final measures were examples from the last-mentioned step. Holt (2007) agrees with Richelieu et al (2008) regarding abroad tournaments as an effective marketing and branding tool. Holt (2007) argues that the football tournament UEFA Champions League helps the team build up their brand by being associated with the competition and give lesser clubs and nations an opportunity to compete among Europe's biggest and famous teams for status and glory.

Previous research regarding sport stadiums has been viewed most from a psychological perspective (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010; Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009) and not directly through a marketing perspective. There is a lack specific regarding the atmosphere in football stadiums, due most research is focusing on sport stadiums in general. The previous research is focusing on why spectators are participating in live sports and also what the spectators prefer, a regular stadium or a more multifunctional stadium (running track in combination with a football field). (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010; Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009; Feddersen & Maennig, 2009) However according to Uhrich & Benjenstein (2010) the previous research regarding atmosphere (which is a term that is often connected to stadiums in real life) has been made a lot in the retail industry, where focus is on the atmosphere inside the retail store.

According to the previous research that was made from the authors for this thesis, buying players is mostly focusing on the transfer fees and the players' salaries (Frick, 2007; Dobson & Gerrard, 1999), which have no connection to the club's brand equity. Although the buying process of players is happening very frequently in the football industry there is no research about 'buying players', as a communications tool, connected to brand equity. Also, there is no sign of the connection between buying players and brand equity in smaller football clubs. However, when Paris Saint Germain (PSG) signed David Beckham in the beginning of 2013 many sport journalists and "football knowers" argued that David Beckham was too old and that the transfer where just a move to attract global attention, sell merchandise and show that "cool players" can be comfortable in France if the club has great financial means. In other words increase brand strength to PSG. (www.dailymail.co.uk)

According to another article an effective marketing tool is jersey sponsorship as Horowitz (2012, p. 180) argues that *“sponsorships can be the most effective form of marketing to consumers as, on average, fans are three times more likely to purchase products and services if they are aware of, and familiar with the brand. Jersey sponsorship is a great way to clear the hurdle but the greatest success will come to those who are clear in their objectives and thoughtful in their implementation execution and measurement.”* Writers that share similar thoughts are Tanvir & Shahid (2012) which argues that sports sponsorship plays a vital part on building a brand image and have a tremendous impact on the consumers. Research considering the vital role of sponsorship and the affect of it have been done by many authors such as Groza et al (2012), Walraven et al (2012) and many more.

A few authors such as Kaynak et al (2007) thinks from the opposite direction and hence consider in order to understand the reasons why fans of a particular sport team support and follow, the club needs to investigate that area to be able to serve them better and keep them committed. Mainly, research has been done in areas of brand equity of sports, sponsorship of sports, how a sports team can be transformed from being local to global. Broad studies such as Richelieu et al (2008) and Hill & Vincent (2006) have been involving big club names such as Manchester United, Olympique de Marseille and FC Barcelona. The authors of this master thesis have studied these researchers that have been mentioned above.

Regarding consumer behaviour studies within sport, there has been a lot of research connected to loyalty, culture and communities such as Bodet & Bernache-Assollant (2011) article about the relationship between consumer satisfaction and team identification. The researchers came to conclusion that team identification played a vital role to consumers' satisfaction and had a direct bond to consumer loyalty. As mentioned before research has been made in the area of communities and group identification of a specific sports team and an author that brings up this matter is Robert J. Fisher (1998). Castillo (2007) brings up the concept of loyalty in Spanish football and raise issues such as regional rivalries, globalisation, nationalism and identity and how it affects matters such as loyalty. Dr Alan Tapp (2004) problematize the concept of loyalty and believes that it has a complex meaning in sports and why marketers must go beneath the surface regarding those fans and explore concepts such as community belonging and image.

Giulianotti & Robertson (2004) mention that the culture of football is a phenomenon widely spread all over the world. Further the researchers refer this as glocalization which highlights the global and local processes within the particularly sports institutions and identities. Robert Madrigal (2000) discuss the influence of sponsorship on the consumer and come to the conclusion that sponsorship do not have a strong impact on the consumer itself, however will the consumer have strong passion toward events and sports team which the consumer is heavily affiliated with. Therefore companies that are able to infiltrate successfully into the heart of a consumer will obtain more than a simply product (Madrigal, 2000).

1.2 Problem discussion

Regarding brand building in general, many researchers have studied about the concept brand equity and connected it to brand building in many different industries. Brand equity is a concept that arises often in terms of when companies want to establish strong brands on the market. Earlier research established that loyalty, relationships, satisfaction, creating value (for both companies and customer) and creating an extraordinary experience for the customer relate to companies when they are trying to strengthen their brand position on the marketplace. However, most research is studied from a marketing perspective from

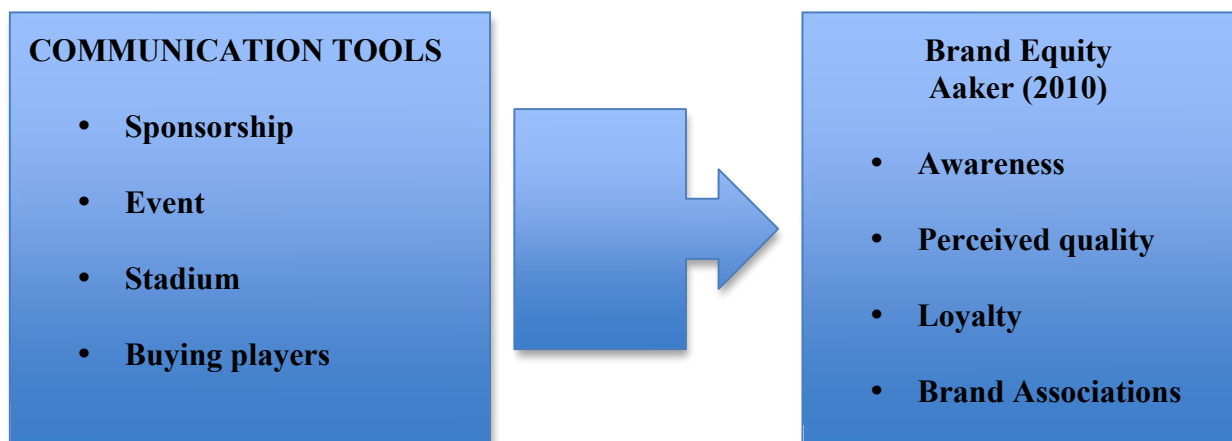
companies' point of view, but there is also some psychological research where the researcher is looking from a customer perspective.

Regarding sports in general and football, previous research as mentioned earlier, have been made in areas within branding and consumption and have been focusing on areas involving global football clubs, brand equity, sponsorship, the importance of branding, the effectiveness of market tools of specific event, loyalty, identity, satisfaction, community, culture within sports and football and finally the influence of sponsorship on the consumers.

Little attention has been on how football teams generally build their brands, but a lot of previous research has been related to other industries. How smaller football teams behave in order to achieve stronger brand is something that has not been studied before and the writers of this thesis notice a big lack of knowledge here. In terms of communication tools researchers have studied some selected tools, such as sponsorships, however not many different tools at the same time.

When speaking of sponsorship it is often connected to event (Kelly et al, 2010) and it is documented that sponsorships and event have an impact on brand equity, especially awareness, however no research has been done regarding Sponsorships and Events and its connection to brand equity with smaller clubs in the football industry. The other communication tools that are brought up by the writers above (Stadium, Event and Buying players), are also in need of further research. It has been discussed in previous literature that a Stadium is an important connection between the supporters and the club, but previous research have focused on why supporters goes on live matches and which type of stadium the supporters prefer (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010; Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009; Feddersen & Maennig, 2009). Having that said, stadium have never been connected, what so ever, with brand equity in previous research and have also never been seen as a communication tool. Buying players has also never been seen as a communication tool and no previous researchs have connected it to companies' brand equity. The only studies that have been made regarding sport players are regarding the players' transfer fees and salaries. With buying players becoming more common in order to strengthen the brand, the authors see the opportunity to study it more closely.

Having the above written in mind. The authors of this thesis noticed a huge lack of research regarding how smaller teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and smaller teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty). Therefore, a need for further research is necessary. To clarify for the reader, the authors of this master thesis have made a model that will be the base for this study.



(Model created by the authors)

Having that said, this master thesis will focus on the connection between the communication tools sponsorship, event, stadium and buying players with factors that brand equity include. This thesis will also focus on two perspectives, from supporters' point of view and from smaller teams' point of view. This thesis will also stress if and how smaller clubs are using these communication tools in order to enhance their brand equity and also how they connect these communication tools to the brand equity' factors. From a supporter point of view, this master thesis will stress how a supporter perceive the communication tools sponsorship, event, stadium and buying players and how the supporter connects them with the factors of brand equity. The supporters and the smaller teams will also give their opinion on which of the communication tools they believe has the most impact on smaller teams' brand equity.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how smaller teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and smaller teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty).

1.4 Research questions

1. Do smaller elite football teams use Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players as communication tools to enhance their brand equity?

2. How do existing fans and smaller teams perceive the communication of Sponsorship, Stadium, Event and Buying players and how do these communication tools connect to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors?

1.5 Disposition

1.5.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this master thesis seeks to give the readers an expanded understanding for the chosen topic in general in order to understand how this subject is vital and needed to be further explored. The authors will provide a theoretical background to the readers to be able to show what has been done previously in this specific field. The introduction part will then phrase a few research questions that will build this study. Finally the authors will provide the disposition and delimitation regarding this research.

1.5.2 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical basis for the research. It intends to provide the reader a combination of greater understanding for the topic branding generally and also as a tool for the interpretation of the empirical data presented from the qualitative and quantitative collected information. This chapter will enlighten the reader by presenting relevant models and research to understand the issue and to get the basic fact about the concepts mentioned as branding, brand equity, product brand, corporate brand, sponsorship, events, stadium and buying player.

1.5.3 Methodological

In this section the authors present and argues for the chosen methodology that has been used in this thesis and the approach that sets the basis for this study. Further on, the authors make a brief presentation of the chosen embedded cases that are going to be the ground in this case study. In this chapter the writers will give a critical view on the chosen sources and method in general in order to strengthen the validity of the work.

1.5.4 Empirical framework and Analysis

In this section the authors will present the result of the qualitative interviews and the quantitative web- survey, which was based on relevante theories and concepts. Further on, the empirical result will be analysed where differences and similarities will be made within and between the qualitative- and the quantitative result.

1.5.5 Conclusions

In this section the authors will present their conclusions for this master thesis, based on the analysis and empirical collected data of this paper. Quantitative and qualitative data has been collected with insights from the theoretical framework in order to fulfil the purpose of this thesis and come to a conclusion regarding the thesis research questions.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theoretical basis for the research. It intends to provide the reader a combination of greater understanding for the topic and also as a tool for the interpretation of the empirical data presented from the qualitative and quantitative collected data. This chapter will enlighten the reader by presenting relevant theories and concepts to understand the issue and to get the basic fact about the concepts mentioned as branding, brand equity, product brand, corporate brand, sponsorship, events, stadium and buying player. Finally the authors will argue for the choice of theory.

2.1 Brands

Through ancient history evidence have been found that names were put on bricks on goods to identify their maker. It is also known that trademarks were used on trade guilds in Europe to assure the customers and provide legal protection for the producers. There is no doubt that brands have had a long and important role in commerce and it is still a very important asset for companies, but it should take time for the market to realized that branding and brand associations have a central role to the competitors. A brand protects both the customers and the producers from competitors who are trying to imitate other competitors' products so there appear to be identical. (Aaker, 1991)

Aaker (1991) defines a brand as follows:

“A brand is distinguishing name/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those competitors” (p. 7)

Brand assets are expensive and resource demanding to maintain, develop and adapt. The brand has a flexibility to play various roles within the brand portfolio. A brand can give associations direct to the organisations or/and through the products. In either case, the brand will stand behind and define the companies' offerings. (Aaker, 1991)

	Product brands	Corporate brands
Management	<i>Middle manager</i>	<i>CEO</i>
Responsibility	<i>Middle manager</i>	<i>All Personnel</i>
Cognate discipline(s)	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Strategy/multi disciplinary</i>
Communications mix	<i>Marketing communicator</i>	<i>Total corporate communications</i>
Focus	<i>Mainly customer</i>	<i>Multiple. Internal and external stakeholder groups and networks</i>
Values	<i>Mainly contrived</i>	<i>Those of founder(s) + mix of corporate + other sub-cultures</i>

(Balmer, 2001, p. 281)

Regarding the product level, a lot of research has been done in the marketing literature, where the scholars have primarily been focused on customer's perceptions about a product brand. Recently, corporate branding is getting more attention and is increasingly gaining importance from the marketing scholars, because of the growing interest from the consumers. The consumers are becoming more and more knowledgeable about companies products and also about the whole corporation, for example the employee-working environment, social responsibility and community involvement. Corporate branding includes social responsibility,

employee relations and corporate trust. In other words, corporate branding is focusing on intangible elements that are not directly associated with the product. Corporate branding includes views about the company both externally and internally. (Shamman & Hassan, 2011) In other words a corporate brand differs from a product brand, in the sense of, a corporate brand is not only communicated to the customers, but to all other stakeholders (Juntunen et al, 2011).

The corporate brand is special because it represents both the company and the products/services. The corporate brand can create branded energizes, provide credibility, facilitates brand management, support internal and external brand building and provide basis for relationships. The corporate brands usually have some kind of heritage, roots, that are richer and more relevant than product brands. The roots of a corporate brand defines the brand what it is today and also add value both for the customers and to the company. For corporate brands that are service minded, the people inside the organisation are especially important, because through these people the company provide the basis for their corporate image. If the working people inside the organisation appear to be engaged, interested in customers and competent the company will be more likable and in the end gain loyalty from the customers. (Aaker, 2004)

People inside an organization and people outside an organisation have different views about what products are. To the people inside the organisation (managers and accountants) products are something that are produced in the factory and it is about materials, components, labour, costs, quality and output specifications. Regarding the people outside the organization, consumers view products as something else. It is a way of meeting the consumers' needs or/and solving their problem. These needs can be emotional and psychological as a functional and economic. However, a product's value isn't what the company puts in, it is what the customer gets from it. (Doyle, 1989) According to Doyle (1989), "*a product is anything which meets the needs of customers*" (p.78).

An organisation can take on two different characteristics, local or global. Depending on which role the corporate takes on, the customer relationship will be affected. However the more reasonable way is to choose one of them. To be a local corporate brand means that the corporate brand is striving to connect in tangible and intangible ways to the local environments and customers. The local way allow the customers to feel pride over successful local companies and express their pride through purchases. Being local, the corporate brand can relate more to the customers by providing a brand position that match the local culture. However, being a global corporate brand has also benefits regarding visibility, aspirations and reach. People around the world will be able to recognize and respect the brand and by extensions people will use the brand. Although being a global corporate brand, the brand must also deliver innovation and quality products and services. (Aaker, 2004)

2.2 Brand Building

By having a strong brand comes great benefits and that is why so many companies invest in brand building activities. Nokia and Starbucks are two great brands and can therefore take advantage of it and charge their customers a premium price and still have returnable customers. Mercedes-Benz for example, is selling premium cars and their customers are known for being brand loyal. This in turn gets promising future sales for the company. The literature of brand management (Keller, 2001; Aaker, 2010) provides companies how they

should build and grow their brand and a common denominator is that companies need to invest heavily in communication, distribution and other activities. (Fisher et al, 2010)

Although added value, profit and revenue are historically focused measures, brand value focuses on the future. *“Brand value is an index-based measure that seeks to represent the net present value of the future earnings stream of a brand”* (Wood, 2000, p. 667). Brand value as a measure has a further advantage than other measures, in the sense of that brand value addresses both the health of the market and the brand within the market. Therefore the important works of the brand managers are to maximise the long-term value of that earnings stream. To maximise the long-term value it will require expenditure of the marketing mix to support the brands. However, this can lead to short-term sub-optimisation to ensure the long-term brand building. (Wood, 2000)

How to do a successful brand building differs depending on which category and industry the company operates in. According to Fisher et al (2010) successful brand building depends on several factors such as (especially) customers’ predispositions towards brands, own management capabilities and competitors’ activities. Although, brand building is very important to do through different activities outside the organisation, but many researchers agree with each other that brand building outside the organization needs to be supported by brand building processes inside the organisation (M’zungu et al, 2010; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005).

2.3 Brand Equity

In recent years brand equity is the most discussed topic in the field of marketing and it is also probably the most important concept as well. Due to all the research around the topic brand equity, there are also many different approaches of it. But there is some agreement that the concept should be defined in terms of marketing effects uniquely attributable to a brand. (Keller, 2009) One of the agreements are that *“brand equity relates to the fact that different outcomes result in the marketing of a product or service because of its brand, as compared to if that same product or service was not identified by that brand”* (Keller, 2009, p. 140) Another agreement is that these different outcomes (written above) *“arise from the added value endowed to a product as a result of past investments in the marketing for the brand”* (Keller, 2009, p. 140) To interpreting marketing strategies and assessing the value of a brand, brand equity is used as a common tool for companies (Keller, 2009).

The concept brand equity can be classified into two main streams. One of the streams is the ‘Customer-Based Brand Equity’ (CBBE), *“where the value of the brand is determined by customers’ associations with a product brand”* (Shamman & Hassan, 2011, p.11). The CBBE view is from the North American scholar and is supported by researchers such as Keller and Aaker (M’Zungu et al, 2010). The second stream is ‘Corporate Brand equity’ (CBE), *“Where the value of the brand is determined by the stakeholders associations toward a corporate brand”* (Shamman & Hassan, 2011. p.11). However, there is also one more view regarding Brand Equity, the ‘Financial view’. This scholar believe *“that brand equity is a financially-based measure and should be assessed according to its impact in financial performance indicators such as sales, profits and operating margin”* (Shamman & Hassan, 2011. p.11). (Shamma & Hassan, 2011)

According to Keller (2000) Corporate Brand Equity is *“the differential response by consumers, customers, employees, other firms or any relevant constituency to the words, actions, communications, products or services provided by an identified corporate brand”*

entity” (p.115). To put it in other words, corporate brand equity is seen as the sum of results regarding any actions that are made by the corporation and its brand (Juntunen et al, 2011).

A company has strong corporate brand equity when their stakeholders (customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers, government, regulators, competitors, political groups, social groups media Etc.) have great associations in their minds towards the corporate brand. Therefore corporate brand equity, is connected to the corporate identity in the sense of its include all intangible aspects that are presented within corporate brand reputation, corporate image, corporate associations and relationships. (Shamman & Hassan, 2011)

Corporate Brand Equity is based on the grounds of corporate image and that corporate image effect corporate brand equity. Corporate image is about the organisation’s products, how the organisation communicates and the actions the organisation takes. (Juntunen et al, 2011)

2.4 Aaker (Brand Equity)

As the authors mentioned in the ‘Brand equity section’ above, Aaker prefers CBBE and views it from the North American scholar. According to Aaker (2010) Brand Equity is “*a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand’s name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm’s customers*”. (Aaker, 2010, p.7-8)

As the quote above are telling, brand equity is a set of assets and according to Aaker (2010) the major asset categories are:

1. *Brand name awareness*
2. *Brand associations*
3. *Perceived quality*
4. *Brand loyalty*

If a company manages to have all these four assets, it will in the end create value for both the company and the customers (customers in the sense of both end-users and those at the infrastructure level). However, the management of brand equity requires investment to maintain and create these four assets. Each of these assets creates value in several different ways (a deeper review of how and what the different assets contributes to will be presented further down in this chapter) and to handle brand equity effectively and to make the right decisions about brand-building activities, it is important to have the right knowledge and to be sensitive to the ways in which strong brands create value. To have assets and liabilities underlie brand equity, a connection to the brand name or/and the symbol must be strong. If symbol or/and the name of the brand would change so will the assets and the liabilities. All the assets and the liabilities or some of them will be affected and worst scenario even lost. Although some of the assets and the liabilities will change and fit the new brand name and symbol. (Aaker, 2010)

2.4.1 Brand Name Awareness

According to Aaker (2010) brand awareness “*refers to the strength of a brand’s presence in the consumer’s mind*” (p. 10). To measure awareness you have to consider the different ways consumers remember a brand and ranging them from recognition to recall, to top-of-mind (the first brand the consumer answer) and to dominant (the only brand the consumer answer). (Aaker, 2010)

Brand recognition involves familiarity and liking from past exposure, and can be defined by asking the question - “*Have you been exposed to this brand before?*” (Aaker, 2010 p. 10). This means that recognition does not necessarily involve *where* the consumer came across with the brand before, *why* the brand is different from others or *what* the product class is of the brand. Psychological research has shown that recognition alone can create positive feelings toward whether it is words, people, music or brands. Although even when consumers will make their decision regarding almost anything the brand that they are familiar to will have an impact on their decision- making. (Aaker, 2010)

Due to the growing marketing messages that consumers are exposed to every day, the challenge of establishing recall and recognition is difficult. (Aaker, 2010) Therefore, Aaker (2010) argues that those companies that don’t use normal media channels, but instead doing marketing efforts “outside the box” such as event promotions, sponsorships, publicity and sampling, will be the most successful companies in building brand awareness. (Aaker, 2010)

2.4.2 Brand Associations

Brand associations are connected and driven by the company’s identity of the brand (what the company wants the brand to stand for in the customers’ mind) and the associations a customer is doing with a brand, supports brand equity. A brand association can for example be product attributes, celebrity spokesperson or a particularly symbol. (Aaker, 2010)

2.4.3 Perceived Quality

The second asset is ‘Perceived quality’ and this asset is a brand association. Perceived quality is an asset for three reasons. (Aaker, 2010)

The first reason is that ‘Perceived quality’ is one of the only brand associations that has been shown to drive financial performance. One study that proves this is a study done by Clas Fornell and couple of colleges to him at the National Quality research Center at the university of Michigan. The study was made during a five-year period and investigated 77 firms in Sweden. The result of the study was that they noticed that perceived quality was a major driver of customer satisfaction, which in turn had a major impact on ROI (Return Of Investment). (Aaker, 2010)

The second reason is that perceived quality is a huge strategic thrust of a business and many companies believe that quality is one of their primary values. Therefore many companies include quality in their mission statement. Most important, perceived quality is often the key-positioning dimension for products classes and corporate brands, because these brands are almost never driven by functional benefits. (Aaker, 2010)

The third reason why perceived quality is an asset is that it is connected to and often drives other aspects of how a brand is perceived. In other words when perceived quality improves, it will have an impact on all the other elements of customer’s perception of the brand. Perceived quality is a bottom-line measure of the impact of brand identity and reflects a sense of “goodness” all over the brand’s elements. (Aaker, 2010)

2.4.4 Brand loyalty

When placing a value on a brand that will either be bought or sold, brand loyalty plays a very important part. If the company has a broad customer loyalty base, company can predict how their sales and profit will turn out in the future. If a brand doesn’t have a customer loyalty

base the brand becomes usually vulnerable or has value in the form of its potential to create loyal customer. And also having a customer base makes it less costly for the company in the sense of the company doesn't have to look for new customer, which is much more expensive than maintaining and focusing on the existing customers. (Aaker, 2010)

In most models and conceptualizations regarding brand equity brand loyalty is excluded (Aaker, 2010), but according to Aaker (2010) there are a few reasons why brand loyalty is appropriate and useful and should be included when talking about brand equity. First of all, the value that companies receive from their brands is mainly created by the customers' loyalty it commands. One other thing that makes brand loyalty appropriate and suitable in the concept of brand equity is that brand loyalty, as an asset, justifies and encourages the creation of specific loyalty programs for the company, which will in the end create value for the company. (Aaker, 2010)

When building strong brands it is important to segmenting your customer loyalty because it provides a tactical and strategically insights during the brand building process. A customer's loyalty can be divided into non-customers, the passively loyal, price switchers, fence sitters and the committed. Non-customers are those who purchase other competitive brands or are not product class users, which is the opposite of the committed customers. The customers who are passively loyal are those who purchase the brand by habit and not about a specific reason. The price switchers are the customers who are very sensitive regarding the price and the fence switchers are those who are indifferent between the company's own brand and two or three other brands. (Aaker, 2010)

2.5 Keller's Customer- Based Brand Equity model (CBBE)

Just as Aaker, Keller's view on brand equity is also from the North American scholar (CBBE) and according to Keller (2009) customer- based brand equity is defined as the *"differential effect that consumer knowledge about a brand has on their response to marketing for that brand"* (p. 142).

Companies have always been interesting in building their brand with great equity. Kevin Lane Keller has developed a model called 'Customer- Based Brand Equity model' (CBBE - model), which explains to the public what brand equity is and how companies should build it to reach the maximum level of brand equity. The model also shows how to measure and manage brand equity in the best possible way. (Keller, 2001)

The overall concept and background of the CBBE- model is that a brand's power lies in what customers have learned, seen, felt and heard about a brand over time. In other words, the power of a brand is what's in the customer's mind. So the on going struggle and challenge for marketers is to ensure that customers receive the right experiences with the product or service and companies marketing program so the experience (feelings, thoughts, images, perceptions, attitudes) is connected to the brand itself. (Keller, 2001)

The CBBE- model contains six building blocks, which are placed in a pyramid and to reach the top of the pyramid (resonance), it is crucial to manage and go through each step in the right order (Keller, 2001). According to Keller (2001) the six blocks are (placed from bottom to top): *Saliency, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings and resonance*. According to Keller (2001) the CBBE- model includes 4 steps and these four steps can be seen as guidelines for companies when building a strong brand. The first step is to connect the brand's identification with customers and create an association of the brand in the minds of

the customers with a customer need. The second step is to establish the meaning of the brand in the customers' mind. The third step is found and elicits the right customers responses of the identity and meaning of the brand. The last and the final step is to create active loyalty relationship between the brand and customers, by converting the brand response. (Keller, 2001)

Keller (2001) also argues that these four steps are also represented as questions inside customer mind-set such as:

1. *Who are you? – Brand identity (Salience)*
2. *What are you? – Brand meaning (Performance and Imagery)*
3. *What do I think or feel about you? – Brand response (Judgements and Feelings)*
4. *What kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you? – Brand relationship (Brand Resonance)* (Keller, 2001. p.15)

2.6 Marketing communication tools

Marketing communication are the voice of a brand due to its attempt to remind, inform and persuade customers both directly and indirectly. Different communication can in that way provide a dialogue between the consumers and the company and build a relationship between these two. Using various ways of reaching out to the consumers the company could link their brands to other brands, feelings and people. Marketing communication allows building brand communities both online and offline and create experience for the customers. By creating a brand image and establishing the brand in memory they could contribute to brand equity. (Keller, 2009)

Several communication tools can be used in order to, either build or harm in a long-term perspective. Focusing on advertising and investing in corporate social responsibility are examples of brand building activities. On the other hand activities such as price promoting dilutes the brand in a long-term perspective and therefore seen and classified as brand harming. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

In the communication mix a company can use many different tools such as: advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship, point-of-purchase, personal selling, public relations and many other promotions that could have a positive impact on the brand. Two important factors need to be focusing on when using these various tools: consistency and synergy. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

2.6.1 Sponsorship & Events

“Sponsorship can be defined as an investment in cash or kind in an activity, in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with this activity. The company promotes its interests and brands by trying them to a specific and meaningfully related event or cause.” (Pelsmacker et al, 2010, p. 369) Given the fact that the involved sponsors' messages typically are simple and confined to brand names or company, one may argue that the effectiveness of the sponsorship is based on the exposure effect. This implies that increased recognition for a brand is a result due to the long-term linked along with the sponsor over a longer period and thus generates a preference for the brand. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Sponsorship is a marketing communications tool that has increased significantly over the past decade and has become an important role in a company's marketing activities. Between 2000 and 2007, this industry has grown by 37%. In some countries such as Italy and Australia entire 13% of the budget are spent on sponsorship. Another way of seeing the increased

importance and popularity of sponsorship is the (top) management involvement where studies have shown that regarding sports and art have more than 50% of the cases top/senior management is involved in agreement sponsorship campaigns and proposal assessment. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

A study shows that it is mostly young people who have a positive attitude towards high-profile events such as world cup. It turns out that between the ages of 15-24, 40 % said they would feel more confident towards a brand if it were sponsored in a high-profile event. 19 % in the age of 25-34 felt the same. The higher the age was, the less positive attitude they had and therefore one could draw a conclusion that the younger population generally had a more positive impact on the brand awareness and brand perception. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Another example of a sport event where sponsors had an impact was the 2011 Audi cup. The car company organized a football cup involving four big teams: FC Bayern München, FC Barcelona, AC Milan and SC Internacional de Porto Alegre. These teams played against each other at Munich's Allianz Arena in Germany (www.audi.com).

In the field of sponsorship, four different types can be distinguished:

Event-related sponsorship: This kind is the best-known one within the category of sponsorship and implies that a company may choose to sponsor a football competition, an athlete or even a football team. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Broadcast sponsorship: Programming or broadcast sponsorship is a phenomenon that has been mobilized during the later period, and includes the support and sponsorship of a specific sports programme or even the weather forecast. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Cause-related sponsorship: Cause-related sponsorship is probably the oldest type in this area and implies that companies or wealthy people donate money to schools and hospitals. In the case of companies, this phenomenon usually is a matter and a part of their communication plan and not only for charity. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Ambush marketing: Ambush or parasitic sponsorship is planned marketing by companies where the goal is to confuse or mislead their customers by appearing more involved in an event than they actually are by spending a lot of their budget on marketing to be able to be associated heavily even though they are only a minor sponsor. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

According to another article an effective marketing tool is jersey sponsorship. Horowitz (2012, p. 180) argues that "*sponsorships can be the most effective form of marketing to consumers as, on average, fans are three times more likely to purchase products and services if they are aware of, and familiar with the brand. Jersey sponsorship is a great way to clear the hurdle but the greatest success will come to those who are clear in their objectives and thoughtful in their implementation execution and measurement.*"

Tanvir & Shahid (2012) argues that sports sponsorship plays a vital part on building a brand image and has a tremendous impact on the consumers. Further the researchers argue that it is a great opportunity for brands to be associated with the sports in order to create emotions. Sponsorship also shows the excitement, passion, feeling, and spirits that could come along with the sponsored brand and have a tremendous impact on the purchase intention. (Tanvir & Shahid, 2012)

A study was done to ensure what impact sponsorship has on a football team and it proved to have a significant impact in terms of awareness. The study also showed that the degree of commitment the fans have, do not have an impact on the attitude towards, loyalty or awareness of a sponsor's brand. How close relationship a fan has towards their team also has an impact on fans' views on sponsorship. A season ticket holder is considered recognize the sponsored brand. Therefore it is important for companies to have collaboration with a sports team by finding these emotional links between the fans and the team. (Vale et al, 2009)

Further more, Vale et al (2009) continue by saying that sponsorship can create goodwill and they explain it as *“a football fan may consider the sponsorship to be generally good for the society (general level) and they can have a positive attitude towards the sports sponsor (category level). Nevertheless, it is in the individual activity level that the fan’s response to the sponsor of the team with which they are closely committed will be felt more deeply, consequently generating higher levels of goodwill and gratitude towards the sponsor”* (p.271). (Vale et al, 2009)

However, events don’t necessarily have to be connected with sponsorships. An event can also be different reward programs, product launches, open days, conferences, publicity events, created events, different shows, corporate entertainment, charity and product visitor attractions (Wood, 2009). According to Wood (2009) *“an event is a live ‘accordance’ with an audience”* (p.248). All events can communicate something if they have an audience, because then a message or experience is being shared, transmitted and generated. (Wood, 2009) The most interesting events are the ‘product visitor attractions’ and ‘created events’. According to Wood (2009) ‘product visitor attractions’ is *“permanent events developing involvement with the brand and often marketed as a product in their own right”* (p.249). ‘Created events’ are *to developing an event often as a product in its own right to carry the brand values”* (p. 249). (Wood, 2009)

2.6.2 Stadium

“Point-Of-Purchase (POP) also called in-store, point-of-sales or POS advertising, can be defined as any promotional material places at the point of purchase, such as interior displays, printed material at shop counters or window displays.” (Pelsmacker, 2010, p. 276) This kind of communication also includes video screen demonstrations, in-store broadcast, interactive kiosks, shopping-trolley advertising and so on. POP not only include advertising but rather the store design, store image, the music played in the store and involves all aspects of the store and environment that may affect the consumer regarding price, quality, product and other important factors. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Point-of-purchase communication can serve different functions, many or few depending on the situation and the intention from the brand owner. According to Pelsmacker et al (2010) there are various reasons or rather functions with POP communication. A specific store design that has an attractive exterior may *attract* a consumer’s attention and could be the factor that differentiates themselves from their competitors. Another important factor that a company must constantly work on is to *remind* consumers of their brand. With all the advertising its get confusing and hard to keep remember. POP communication is also there to *inform* consumers about different things such as target groups through store design. Another object is to *persuade* consumers, to be able to influence their thinking and decision-making at the point of sale. Finally out of a product perspective and retailer perspective point-of-purchase communications serve to build and image. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Store image however, can be defined as *“an individual’s cognitions and emotions that are inferred from perceptions or memory inputs that are attached to a particular store and which represent what that store signifies to an individual. It consists of both affective and cognitive factors.”* (Pelsmacker et al, 2010, p. 484) The way the personnel behave and dress, how the store is organised, the quality of the merchandise, the service, the price levels, the location and the store’s reputation all combine lead to form the image of its products and store. The importance of store image depends on the industry where it may be crucial to have a certain image in one business but in another one its less significant. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

Related to the topic store image is store personality and according to Pelsmacker et al (2010) could be divided into a scale of five:

1. Enthusiasm: welcoming, enthusiastic, lively and dynamic
2. Unpleasantness: annoying, irritating, loud and superficial
3. Sophistication: chic, high class, elegant and stylish
4. Solidity: hardy, solid and reputable
5. Genuineness: honest, sincere, reliable and true

Different segments of consumers will connect and relate with various of store personality and therefore a store communication can not match everybody and that why its vital for companies to find their audience, to be able to communicate this through the store. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010)

“Atmospherics can be defined as the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyers that enhance their purchase probability, since atmosphere is apprehended through the senses.” (Pelsmacker et al, 2010, p. 488-489)

There are four different dimensions in store atmosphere containing different properties:

1. Visual dimension: colour, brightness, size and shapes.
2. Aural dimension: volume and pitch.
3. Olfactory: scent, freshness.
4. Tactile dimension: softness, smoothness and temperature. (Pelsmacker et al, 2010, p. 489)

“Sport stadium atmosphere can be tentatively defined, then, as the relationship between perceptions of the specific environmental features of a sport stadium and the elicited affective responses of the spectators.” (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010, p. 215)

According to Uhrich & Koenigstorfer (2009) another definition of stadium atmosphere is that it is seen *“as a specific emotional response to the entirety of stimuli in a particular environment”* (Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009, p. 325) These authors consider experiencing this stadium atmosphere is important due to the satisfaction of peoples’ consumption need. Not only does a sport stadium create value in terms of additional to the core product, but also a unique value called entertainment value. Therefore the atmosphere differs tremendously from retail stores and adds a factor that one could not usually experience. (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010)

The effects on consumers regarding sport stadium atmosphere have been given quite little attention. The atmosphere of a sport stadium is considered to be mighty and therefore

considers being one of the important or even decisive factors to why individual attend events. (Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010; Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009)

Sponsors of sports events utilizing phenomena such as atmosphere due to they grow the advertising effectiveness and therefore help to achieve greater emotional effects and positioning of various brands by anchoring messages of different kinds of advertising in the audience world. The organizers benefit from the atmosphere tremendous due to the large generation of money in terms of sponsorships and ticket sales. Despite these circumstances little research have been made into the area of sports stadium atmosphere. (Uhrich & Koenigstorfer, 2009)

2.6.3 Buying players

A player can only be register in a soccer team if the transfer window is open. However there is one exception. If a soccer player's contract has expired before the window has closed, the player is allowed to be registered after the transfer window has closed. (www.footballtransfers.com)

According to FIFA's (International Federation of Association Football) set of regulations there should be two transfer windows. The first window is open after the end of the season, and closes before the beginning of the new season. This period may not be longer than twelve weeks. The second transfer window take place normally in the middle of the season and is for four weeks. (www.footballtransfers.com)

The dates for the transfer' windows is depending on when the season is played. Because the seasons for different teams in Europe are different so are the transfer windows. In Sweden the whole season is played during one calendar year and the dates are therefore 10th of January to April second (first transfer window) and first of August to the last date of August. In England and Spain for example, the first window is open from first of January to the last date of August. (www.footballtransfers.com)

Accroding to Bendapudi & Bendapudi (2005) companies that are focusing on a mass market *"consider employees their living brand and devote a great deal of time and energy to training and developing them so that they reflect the brand's core values"* (p.124).

As the author's enlightened the reader in the introduction, the only researchs that have been done regarding football players are focusing on the transfer fees and the players' salaries (Frick, 2007; Dobson & Gerrard, 1999) in the bigger international clubs. No researchs have been done in the smaller leagues and no theories and connections with brand equity have been done, what so ever.

2.7 Choice of theory

In the theoretical part, the authors have emphasized theories and special communication tools (Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players), which will be used as a base when our empirical data will be gathered. The brand equity theories from both Keller (2001) and Aaker (2010) was chosen to include in the theoretical part because of their concepts in how to build a strong brand that generates great brand equity. However, Keller's (2001) and Aaker's (2010) brand building process have been tested and used by many researcher in different industries, but based on our previous research, not regarding the football industry for smaller teams. Another theory within that area is corporate brand equity that enhances a different

perspective of brand equity. The authors would like to inform the reader about the various theories for deeper understanding.

In this thesis the writers perceive the football clubs as a product. This argument is based on Doyle's (1989) definition that "*a product is anything which meets the needs of customers*" (p.78) and therefore the authors consider customer-based brand equity more appropriate than corporate brand equity for the purpose of this thesis. Another reason why the authors of this thesis are using customer-based brand equity instead of corporate brand equity is because, corporate brand equity has also a big focus on the inside of the organisations such as employees and the culture, which is not the purpose of this thesis to investigate.

The reason why both Keller and Aaker are mentioned in this thesis' theoretical part is to enlighten the reader the similarities they share and therefore add a greater understanding and depth to the work. Aaker (2010) and Keller's research regarding customer-based brand equity pervade similar thoughts but expressed in two various ways and that is why the authors decided to involve both of them in the theoretical part. However, by enlighten the reader about brand equity from two well-known researchers, makes it more interesting from a reader's perspective. Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory which involves four factors; Awareness, Associations, Loyalty and Perceived quality, have been used in this master thesis in order to fulfil the research questions and the purpose in best possible way. The choice of using Aaker's (2010) theory about brand equity and not Keller's CBBE-model is because Keller's CBBE-model is constructed in a way that, to reach the top of the pyramid you need to have managed all the other steps below. This is not the case with Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory and the authors thought it was the best possible theory for connecting and investigating communication tools with.

As the authors have already mentioned, communicating your brand during the brand building process is crucial, and off course many companies are doing so. However companies usually communicate through traditional media (billboards, television, newspapers Etc.), social media (recent time), POP and other different marketing activities to their customers. But, as we have already established, Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players have not been sufficiently measured in how big impact they have on smaller teams' brand building. Also if smaller teams are using these communication tools in order to create great brand equity and therefore these tools have been chosen in this Master thesis.

It is necessary to enlighten the reader that Sponsorship has been distinguished of two parts in this study. A smaller team can either sell sponsorship (to get other companies on the smaller teams' jerseys for example) or buy sponsorship (the smaller team sponsor another happening, event or company). Regarding Event, Sponsorship doesn't necessarily have to be connected to a special Event. Event is in this study the smaller teams matches and activities the smaller teams do outside the arena. Due to Stadium hasn't been investigated before as a communication tool and its affects on brand equity, the authors have used theories about Point-of-purchase (In store activities) and store atmosphere together with theories directly connected with the Stadium. Regarding Buying players, there is no theories about that Buying players for a smaller team will enhance the team's brand equity, there is also no theories regarding buying players as a communication tool either. However, in this study the authors have consider the smaller teams as companies that are focusing on a mass market and therefore the smaller teams consider their players as their living brand. Through training and matches the smaller teams developing their players (employees) so they will reflect the brand's core values (Bendapudi & Bendapudi, 2005).

Due to the lack of knowledge regarding brand building in the football industry for smaller teams and the lack of knowledge regarding the chosen communication tools effect on brand equity, we believe that by combining the communication tools Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players with Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors and also involve supporters opinion both in general (world wide) and in Sweden, we will be able to fulfilled this huge gap, fulfil the purpose and answer our research questions:

1. Do smaller elite football teams use Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players as communication tools to enhance their brand equity?

2. How do existing fans and smaller teams perceive the communication of Sponsorship, Stadium, Event and Buying players and how do these communication tools connect to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors?

3. Methodology

In this section the authors will present the chosen methods and research design that are conducted in this study. Further on, the authors will explain how they chose the respondents and how they collected the data. In the end the investigated teams will be presented continue by the thesis external validity and reliability.

3.1 Research Philosophy

This master thesis uses a theoretical framework that has its basis from one major area within marketing, branding to be specific. The chosen methodological philosophies will guide this master thesis that will have a direct impact of the results of the paper. The authors intention with this paper is to gain an insight into the field of branding with focus on the smaller teams in the football industry and further to understand this phenomenon and reflect on it. To get a deeper understanding in this area the writers have read relevant articles, books and other useful references. This thesis aims to examine how smaller teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and smaller teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty).

To be able to fulfil this purpose the writers' intention is to use existing theories within the field of branding and through a well-executed empirical study both regarding supporters and different smaller football clubs in Sweden. In other words, to fulfil the purpose and to answer the research questions qualitative interviews have been made both with relevant persons inside the smaller teams in the highest league in Sweden, 'Allsvenskan', and also with supporters cheering for the teams. The authors have also made a quantitative web-survey to get a more general view of how supporters react to the chosen communication tools and how they connect them to brand building. The supporters are both international and national (can cheer on bigger or smaller teams) in order to get a broader web-survey that could support the qualitative interviews.

Regarding the research philosophy, a chosen epistemology is necessary due to the knowledge gained during the study and highlights the question of what should be seen, in a discipline, as knowledge. A central issue in the topic epistemology is whether the social world should be studied equal, philosophy, procedures and principles as the natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2007). *"The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not "mean" anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist - social reality - has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking within it."* (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 19). The quotation explain the difference between social science and natural science and this study will use a more hermeneutic approach that is defined by Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) as a collective term where the main objective is to interpret and understand. This master thesis will have a mix-method approach but the focus will lie upon the qualitative interviews (more detail comes along with the thesis) and therefore is this epistemology more appropriate according to Lundahl & Skärvad (1999).

3.2 Mix method (Triangulation)

This master thesis has used a so-called "mixed methods" research and Bryman & Bell (2007, p. 642) explains it as *"a simple shorthand to stand for research that integrates quantitative and qualitative research within a single project"*. Further more, Bryman & Bell (2007) declare it as an approach that is more appropriate if the researchers do not want to rely on

only one of the mentioned methods. Instead the authors of this thesis fulfil the gaps of each other by using different practices such as quantitative web-survey and qualitative interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Mix-method or a “triangulation” as it also can be called, is necessary if researchers want to collect two different kinds of data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Due to the authors want to investigate how smaller football clubs are building a brand through chosen marketing communication tools and how the supporters behave and respond to these marketing communication tools the authors considered that a quantitative and qualitative study was necessary in order to extract as much as possible empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This argument is also mentioned in Management research by Easterby-Smith et al (2008). According to Bryman & Bell (2007) there are more benefits with this combination of method due to static and processual features. “*Quantitative research tends to bring out a static picture of social life, qualitative research is more processual*” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 650). Another benefit is the problem of generality, where a mix-method research could enhance the generality of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.3 Abductive approach

Lundahl & skärvad (1999) explains the inductive approach as trying to draw conclusions through empirical facts. This approach aims to study the phenomenon in depth and to be able to create theories and models. The deductive approach takes place on the basis of existing theory and subsequently designs hypotheses that will be tested by researchers. Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) explain deduction by trying to draw logical conclusions. Bryman & Bell (2007, p. 14) shows a model that explains the deductive and inductive approaches in an easy, convenient way and showing roughly the differences between the two, which can be explained through these mini-models.

Deductive approach:

Theory ----> observations/result

Inductive approach:

Observations/result ----> theory

However there is one other approach, the Abductive approach. The abductive approach is a combination between an inductive and a deductive approach, and is often used in a case study. (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994) This approach has been used in this master thesis in order to fulfil its purpose and answer the research questions. Using an abductive approach was appropriate in this thesis, because the authors have compared and analysed the empirical findings with relevant theories, and through the empirical findings new observations have been made (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994). However, the researchers of this thesis have taken an active decision not to use hypothesis due to its necessary to fulfil the purpose.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Embedded case study design

A case study is focusing on a single case where the researchers are doing detailed and intensive analysis of this particularly case (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The definition of a case is

on the other hand quite defusing, because a case “*is an object of interest in its own right*” (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p.63). However the most common cases associate with a special location such as an organization or a workplace. When doing a case study, the researchers will always do an in-depth elucidation of the particularly case. (Bryman & Bell, 2007) There are several ways of doing a case study, however two of those are worth mention in this thesis, the embedded and the holistic design. These two perspectives of a case study involve more than one unit of analyses. The holistic design involves a single unit of analysis (for example investigate a hospital’s different departments) and the embedded design involves multiple units of analyses. The different between a holistic and an embedded perspective also depends on the thesis research question and the phenomenon as whole in the study. (Yin, 2009)

In this thesis the authors have done an embedded case study design. Because in this thesis the authors have seen ‘Allsvenskan’ as a whole case and the teams with their supporters have been seen as embedded units of analyses. (Yin, 2009) In other words, the authors have chosen to do a single- case study with an embedded design because it suited best with our choice of phenomenon and answered the authors’ research questions in the best possible way.

‘Allsvenskan’ is the highest football league in Sweden where 16 teams plays against each other both in their home town and away. The winner after thirty rounds can title them selves as the Swedish champions (gold), the team on the second place gets “big silver”, third place gets “small silver” and the team on the fourth place gets bronze. Since the start of ‘Allsvenskan’ 1924, Malmö FF has won the league most times (19 times), followed by IFK Göteborg with 18 titles. (www.allsvenskan.se)

Four units have been investigated with qualitative interviews:

Embedded unit of analyses, 1: Malmö FF + Belonging supporters

Embedded unit of analyses, 2: AIK + Belonging supporters

Embedded unit of analyses, 3: Helsingborgs IF + Belonging supporters

Embedded unit of analyses, 4: Kalmar FF + Belonging supporters

The authors are aware of the downside of this research design. One important downside is worth mentioned. There is a risk when doing a design like this, and it is what the focus would be. If the focus is only on the subunits and fails to return to the larger unit of analyses, there is a risk that original phenomenon of interest has become the context and not the target of the study. (Yin, 2009) To reduce the risk of the recently mentioned, the authors have focused on both parts so the purpose and the research question got answered and fulfilled properly.

The author of this master thesis thought it was highly appropriate to use a mix method approach with an embedded single case study design, though an embedded case study design isn’t connected only to a quantitative or a qualitative study (Yin, 2009). A researcher can use either one or both. However, in this thesis the qualitative method will precede the quantitative method.

As already established above this thesis have been constructed with a mix- method including an embedded case study with qualitative interviews and a quantitative web-survey questionnaire. The embedded case- study will answer both the research questions. However, the web-survey will be as a support to the answer of the second question, which is directly connected to the supporters.

1. Do smaller elite football teams use Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players as communication tools to enhance their brand equity?

2. How do existing fans and smaller teams perceive the communication of Sponsorship, Stadium, Event and Buying players and how do these communication tools connect to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors?

By answering these research questions this thesis will end up in fulfilling the purpose of this thesis:

The purpose of this study is to investigate how smaller teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and smaller teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty).

3.5 Qualitative interviews

In the field of doing qualitative interviews there are many alternatives to choose from. But, mainly there are of two kinds, structured or unstructured interviews. The structured interview (Standardize interview) is that the interviewer entails the administration of an interview schedule. The aim of this kind of interview is to give all interviews exactly the same context of questioning. In other words each respondent's gets exactly the same questions and no follow up questions are allowed. However, with unstructured interviews means that the interviewer has only an interview guide with list of topics or issues and the style of questions are informal. The phrases and interview questions vary from interview to interview. (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

In this thesis the authors have chosen to use an interview form that is something between a structured interview and an unstructured interview, the semi-structured interview. When doing semi-structured interviews the questions are in general form of an interview schedule but are able to vary the sequence of questions. Semi-structured interviews have been made both with the supporters and the chosen persons within the teams. Why semi-structured interviews were made is because that specific form of interviewing allowed the authors of this master thesis to ask follow-up questions and to get a deeper understanding of the chosen smaller elite football teams in Allsvenskan. (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) there are seven steps to get through an interview: It involves thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting. Further the authors explain that these could be useful to novice researchers. This master thesis has used these different steps in order to achieve best result and to carry out these interviews properly.

3.5.1 Telephone interviews

When constructing the interview guides several things have been considered by the authors, such as formulating the questions in a way that the research questions got answered used appropriate language to the respondents and no leading questions. (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

Why the authors decided to do interviews over the telephone is because of the time spending and money spending it would require meeting all the teams face to face, also because of the chosen teams' locations which are spread all around Skåne and up to Stockholm. Therefore

telephone interviews were considered by the authors to be the best possible way to get relevant information from the teams. The authors are aware of some limitations regarding telephone interviews. For example, having the ability to respond and react on the respondent's body language (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The authors are also aware of that recording an interview can have an effect on the respondent's answers (Bryman & Bell, 2007), however after the first interview with one of the teams, the authors were convinced that recording the interview while doing it over the phone was the best way in order to capture all the information that was given by the respondent.

3.6 Selection criteria for smaller football teams

This criterion is based on which league the team is currently playing in. In order to qualify as a smaller elite football team, the team has to play in 'Allsvenskan', which is the highest and best football league in Sweden.

3.6.1 Definition of a smaller elite football team

The authors of this thesis have chosen to define 'a smaller elite football team as a team that is currently playing in the highest football league in Sweden, 'Allsvenskan'.

3.7 Research procedure – Smaller teams and respondents

The authors began the search for potential smaller football clubs that was suited for the empirical study and that reaches the requirements for Swedish elite football clubs. A list with potential clubs was made with their respective representatives in form of sporting director, communications director, marketing director, commercial director and other positions that could be helpful for this research. The writers gave them a call and explained what they were doing and how they wanted these persons to participate in a telephone interview. The majority had a positive approach due to it might be good publicity for the club and therefore an interview was set up with six (6) people within four different teams (Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, AIK and Helsingborgs IF) approximately 10 days after calling them for the first time.

The interviews were conducted with one respondent at a time and both authors were present during all the interviews, except for two occasions when the interview with Malmö FF and one of the interviews with AIK took place. Although, both authors were present during most of the interviews, one of the authors asked the questions to reduce misunderstandings and confusing the respondent. All the interviews regarding the football teams were conducted over telephone and were recorded and transcribed in order to secure the authors' objectivity. The respondents have approved the telephone interviews afterwards.

When searching for relevant respondents within the different teams that were able to answer the questions, the authors focused their search on finding persons directly involved in the team's brand building process and the team's communication strategy. When searching for respondents (supporters) outside the teams the focus was on finding supporters that were cheering for one of the chosen investigated teams.

3.8 Selection

Given the selection criterion above, the authors of this thesis have selected four teams that suit the profile. The selected teams are presented below and all teams are playing in the Swedish league 'Allsvenskan'.

3.8.1 The choice of smaller elite football teams

3.8.2 Malmö FF

Malmö FF (MFF) was established in 1910 and has won the highest football league in Sweden, 'Allsvenskan' 16 times and 'Svenska Cupen' (The Swedish cup) 14 times since the start. Malmö FF is the only Swedish team that has played in the final of 'Europacupen' and they were the first team in Sweden that introduced professional salaries for the players. Malmö FF plays their home games at their relatively new arena 'Swedbank Stadion', an arena which the club Malmö FF own and run by themselves. (www.mff.se) With the total sum of 19 titles in 'Allsvenskan', Malmö FF is the team that has won 'Allsvenskan' most times. (www.allsvenska.se)

3.8.3 Kalmar FF

Kalmar FF got its name through a name change from 'Kalmar Idrottssällskap' in 1927. Since the start of Kalmar FF the team has won 'Allsvenskan' and 'Svenska Cupen' several times. Kalmar FF has also participated in the qualifying process to 'UEFA- Cupen' three times. They play their home matches at 'Guldfågeln Arena', which was built in 2011. (www.kalmarff.se)

3.8.4 AIK

AIK (Allmänna Idrottsklubben) football started in 1891 and is currently playing their home games at 'Friends Arena'. AIK is a football team from the Swedish capital Stockholm and has won 'Allsvenskan' 11 times and 'Svenska Cupen' 8 times. AIK has also won 'Supercupen' in 2010. (www.aikfotboll.se)

3.8.5 Helsingborgs IF

Helsingborgs IF (HIF) started in June 1907 and has since the start won 'Allsvenskan' seven times. HIF is also in possession of several titles from different cups and has managed 63 seasons in 'Allsvenskan' (including the season of 2013). HIF managed to do something that no team in Sweden has managed with before. They took three titles in the same year (2011) when they won 'Supercupen', 'Svenska Cupen' and 'Allsvenskan'. (www.hif.se)

3.9 The choice of respondents within the teams

Per Welinder, Head of communication at Malmö FF

Per Welinder is in charge of the brand Malmö FF and is highly involved in how Malmö FF use different communication channels. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Per Rosenqvist, Head of marketing at Kalmar FF

Per Rosenqvist is in charge of sponsoring, marketing, communication of the brand and business development at Kalmar FF. (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-05-26)

Niklas Nestlander, Commercial manager at AIK football

Niklas Nestlander is in charge of sales and marketing activities at AIK. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26)

Gabriella Blombäck, Head of communication at AIK football

Gabriella Blombäck is in charge of the internal and the external communication in AIK and is very much involved in AIK's Stadium (Friends arena). (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29)

Rickard Nilsson, Head of Marketing at Helsingborg IF

Rickard Nilsson is in charge of creating relationships with the business world and creating revenues and resources to Helsingborgs IF. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

Björn Andersson, Head of security and event

Björn Andersson is in charge of security and football event. His main task is to secure that players, audience and his colleagues are secure during the football games. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26)

3.10 Selection criteria for the belonging supporters

This selection criterion is regarding the choice of supporters. In order to qualify as a respondents in this master thesis, the persons that were asked the questions in the qualitative interviews has to cheer on one of the selected teams (Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, AIK or Helsingborgs IF).

3.10.1 Definition of being a football supporter

The authors of this thesis have chosen to define a supporter as a person that is emotionally attached and cheering for one special team in the highest football league in Sweden, 'Allsvenskan' (can be connected to Aaker's (2010) 'committed customer'). The supporter has been on the home arena of his or her team several times and cares about the team's currently ranking in 'Allsvenskan'.

3.11 Research procedure – Supporters

Regarding the qualitative interviews with football fans the writers have approached various people of different age, nationality, occupation and genre. The people who have been interviewed are either cheering of Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, AIK or Helsingborgs IF. Due to the teams locations around Sweden the authors have close friends in the south of Sweden that where supporters to one of the teams. After localizing supporters that would fit into our thesis, an interview was made with the supporter face to face in various places in Lund, where both authors where present. In order to get a stronger empirical data the writers have chosen to interview fans linked to the same teams, which were approached earlier. Thus the purpose of this master thesis could be fulfilled easier.

3.11.1 Face-to-face interviews

Regarding the qualitative interviews with the supporters, face to face semi-structure interviews were made, were the authors interviewed six (6) persons on different locations in Lund and transcript their answers on place. The authors didn't think it were necessary to record the interviews with the supporters because the interviews were transcribed and all the respondents gave their approval on place. Why the authors did face- to- face interviews with the supporters, were because of all the respondents lived in Lund or closed to Lund, so no unnecessary time-spending were made. With all the face-to-face interviews with the supporters both authors were present, were one at the time asked the questions and the other one supported by asking follow- up questions if it were necessary. By doing face-to-face interviews with the respondents, the authors were able to see on the respondents' body language and face expressions if further questions were needed or if the questions needed to be repeated (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

3.11.2 The choice of supporters

The choice of supporters, which have qualified for interviewing, have followed the earlier mentioned requirement for being a football supporter. In this thesis the authors have interviewed six (6) persons, which wanted to be anonymous, from the south region of Sweden, Skåne. All the persons that were interviewed are supporters to one of the investigated teams, Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, AIK or Helsingborgs IF. As the reader can see below, the respondents were all males and the majority was from Sweden.

Name	Nationality	Gender	Age	Occupation	Team
Anonymous 1	Bosnian	Male	25	Student	HIF
Anonymous 2	Swedish	Male	22	Student	HIF
Anonymous 3	Swedish	Male	29	Student	Kalmar FF
Anonymous 4	Iraqi	Male	22	Working	Malmö FF
Anonymous 5	Swedish	Male	25	Student	Malmö FF
Anonymous 6	Swedish	Male	24	Student	AIK

3.12 Quantitative web survey

To be able to get a more generalized understanding the authors decided to do a quantitative web-survey with random people that have an interest in football. This quantitative web-survey was posted on the Internet during the time the qualitative interviews were made. Therefore the collected data is gathered both from national and international supporters that might cheer for many different clubs.

As mentioned earlier, this master thesis will utilize a mix-method also called triangulation and will thus provide a general quantitative approach in the form of a web survey. According to Bryman & Bell (2007), a web-survey works by inviting respondents to a website where a specific questionnaire can be found and implemented at the selected platform. The use of a web-survey is smoother due to it can ensure that respondents answer consistently throughout the survey due to its dynamic error checking. Subsequently, the authors can easily transfer the collected data to different programs to analyse it, unlike a regular paper survey made manually (Easterby-Smith et. al. 2008). According to Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) a survey attempts to acquire knowledge about a particular phenomenon with the help of the responders of the questionnaire.

With this type of quantitative study, which is used in this thesis, there are some major advantages such as: *faster response*, which means that one can within seconds get results from the answered survey. *Unrestricted compass*, which means that the master thesis has no geographical barriers and may send the questionnaire to everyone with access to the Internet. Finally, the third advantage for the authors is the *Low cost* that implies that one could spend time on other things that the authors may save on chasing respondents and coding difficulties that comes with a paper questionnaire. (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

The Internet and social media have made it easier to spread the questionnaire by getting access to different types of communities. Hence it is an advantage for the researchers due to it

can infiltrate them and distribute the survey to chosen groups that have a connection to the topic and generate valid responses. (Eysenbach & Till, 2001)

3.12.1 The process of the quantitative web survey

The survey was made on Google docs where one could share the questionnaire to different social networks. The quantitative web-survey was posted on a football site on Twitter (Get football news) and on different related football sites on Facebook (Get football news, 100.united, Arsenal FC till I die, Chelsea FC latest news, LFC news 1, Silly Season Sweden and World). The respondents have found the pages by them selves and a total of 301 persons have answered the questionnaire. The web-survey questionnaire was posted 2013-04-24 and was taken down 2013-05-03 (during this time the qualitative interviews was made). The goal was to be able to get a greater understanding regarding how fans perceive the chosen communication tools and how these affect a clubs brand building process. Regarding the supporters that answered the quantitative questionnaire on the Internet are from different countries (was published on different international sites on the Internet) around the world and are both males and females.

When the authors of this master thesis designed the quantitative web-survey questionnaire, there were a few things to have in mind, such as which order the questions will have in the questionnaire. The authors wanted to open the questionnaire by asking something interesting, non-threatening and general questions, which will lead to more specific questions related to the authors' subject. Finally, the authors of this thesis waited to the end of the questionnaire with the more difficult and complex questions (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). The authors have also considered when doing the questionnaire that the formulation of individual questions is also important to the design of the questionnaires. The questions in the web-survey questionnaire were constructed based on the theories in this study. The questions were also constructed so the answers that were given could be compared to the answers that were given to the authors in the qualitative interviews. Depending on the answers from the web-survey, the authors could see if there are some similarities or differences between the qualitative interviews answers and the web-survey.

The following basic rules of designing questions from Lundahl & Skärvad (1999, p. 173) have been considered by the authors when the web-survey questionnaire was made:

1. Formulate the question clearly so that it is fully understood by the respondent.
2. Avoid rare, strange and long words.
3. Specify the question in time and space.
4. Aim for short questions.
5. Avoid emotionally charged words or leading questions.
6. Just ask for one thing at a time.
7. Specify carefully the concepts included in the question.

Another thing that the authors were aware of when constructed the web-survey questionnaire was whether the answer choices should be open and/or bound responses. When constructing an open question the respondent answer the question with his or her own words. But when constructing a bound question the creator of the questionnaire makes up the answer in advance. The major advantage considering bound answers is the subsequent statistical processing afterwards. (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999)

In this thesis the authors have decided to use bound answers due to its advantages and the researchers have also active used the book by Lundahl & Skärvad (1999) when creating the questionnaires and hence thought of these matters mentioned in this written paragraph to make sure a well done survey is made.

3.13 Structure of the interview guides and web survey questionnaire

The interview guides that were used regarding interviewing the supporters of the teams and the persons inside the teams are presented as an appendix in this study. Due to the different follow-up questions that were made with the respondents of the teams and the respondents of cheering for one of the chosen teams, the guides are containing the main questions that were asked during the interviews. This is in accordance with the semi-structured interview form. The questions were in open form in order to not affect the objectivity of the information that was given to us. As the authors have already established above, the respondents have approved all the qualitative interviews.

Regarding the web survey questionnaire the questions was in closing form (bound questions), to reduce misunderstandings from the respondents. This quantitative web survey questionnaire will also be as an appendix in this thesis.

The questions regarding the qualitative interviews and the web survey questionnaire are based on the authors' theoretical framework in this thesis and its proves that the questions that were asked is connected to this thesis research questions.

3.14 Data collection

In this master thesis both primary and secondary data are used. Although this thesis has taken on an abductive approach and has its base from theory, the gathering of primary data is especially in focus. Primary data means that a researcher is collecting the data for the first time, in other words, the researcher goes directly to the primary source (Jacobsen, 2002). The authors of this thesis have collected data directly from the primary source through interviews gathered from both the chosen football teams and from the supporters from the different teams, to secure that the data used in this thesis is accurate and reliable.

Due to the use of a mix method in this thesis the authors have also gathered primary data from a quantitative perspective. Through a web survey questionnaire the authors have reached more general information from supporters about how they thoughts are regarding the chosen communication tools and how they connect them to the teams brand building process. The answering supporters are cheering on different teams all around the world and with this web survey the authors saw if there are some connection between the web survey and the qualitative interviews with the supporters to the chosen teams.

As previously established, secondary data is also used in this thesis. Secondary data means that another researcher has gathered the information to another purpose (Jacobsen, 2002). In this thesis secondary data are used in form of articles, presentations from the teams' web sites and literature and was collected in the purpose of earlier research in the field of marketing and different communication tools, present the chosen football teams and to present suggested theories.

3.15 Delimitation

How smaller football teams build their brand to strengthen their brand equity has not been a hot topic, however, as the authors have already mentioned, brand equity in other industries are highly discovered by several researchers such as Aaker and Keller. In this study the authors have focused both on a team perspective and from a supporter perspective. Because this field of creating brand equity for smaller teams haven't been sufficient discovered the authors have made necessary delimitations. One delimitation is, in order to fulfill the purpose the authors have decided to investigate Swedish football teams in the highest league, 'Allsvenskan' and asked belonging existing supporters. Because there are several ways of how to communicate a brand (Pelsmacker et al, 2010) that can affect brand equity (Aaker, 2010) the authors have also chosen to use Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors together with selected communication tools relevant to the football industry. Due to that Internet reaches people all over the world it is difficult to delimitate the web-survey to only Sweden, therefore the web-survey that have been done will be, depending on the answers, be as a support to the qualitative interviews with the supporters or/and the teams.

3.16 External validity

Because of this thesis purpose, it is not an explanatory research and has not the purpose of explaining how and why event X led to event Y, therefore this study is not concerned with Internal Validity. However, external validity is about whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the research context (Bryman & Bell, 2007). External validity is a hot topic when discussing case studies. Although many critics say that single cases can't be generalized to other cases, Yin (2009) says that they can. The critics put the single cases in relations to the quantitative surveys where the sample intended to be generalized to a greater population. Having that said, Yin (2009) states that case studies rely on analytic generalization. (Yin, 2009)

In this thesis the authors have used a mix- method including an embedded case- study with qualitative interviews and also a web-survey to give the reader a more general view of how supporters, which are cheering for different teams around the world, are affected by the communication tools and how they connect them to team's brand building. Because of the huge amount of supporters around the world, the authors of this thesis have only investigated a small part of it in the web- survey. Therefore the web-survey alone can't be generalized that every supporter will answer the same. Regarding the embedded case- study of the investigated teams, alone, the authors can't generalize the findings to other top-leagues around the worlds, for example the English Premier League. Therefore regarding the whole thesis, the authors can't claim that the findings of this study can be generalized to other cases and contexts, however, this is not the purpose neither of this study nor this research design.

However, if this study shows that Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors and the authors chosen communication tools are applicable for smaller football teams in the football industry. Also, that the communication tools can be connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory, this can be generalized, according to Yin's (2009) analytic generalization, within 'Allsvenskan' to other smaller teams and to other cases. However, this requires similar, nearly exact conditions as this study was based on (Yin, 2009)

3.17 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with if the results of the study are repeatable (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In order to achieve a high range of reliability as possible, due to this thesis mix- method design the authors have explain deeply every step how this study was made. The authors have also clarified for the reader both advantages and disadvantages with the chosen method conducted to this research. The interviews with the teams have been recorded and all the interviews have got the respondents approval. The result of the web-survey questionnaire has been presented in the empirical framework and is also in the appendix together with the interview' guides. However, because a web-survey has been done were every person accessed to Internet had the opportunity to answer, it is difficult for another researcher to replicate the web-survey. Regarding the embedded case- study interviews that have been done with individuals and are therefore affected with human behaviour, which is not static. Therefore the factor of human behaviour plays a big part, which is beyond the authors of this thesis control. However, the big issue is the quantitative questionnaire on the Internet and makes this study hard to replicate and therefore has a chance to differ from the original study.

4. Empirical result and Analysis

In this section the authors will present and analyze the empirical result of the teams, belonging supporters to the teams and the web-survey. Further on the authors will present how the teams and the supporters rank the different communication tools and how they connect the tools to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors. In the end a comparison and discussion will be made between the result of the qualitative interviews and the general web-survey. For further information about the interview' guidelines and the web-survey can be find in appendix.

4.1 Teams

All the empirical results are based on chosen theories, which is presented in the theoretical part of this thesis. All the respondents have given their approval regarding the interviews and are aware of that the result will be used as basic material in this master thesis. The supporters from the investigated teams will be addressed as Anonymous 1 – 6 followed by their cheering team, to respect the supporters' request regarding anonymity. The questions asked both to the supporters and the clubs will be shown in appendix. The researchers will also have the complete web-survey including the results in the appendix.

Do you believe that branding is important for a football club today?

Regarding the above question all the teams' respondents (AIK, Malmö FF, Kalmar FF and Helsingborgs IF) believe that branding is very important for a smaller football club in the football industry. However even if the teams agree with each other in this question, they answered different of it. Per Welinder head of communication at Malmö FF thought it was really important and said that a football brand is no different from another brand that seeks the attention from the consumers (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25). AIK's commercial manager Niklas Nestlander gave a different answer than Per Welinder. He said that AIK isn't a normal brand, comparing to a brand in another industry, because AIK don't use strategies such as positioning, he believes instead that the brand is what it is, in other words the power lies in the passion of the brand AIK (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-25). However, Rickard Nilsson (Head of marketing at Helsingborgs IF) said that branding was no priority for a football club 10 to 15 years ago, because a club thought that it was enough to generate sporting success. But now, football clubs have realized that it is not enough to just win trophies and titles, it needs branding as well. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

When the authors asked the questions if their teams have a strong brand today comparing to other teams in Allsvenskan, all the respondents said that they have a very strong brand. However, Niklas Nestlander (AIK) was most confident and answered:

“Absolutely. I would say that it (AIK) is one of the strongest brands in Sweden. You can ask anyone about what AIK is, and then everybody have heard something about it. Whether you hate AIK or you love AIK”. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-05-26)

Per Welinder (Malmö FF) goes head to head with Niklas Nestlander (AIK) and said that they have one of the strongest brand regarding sports brands in Sweden. He continue by saying that they have done research about it and that it can be measured in many ways, for example audience and sponsorship revenue (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25):

“Yes, all the measurement we do indicate that. We belong to one of the absolutely strongest sport brands in Sweden and you can measure that in many different ways. We had, for example last year (2012), most audience in the whole Scandinavia. It was no other club that had more audience than us”. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-05-25)

Kalmar FF and Helsingborgs IF were the only teams that mentioned the sporting success of the team when answering the question. Björn Andersson, head of security and football event at Kalmar FF agrees with what Per Welinder and Niklas Nestlander say about their club, and positioning his own club brand, Kalmar FF, lower down in the ranking:

“Yes, it is very strong. I saw recently that it is Kalmar’s biggest brand at the moment. . . . Comparing to the rest of football Sweden we are somewhere in the middle, but I think we are ranked higher than Norrköping. It is the “big city” teams, Malmö, Göteborg, Helsingborg, AIK, Djurgården and Hammarby which are the bigger brands, but after them, we are”. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26)

One interesting statement from Per Welinder (Malmö FF) was that he believed that media has a great “punching power” regarding building the brand stronger. However, he continue by saying that there is much local media in Stockholm (Interview, Per Wlinder, 2013-04-25), and if the authors connects Niklas Nestlander statement about that AIK is one of the strongest brands in Sweden. The authors get the intuition that it may have something to do with the strong local media power in Stockholm. Especially, when Björn Andersson mentioned all the teams in Stockholm as well.

The next question of the agenda was which communication tools do the teams use to strengthen their brand. Malmö FF, Kalmar FF and AIK answered almost the same on the questions. All the three above-mentioned teams use Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter as a communication tool when they want to build stronger brand equity. Kalmar FF, Malmö FF and AIK also use traditional media such as television and ads. However, the first tool that all these teams said were their own home page. As mentioned earlier, the authors have an intuition about why AIK is such a strong brand is because of all the local media in the Stockholm area, and when AIK stated above that they are using traditional media such as television and ads, the authors’ intuition got stronger.

Although, all the teams answered quite similar regarding their communication tools, Per Welinder (Malmö FF) stated his answer of the question that Malmö FF is using some of the authors investigated communication tools to build a stronger brand. According to Per Welinder Malmö FF is using a type of sponsorship structure, which includes two clear sponsors that have exposure rights. This makes that Malmö FF is being associate with other big companies and strengthen the brand Malmö FF indirectly. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-26)

As the authors mentioned in the theory section, Fisher et al (2010) argued that to build a stronger brand a company needs to invest heavily in communication, distribution and other activities. However, from the above written, the authors got the intuition that the teams don’t invest heavily in communication, because their strategy is more through social media and their own web sites. Although, it may be cheaper to invest in social media than in television,

but the teams invest in other activities as well, which will be presented further down in this section.

4.1.1 Sponsorship

When the writers asked the investigated teams, if they use sponsorship as a brand building tool AIK, Malmö FF (MFF) and Helsingborgs IF (HIF) said that they use sponsorship very much as a brand building tool. However Kalmar FF gave the authors a different answer.

In the theory chapter the authors mentioned that Pelsmacker et al (2010) stated that sponsorship have become a great role in companies' marketing activities, but according to all the respondents in the chosen investigated teams, the buying procedure of sponsorship is not included in their brand building process. However, all the teams are selling Sponsorship to different companies to get revenue, i.e. other companies are using what Pelsmacker et al (2010) calls 'Event- related sponsorship' when they place their logotype on one of the teams jerseys. In other words, the teams don't sponsor events or other happenings to create greater brand equity for the team, but the teams are highly dependent of 'Event related sponsorship' from other companies on their jerseys. One example of this is the Swedish beer company 'Åbro' which has sponsored AIK for several years, almost twenty years (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29).

“Our two other main sponsors are Adidas and Stadium and we feel that both they and we get out the most of the sponsorship, because we work towards a similar audience and that we stand for similar estimations and have almost the same interests. So, maybe there are easier to work with sponsors that act in the “same world”. Meantime we have had ‘Åbro’ for about twenty years and it has been incredibly successful”. (Interview, Gabriella, Blombäck, 2013-04-29)

The authors started to wonder why the football teams don't buy sponsorships with other companies or events, because according to Horowitz (2012), which was mentioned in the theoretical part, stated that sponsorship is one of the best communication tool for reaching your customers. If a customer is aware of the brand there is three times more possibility that he or she will purchase from the company later on, comparing to another brands. As the writer said, this is a surprise, because the teams are selling merchandises with their label on as well and also that it can further on attract visitors to the stadium and create more fans.

However, Per Welinder (MFF) stated that when they moved into their new arena 'Swedbank Stadium' they decided to have fewer sponsors on their jerseys (maximum 3 sponsors) and only 16 sponsors that were shown in the arena. By having this type of sponsor structure, the jerseys exposes more the brand Malmö FF, and according to Per Welinder, it is very important that the brand Malmö FF are being seen from the public and not all the other sponsor' brands. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Although the teams do not sponsor any other event, TV-show or happenings some of the respondents stated that it is important to have the right sponsors on their jerseys. Rickard Nilsson (HIF), Gabriella Blombäck and Niklas Nestlander (AIK) and Per Welinder (Malmö FF) said that the sponsors on their jerseys are very important and also that they care of which sponsor they have on.

“Off course we care about which sponsors we have on our jerseys. We choose them, we are very active regarding the search for companies”. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

“Absolutely, which sponsors we have (on the jerseys) are very interesting and important. . . but our sponsors we use, is apart of our brand building”. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Kalmar FF was the only team that gave the writers a different answer comparing to the other teams. According to Per Rosenqvist (Kalmar FF) Kalmar FF don't search for specific companies to put on their jerseys, however it is important to not use sponsors that can be bad for the brand. He continue by saying, that it is not many teams in 'Allsvenskan' that can choose which sponsors they will have on their jerseys (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26). The writers started to wonder if this is only regards Kalmar FF and not the other investigated teams, because as the writers have already stated above, the other teams can choose which sponsors they will have on their jerseys and they are also locking for the most appropriate one. However, the other respondents of Kalmar FF, Björn Andersson, said the following:

“Sponsorship is more important for the clubs survival and it is through Sponsorship the biggest part of our revenue comes from, and when we (Kalmar FF) is being seen together with famous companies it will affect, off course, our brand”. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26)

Although the teams do not use 'event-related sponsorship' or any other "buying type" of sponsorships that are mentioned in the theoretical part, Kalmar FF and Helsingborgs IF are doing different things to show their brand for the public. For example Helsingborgs IF is doing at the moment a project that is called "The school project" where they let children in the six-grade meet the players of Helsingborgs IF and also teaching the children regarding ethics (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26). Kalmar FF also cooperates with different kinds of help organisations where the children are in focus (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26). The authors believes that this is a very good example of letting the public know that a football team is more than "just" a team, and these kinds of actions also helps the team to build up their brand and their image.

4.1.2 Event

Earlier, the writers asked the teams' respondents about Sponsorships, which the teams didn't use so much, only the selling procedure. However, when the writers asked if they use events as a communication tool to strengthen their brand. All the teams answered that they are very active with events to strengthen their brand, except for Helsingborgs IF (HIF). However, HIF can be discussed if they use events or not. Rickard Nilsson (HIF) said that they are trying to use events as a brand building tool. For example, when HIF are doing activities with their (cooperate) companies they are trying to show the public visually the brand. HIF is also showing their brand through ads besides the arena, the staffs are labelled with the brand HIF and when they arrive to a hotel there are flags that will show the brand (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26). Regarding Rickard Nilsson's answer, the writers can't stress that HIF are doing events to build their brand. The answer that was given refers to a more traditional marketing communication strategy.

Both respondents from AIK, Gabriella Blombäck and Niklas Nestlander, stated that they are trying to do events all the time that will strengthen their brand;

“Yes, we are doing that a lot. Some events are we doing together with our sponsors, Stadium and Adidas. Then, some events we have are apart of our matches. . .”. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29)

Niklas Nestlander involves AIK’s matches and the arena when he answered the question:

“We have 15 events a year, it is our own matches . . . We work a lot with outside activities (outside the arena). On Sundays we have “Gnagisland” which are for children, there we have built up different jumping castles and suchlike things to broaden and strengthen the brand towards families with children”. (Interview, Per Nestlander, 2013-04-26)

Although, AIK and Malmö FF are using some events in order to build their brands, Kalmar FF is taking events one step further:

“We are using events very much to raise our brand. We are doing kick-offs, where we invite the public to a kind of show with lights and sounds, video presentations etcetera. We are doing the “FF- gala” where we close our season with awards. We are doing ‘girls- nights’, ‘The family day’ and a big event when we are building up the arena with jumping castles and sageway-races, where the whole team of Kalmar FF are in place to write autographs and deliver free t-shirts to all the children. We are working with these events to strengthen our brand” (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26)

Based on the teams answers above, the writers can stress that Kalmar FF are the team that are doing most event- activities to strengthen their brand. However, all the teams AIK, Malmö FF and Kalmar FF are doing events to build their brands and seems to targeting especially families with children. However, the authors are a little bit confused about how Rickard Nilsson answered, when the other investigated teams seems to believe that events have a major positively affect on the teams’ brand building.

All the events mentioned above by the teams, fits with the definition of what an event are, according to Wood (2009) in the theoretical part. Because both matches and events outside the arena have an audience, which a message or experience will be shared and generated. The matches can be connected to Wood’s (2009) ‘product visitor attractions’ because the matches are permanent through the whole season. Regarding the events outside the arena, for example AIK’s ‘Gnagisland’ can be connected to Woods (2009) ‘created event’, because AIK creates the event with what the brands stands for, in this case families and children.

4.1.3 Stadium

When the writers asked the question whether the interviewed teams are using the stadium in order to build their brand the writers of this master thesis received this answer from one of them:

“The stadium is the focus of the 15 main Events (matches) the team AIK offers per year, and thus should be able to offer the fans of outdoor activities, before the game, but also to create the feeling for their fans in the stadium and when

heading to the stadium. One should sense that an AIK match is happening and the opportunity the club have of attracting new fans and sponsors”. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26).

Gabriella Blombäck (the communication manager of AIK) and Björn Andersson (the security and event manager of Kalmar FF) agreed with Niklas Nestlander that the stadium has its part in the club and how important it is in the context of games. Everything from the facilities and the feeling to be on matches (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-05-29; Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26).

This can be directly attributed to Pelsmackers et al (2010) argument, which was stated in the theoretical part, on what features point-of-purchase communication can serve. One of these is to attract consumers. The communication should also be able to inform, lead to the purchase and remind a person. The POP should lead to build an image. The researches of this master thesis receive indications that that the clubs is trying to implement these features by creating these events associated with the stadium. Uhrich & Koenigstorfer (2009) also points out the importance of the stadium and the atmosphere in terms of attracting sponsorships and ticket sales.

Another club (Helsingborg IF) compared the stadium and the match with theatre and argued that they belonged to the same category, the entertainment industry. Rickard Nilsson points out that a person who has been told that if you do not get a drink in the break, sitting in bad chairs, the actors are unknown and that you could not really hear what they said. That is no theatre you would like to go to. But instead if you are told that it was a nice arena, there were many people, awesome atmosphere. You can drink beer in the break and also I saw a great game. The marketing manager believes that is more attracting and can mitigate a loss or strengthen a win. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26) Uhrich & Benkenstein (2010) agrees with this by saying that the atmosphere is important to be able to satisfy the need of the consumers. The same authors consider the atmosphere adds a unique value in terms of entertainment value, as Rickard Nilsson mentioned before. Finally the authors consider the sport stadium to be mighty and therefore important which Niklas Nestlander agrees with when focusing on their 15 main events every year.

Once again the writers in this paper consider that this may be linked to Pelsmacker et al's (2010) theories of store image and perceived atmosphere (mentioned in the theoretical part) for the consumers, where the personality could be divided into 5 different characters. Naturally for the authors of this essay is to connect the stadium and the atmosphere to number one called enthusiasm and that contains a welcoming, enthusiastic, lively and dynamic feeling which Rickard Nilsson explained before. It could also be connected to the different dimensions of atmosphere. Aural dimension that contains volume and pitch is vital as well on and outside (on the way to) the stadium as Niklas Nestlander, the commercial manager, implied.

4.1.4 Buying player

When the writers asked the question whether the investigated teams are buying players in order to build their brand, all the respondents answered homogeneously. However, Per Welinder (Malmö FF) was strongest in his declaration and answered that the club does not use this kind of strategy in order to build their brand. The 48 year old head of communications declared clearly that it is fairly few clubs in the world that have the financial strength and risk 100's of millions to be able to release a player solely to have an effect on the brand.

Furthermore, Per Welinder develops his argument and said that buying a player obviously has a direct impact on the brand by signing a well-known player but it is not a factor in mind when the club decides to sign a player. It is rather the players' qualities and what the player can contribute on the pitch that matters for Malmo FF. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Niklas Nestlander, the commercial manager of AIK, agrees with Per Welinder and explains that the club does not work the same way as Manchester United, who signed a South Korean or Chinese in order to strengthen its brand in Asia. AIK must rather focus on buying players who can deliver and who are good on the field. The Swedish clubs does not have the financial basis to act in the same way that big ones do. Niklas Nestlander explains furthermore, that if AIK would buy an Asian football player, it would not have an impact on their brand in Asia and therefore not profitable for them. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26)

Per Rosenqvist, Marketing Manager of Kalmar FF supports this pattern and he implies that buying star players would definitely increase the status of the team. Further the spokesman for this club indicates that only one team has succeeded with this and it is Elfsborg (another big Swedish team in 'Allsvenskan'). Kalmar FF according to Per Rosenqvist does not use this strategy in order to build their brand (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26).

These deep interviews indicate that the chosen teams generally do not use buying players to strengthen their brand. The need for large amounts of money to attract these stars is something that does not seem to exist in Swedish football. For an instance how Swedish clubs use sponsors, is a sign of economic weakness the researcher of this master thesis would imply. According to Per Rosenqvist there are few clubs in Sweden that have the power of deciding what kind of sponsor that should appear on their game jerseys (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26). The financial part can have a big impact and play a tremendous role why these Swedish football teams do not use player signings to strengthen their brand. The economy is not strong at all if you compare with teams like Manchester United (mentioned before) that recruits players to reinforce its name in a specific market.

A second indication of a weak economy is the budget of the marketing within these smaller football teams. For an instance Niklas Nestlander reveals that the club do not have a financial strength in their advertising budget in order to use different kind of marketing (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26). This statement reveals further weaknesses in the economy in 'Allsvenskan'. This indicate that smaller teams in the same league probably have it even tougher considering the size the club AIK belongs to in Sweden and in the Swedish League, 'Allsvenskan'.

Finally Rickard Nilsson, marketing manager, points out that signing players that have an impact on the brand obviously plays a role. If the club find two similar players (A and B) and it turns out that B raises the brand, it is obvious that selecting that specific player is the correct choice. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

In this subject the reader must distinguish between what a person considers effective/good and if the club active use the tool. Earlier in this section the authors have presented empirical collected data and analysed for the initial concept.

4.1.5 Ranking

After asking the four investigated smaller clubs in Sweden a couple of questions the researchers wanted to find out which of these communication tools (sponsorship, event, stadium and buying players) they rank highest respective lowest. In our ranking system one could choose from the number one to four, which the highest number represent the least effective tools and the lower number, in turn, represent the most effective communication tool.

In this question the researchers got a little bit mixed answers from the clubs where both Per Welinder from Malmö FF and Per Rosenqvist from Kalmar would rank buying players as first and have the biggest impact out of the four this study have chosen to include and examine. For an instance Per Welinder indicates that in Swedish football generally Buying players have the greatest brand impact. Further the head of communication implies that:

“Any club that suddenly gets money and decides to buy five stars would overnight become very famous and renowned”. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Per Welinder ranks the stadium as number two due to its importance to attract sponsors and fans and the construction of the stadium is a demonstration that Malmö FF want to be at the forefront. Next comes the sponsor structure, which follows by event as least impact on the brand due to the low level of spreader insertion of an event. If 15,000 are involved and goes to the game, maybe it is a half million that read about it. Therefore this communication tool has a lower impact than the others, according to Per Welinder. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

It is interesting for the researchers of this master thesis to receive buying players as the highest ranked communication tool when the clubs (mentioned before) do not active use this strategy in order to build their brand. Furthermore, to rank the Stadium as second is not unusual for the writers due to that football is played inside the stadium and is a meeting point for all of the supporters. However, it is surprising that the club does not rank the communication tool event higher even though it does not reach out to so many as Per Welinder explained. One can look at it differently and instead argue that these 15,000 fans that are in place will in turn talk about the games, the feeling, the experience of being at the stadium for other people, which will lead to a very large spread rate.

Per Rosenqvist (Kalmar FF) had similar thoughts regarding the four tools but instead choose to change place with sponsorship and event, which make a ranking list as follows:

1. Buying players
2. Stadium
3. Events
4. Sponsorship.

(Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26)

Rickard Nilsson (Helsingborgs IF) have chosen to rank the four tools differently from the two first mentioned before as he appreciates the Stadium higher than Sponsorship, Events and Buying players. Then Rickard Nilsson chose to place Sponsorship and Events as second and finally Buying players. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

For the writers of this paper, it seems to be quite odd that the marketing manager for Helsingborgs IF rank Buying players as last and the Stadium as first due to his earlier statement about theatre comparison and that is was a part of the entertainment industry. Rickard Nilsson specific said that it would not be attracting if the stadium and the feeling were bad. He also pointed out that seeing unknown actors would not attract people as well. Therefore the authors find it staggering to be ranking these two tools very differently and not close to each other.

Niklas Nestlander, head of Commercial at AIK football, highlights the point that the authors are trying to make regarding that the stadium should be ranked closer to buying players. Instead he ranks event and stadium as number one. It is than followed by buying players and finally sponsorship on the last place. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26) This ranking should have been more natural for Rickard Nilsson due to his earlier statement mentioned in the section above.

After all these teams ranked the four communication tools the indications the authors receive is that stadium plays a vital role for the brand building aspect. One could also notice that buying players plays a vital role even though Rickard Nilsson chose to rank it lower. However it is remarkable that sponsorship is not perceived as a useful and high effect as it could have in the world. This as previously discussed, partly with the amount of money involved, which the authors do not have a deeper understanding of based on theory and the empirical data collected.

4.1.6 Connection to brand equity

The researchers of this master thesis asked the teams Malmö FF, AIK, Helsingborgs IF and Kalmar FF to link these communication tools the writers have chosen to investigate (Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players) with Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty).

4.1.6.1 Awareness

According to Aaker (2010) event promotions, sponsorships, publicity and sampling are good examples of thinking "outside the box" and can be a vital strategy to use when one want to create awareness and becoming successful as a company. He also points out that there are two different ways of remembering a brand, top-of-mind and dominant. (Aaker, 2010)

Per Welinder (Malmö FF) would link awareness to buying players and the stadium, but also event by pointing out that:

“If you look at awareness, so again player purchases, it is connected to all the media, they are the ones who create wide attention. You have the stadium, that is mentioned a lot, it is reported more from a packed stadium if it is larger than a packed smaller stage. A new and modern stadium creates a lot more attention and I would say it follows the same line while as in the way it implements, and now I mean the event, the match event. Then you can, like MFF arrange special matches for an instance to meet Milan and it build awareness at a very high level.” (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Per Rosenqvist (Kalmar FF) is on the same track and saying that buying players are most linked to awareness. (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26)

Niklas Nestlander would also like to link event to awareness by saying:

“Awareness is of course an important part in the event that one becomes attentive what is written”. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26)

Further, Gabriella Blombäck, another person involved in AIK, stated that the club have different kind of event in order to attract individuals at early stages. “Gnagisland” is for an instance one event that the club arranges and that is more suited for families with kids, which is connected to brand awareness. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29)

Rickard Nilsson from Helsingborgs IF argues that when the club changed sponsor from Ica to Nestlé’ back in the 90s it gave the club increased awareness by changing logo on their jerseys and instead use an international brand. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-26)

The authors in this paper can clearly see that these football clubs do not have the biggest advertising budget and therefore a club use (even though it maybe be indirect) marketing efforts such as event and sponsorship, as Per Werlinder for an instance emphasized. At the same time many clubs named buying players as a way of increasing awareness. This could be another way of thinking “outside the box” even though Aaker (2010) does not mention it. It is interesting that only one of the interviewed clubs believe that the awareness is linked to sponsorship considering how big effect such communication tool can have, which Rickard Nilsson described very evident before.

6.1.6.2 Associations

As mentioned before associations are connected and driven by the company’s identity of the brand (what the company wants the brand to stand for in the customers’ mind) and the associations a customer is doing with a brand supports brand equity. A brand association can for example be product attributes, celebrity spokesperson or a particularly symbol. (Aaker, 2010)

Per Rosenqvist would like to link association to the stadium, which they own to 100 %, and thus the only ones to play on it. Further, he states that they may not be so in all arenas. For example, Friends arena that might be considered more an event stadium rather than AIK’s home stadium. (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26) Another person within the same club (Björn Andersson) agrees with Per Rosenqvist and also connects the stadium with associations. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26)

Further, Per Welinder (Malmö FF) agrees and stated:

“Stadium affects at all levels, when we built the Swedbank stadium it was the first club that built something big and new and modern and it has of course had a huge impact on the of course of the piece. We usually win every year, it is the stadium where it's most atmospheric. Where all the players want to play on and it affects how we are building our brand a lot, all the way down.”(Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Even though AIK play on Friends arena that are seen as an event stadium Gabriella Blombäck would also like to connect it to associations in the short run due to it is national stadium and the most modern stadium in Sweden. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29)

As Aaker justify associations, the researchers could understand the motivations of the clubs opinion why one should mainly connect it to the stadium. It is a symbol for the club and where supporters gathered to cheer for their teams. The stadium should prove what the club stands for and therefore rather natural to connect that way. At the same time, the matches is central in football and takes place in the arena, which also can justify Malmö FF, Kalmar FF and AIK's view.

4.1.6.3 Perceived quality

Björn Andersson connects buying players to perceived quality (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26). This followed by Niklas Nestlander's (AIK) answer, which is the following:

“Regarding player purchases I would say the perception of the club when the perceived quality. It is a quality of the team, what you have for players, if you do not have good players considered quality that is quite low”. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26)

This could be connected to one of Aaker's (2010) reason for why perceived quality is an asset where perceived quality was considered as a major driver of customer satisfaction (Aaker, 2010). It is rather natural to have a good team in order to success. However, as Niklas Nestlander stated before, if one do not have good players, the quality will also be low, which will likely reflect the success of the club. Therefore the authors thinks this argument make sense with Aaker's (2010) theory in mind.

Another asset in Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory explains how perceived quality often drives other aspects of how a brand is perceived. For an instance, when perceived quality improves, it will have an impact on all the other elements of customer's perception of the brand. (Aaker, 2010) The authors of this paper consider it to be truly based on the received information, both from the clubs and the supporters. It is like a virtuous circle. By improving the quality of the team, one will achieve great results, which will in turn maybe lead to better sponsorship, which will in turn be recognized easier and associated with better brand. All this will finally lead to a better perceived brand as Aaker (2010) justifies it.

4.1.6.4 Loyalty

According to Per Welinder, the communications manager of Malmö FF:

“Fans' loyalty to the club, I would say depends on which event we have and how we implement those. Especially for those who are here all the time. That part is really important. That you manage that relationship very carefully between club and supporters. It affects tremendously.” (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25)

Loyalty is considered to be extremely important in order to anticipate how their sales and profits will look like in the future. A brand without a "loyal base" is usually vulnerable (Aaker, 2010) Therefore it is important for a football club like any other company to build up a loyal group of supporters. The researchers consider event to be an activity linking with the fans and through various events can reach out to different types of audiences. This is something some clubs are doing in Sweden.

For an instance Per Rosenqvist (Kalmar FF) do also consider that event belongs to loyalty and the club uses different types of event such as kick-offs where they invite the public, a little more build up with light, sound and video presentations. They do the “FF” gala in the end of the season where they give away awards. The club have “girls night”, “family day” and they also have big events on the stadium where they build up the whole arena and have sageway – races, go-carts and the entire first team signing autographs and handing out free t-shirts to all children. The club likes to come closer to the supporters and work with them in early ages. (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26)

Aaker (2010) also points out, as mentioned before, that having a customer base makes it less costly for the company in the sense of the company doesn’t have to look for new customer, which is much more expensive than maintaining and focusing on the existing customers. (Aaker, 2010)

Once again, as these two clubs argued, event plays a vital role to create loyalty, which is according to Aaker (2010) critical for a company’s brand. Aaker (2010) also stated when building strong brands it is important to segmenting your customer loyalty because it provides a tactical and strategically insights during the brand building process. (Aaker, 2010)

The spokesmen from AIK (Gabriella Blombäck and Niklas Nestlander) agrees with previous clubs regarding event and also consider it to be connected to loyalty and the club AIK also have different kind of event in order to attract and bound fans at early stages. For an instance “Gnagisland” which is more suited for families with kids. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29; Interview, Niklas Nestlander Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26)

As the authors already mention above regarding the teams, about having a broad customer loyalty base is very important, because the teams can then predict in the future how their sales are going to be (for example, tickets sales). Therefore, activities such as event are very important to maintain and keep their customers’ loyalty towards the team.

With all this in mind, the researchers find it interesting and logical that the majority of the interviewed clubs consider event being associated with loyalty due to the closeness one could get by doing different types of activities, especially in early stages. It is a way for the club to bond with their supporters in order to build a loyalty base that would strengthen the brand of the club.

4.2 Supporters of the investigated teams

4.2.1 Sponsorship

Regarding the supporters of each investigated team, which where asked if they believed if sponsorship has an impact of teams’ brand building, all the answers from the six respondents said that sponsorship has a big impact of the teams’ brand and it is also a good tool to use when a team wants to strengthen their brand. All the six respondents gave almost the same answer both regarding buying and selling sponsorships to other companies and events. One respondents cheering for AIK stated as follows:

“Huge impact (Sponsorship)! ‘Åbro’ have been on AIK’s jerseys for a very long time and if it disappeared it would be a disaster. I am substantially more into

buying products which are sponsoring my favourite team”. (Interview 6, Anonymous, 2013-04-28)

According to a Malmö FF supporter it is important that the sponsors on the jerseys matches the colour of the jerseys:

“I care about what sponsors Malmö FF have on their jerseys because they have light blue and white on them”. (Interview, Anonymous 5, 2013-04-28)

A Malmö FF and a HIF supporter said the following regarding if sponsorship have an impact on a football team’s brand building:

“Very much, through sponsorships can a team reach out to a consumer that have a certain attraction or love towards a certain brand. . . through sponsorship you can also build a consumers estimations towards the team”. (Interview, Anonymous 5, Malmö FF, 2013-04-28)

“Quite big! If a team encompasses with strong companies, it can surely strengthen a football team’s brand”. (Interview, Anonymous 2, HIF, 2013-04-28)

These two statements above from Malmö FF and AIK are very good examples of what Tanvir & Shahid (2012) argued about. That is, if a company (or in this case a football team) have bought sponsorship with another company or sports’ events, the consumer becomes more attractive to purchase products from the team, because its creates emotions for the consumers.

The six respondents agreed with each other that Sponsorships are good for a smaller football team when a team wants to strengthen their brand, both regarding what sponsors the teams have on the jerseys and that the teams sponsoring another event or company. All the respondents also agreed that it is important what sponsors the teams have on their jerseys. But based on what the teams have said about, that they do not buy sponsorship (i.e. sponsor another event or company) and don’t include it in their portfolio creates an intuition of the writers that maybe the teams have to listen more on their supporters. Because if the supporters believe that they feel more connected to team if the team buy sponsorship and that it can affect the teams’ brand positively, maybe the teams in the end can strengthen their brand even more, and also add more loyalty from the supporters.

4.2.2 Event

Regarding the answers of the supporters for the investigated teams the answers was equivalent. The six respondents said that events such as matches and other events outside the arena are good ways to strengthen a smaller teams’ brand, and also a great way of maintaining the relationships between the fans and the team. Some respondents even said that events are a good way of recruiting new fans.

One Kalmar FF supporter said the following of event:

“If you see a match as an event, it has of course a positively affect on the team’s brand building. Audience see and hear the brand and get the ‘feeling’ of Kalmar FF”. (Interview, Anonymous 3, 2013-04-28)

The same Kalmar FF supporter said also in the interview that matches in “Allsvenskan” are broadcast on television and depending on what happens during the matches, it can also have a bad affect on the brand. However, an AIK supporter said an interesting thing regarding the question of events that neither the teams nor the other respondents have answered:

“Because I don’t live in Stockholm at the moment, events have no affect on me personally. But I think that supporters that are living near the event get more affected by events outside the arena, such as ‘Gnagisland’.” (Interview, Anonymous 6, 2013-04-28)

A HIF supporter stressed another interesting opinion:

“It depends on how big the event is and how big attention it has been given. Event is important to recruit new customers (supporters) and to satisfy the current fans” (Interview, Anonymous 1, 2013-04-28)

As the writer stated above this is very interesting, because events near the arena can have an affect on the people that goes on the games, however, if the authors consider the HIF supporter statement that the size and the attention around the event matters and also the Kalmar FF supporter that said that television helps the events to be shown for the public, it wouldn’t matter were the persons live. The ‘only’ problem is to get the attention from the media so they can pass on the message around the region or/and the country.

4.2.3 Stadium

Regarding the impact of the stadium a supporter of Malmö FF clarified in the authors’ in-depth semi-structured interview that:

“The stadium has very big impact as it functions as the meeting place where one can express their feelings. It is the common place where one's soul, mind and body merge with, for example 80,000 others. Regardless of background, language, thoughts, political branch or demographic features one melts together with all the others. This is just like when Christians go to church on Sundays, the stadium is the holiest site. The atmosphere and the feeling of the stadium is the biggest reason I go to the matches. Obviously also to cheer for my team and watch a good football game”. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28)

Further, a supporter of Helsingborgs IF agrees with the previous fan and argues in the following manner:

“The better / fresher stadium, the better but it is usually only loyal supporters who are regular regardless of arena. But towards the rest of the "world" is the stadium very important. The atmosphere and the way of framing it and what the atmosphere in the place is, is important how people outside the club see the stadium. Something one as a supporter can be proud of make you yearns for the matches even more.” (Interview, Anonymous 1, 2013-04-28)

4.2.4 Buying players

When the authors asked the supporters if Buying players have a big impact on brand building, a Malmö FF supporter answered as follows:

“Of course very big, buying players are a part of a larger cycle. By signing players one become better on the field, which could lead to higher positions in the game, which in turn generates more money and more sponsorship money where they can improve their arena, their events, their solidarity with their supporters and therefore build more and more”. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28)

Further on, this supporter claims that:

“A player with very good image, because of his athletic qualities and other public features can also provide a real boost as a larger supporter base is created which in turn generates more publicity and therefore more revenue. Being a fan means not only buying a sweater or visit the stadium, you are a fan then you have a burning passion to see their team play, which means that channels buys the rights in order to satisfy their consumers, which means more money for the league and hence the clubs”. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28)

A supporter of the Swedish club Kalmar FF tries to enlighten the differences between Sweden and Europe and explained that:

“You can not compare with clubs in Europe who can increase their sale of jersey’s etc. by buying players. Kalmar FF does not have the capital to make such a purchase, and I think therefore that buying players has very little impact on brand building. It would be if you buy a foreign national team player from a small nation which can increase brand awareness in that country.” (Interview, Anonymous 3, 2013-04-28)

This second interview with a supporter in Sweden highlights a very important aspect mentioned before in this section regarding buying players. Economy once again plays a vital role when discussing this communication tool. This interview indicates the importance of a strong financial ground that this Kalmar FF fan does not imply they have. The person also points out what buying famous players can contribute with in terms of increased sale of jerseys.

The pattern is very obvious regarding the supporters’ opinion if buying players have a big impact. As mentioned before, the investigated smaller Swedish clubs do not have this economic power from the empirical study the researchers have made with several clubs and therefore do not successful use this strategy but the strategy according from the interviews described above implies tremendous effect on the brand in a positive way.

4.2.5 Ranking

Regarding the interviews with Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF, AIK and Kalmar FF’s supporters the researchers collected similar findings compared to the web-survey (more information below) and the interviews with the clubs. For an instance number one, two, four and six in our anonymous interviews ranks the tools as following:

1. Buying players
2. Stadium
3. Sponsorship
4. Events

(Interview, Anonymous 1, 2013-04-28; Interview, Anonymous 2, 2013-04-28; Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28; Interview, Anonymous 6, 2013-04-28)

As mentioned before one reason for this ranking system could depend on how the supporters really see out of own experience and due to the last two (sponsorship and events) are fairly connected to how a club build its brand and rather more connected to the loyalty and pleasantness and satisfaction of the supporters. Therefore the authors finds these findings rather logical given previous analyse.

One supporter also chose to rank as following:

1. Buying players
2. Sponsorship
3. Stadium
4. Events

(Interview, Anonymous 5, 2013-04-28)

This maybe because, as previously discussed, on the indirect effects of sponsorship financially which the writers will not go into detail again.

The authors of this paper find it staggering that Per Rosenqvist (Kalmar FF) didn't rank Sponsorship higher due to its indirect impact on the club (mentioned earlier). As one of our anonymous interviews argues (mentioned before) sponsorship and the money could provide money for expanding the stadium and buy players, which in turn increases the quality of the team, which in turn can lead to sporting successes. It is a virtuous circle. However, one reason could be that it does not involve large sums of money and therefore do not have that impact as the authors believe that it can have in the rest of Europe.

4.2.6 Connection to brand equity

The researchers of this master thesis asked the investigated teams' supporters to link these communication tools the writers have chosen to investigate (Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players) with Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty).

4.2.6.1 Awareness

When the authors asked the supporter for the investigated teams the question, how they would connect the authors' communication tools (sponsorships, stadium, event and buying players) to Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory and the factor Awareness, the supporters answered almost the same, however, there was one respondents that differ from the others.

HIF, Anonymous 1: *Buying players = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

HIF, Anonymous 2: *Sponsorship = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Kalmar FF, Anonymous 3: *Sponsorships and buying players = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 4: *Sponsorship = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 5: *Sponsorship, Buying players, and event = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

AIK, Anonymous 6: *Sponsorship = Awareness (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

As the reader can see above there is a clear connection between the sponsorship and Aaker's (2010) factor awareness where five of six respondents chose sponsorship. However, worth having in mind is that sponsorship is regarding the teams' buying and selling procedure. However, based on the supporters' answers above, if the teams want to have greater awareness, maybe they should consider buying sponsorships?

The 'Anonymous 2' HIF – supporter explains his answer as follows:

“If the team sponsor others, more attention will, off course, be given to the team and therefore create more awareness”. (Interview, Anonymous 2, 2013-04-28)

The authors agree with the supporter's explanation why sponsorship is so highly connected to awareness in this research. However, there was one supporter (Anonymous 1) that thought buying players was more connected to awareness than sponsorship. According to the authors of this thesis one explanation can be that if a team is buying a great football player this will give much attention around the country thanks to media.

4.2.6.2 Associations

When the investigated teams' supporters, got the the question, how they would connect the authors' communication tools (sponsorship, stadium, event and buying players) to Aaker's brand equity theory and the factor associations, the answers differed from each other, however the authors can see a pattern regarding the answers.

HIF, Anonymous 1: *Stadium = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

HIF, Anonymous 2: *Stadium = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Kalmar FF, Anonymous 3: *Sponsorship = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 4: *Event = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 5: *Sponsorship, Stadium and event = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

AIK, Anonymous 6: *Stadium and Event = Associations (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

As the reader can see above, stadium and event are most frequent in the answers. Three respondents answered only that stadium is connected to their associations towards the club and one respondent said only event. However, one respondent answered only sponsorship and one sponsorship, stadium and event. According to Aaker (2010) associations are driven by the company's identity of the brand and the associations a customer is doing with the brand supports brand equity. Having Aaker's (2010) definition and the collected data from the supporters in mind, the majority of the respondents associate the stadium and event with the teams. However, as earlier mentioned in the part 'Choice of theory' the authors see the clubs as a product and therefore all the connections that have been made by the respondents with associations, can be seen according to Aaker (2010) as an association.

4.2.6.3 Perceived quality

One of the absolutely most clear connection between the chosen communication tool and Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors is the one between perceived quality and stadium. The reader can see a clear pattern down below that the supporters for the investigated teams answered almost the same.

HIF, Anonymous 1: *Buying players = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

HIF, Anonymous 2: *Stadium = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Kalmar FF, Anonymous 3: *Stadium and Buying players = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 4: *Stadium = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 5: *Stadium = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

AIK, Anonymous 6: *Stadium and Buying players = Perceived quality (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Anonymous 2 (HIF) said the following about perceived quality and associations:

“The quality of the match and the stadium, and at the same time the stadium associates with the team's brand”. (Interview, Anonymous 2, 2013-04-28)

Perceived quality is often connected to and drives other aspects of how a brand is perceived (Aaker, 2010). In this case, five of the six respondents answered that stadium was connected to the supporters' perceived quality. However, this is not a surprise for the authors, because the majority of the supporters experience the team's quality at the stadium. It can be how the team plays, how comfortable the seats are and how easy it is to get access to food and beverages. Why Anonymous 1, chose to connect buying players with perceived quality can of course depend on many factors. However one factor can be that if the team is in need for more players and the current quality of the matches are bad, new better players can be bought and increase the quality of the matches and increase perceived quality.

4.2.6.4 Loyalty

When the authors asked the supporters of the investigated teams, regarding the connection between the communication tools and Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors, all the respondents connected loyalty with event, sponsorship or/and buying players. However, because the authors have done interviews with, as Aaker (2010) would call them, committed customers (supporters) the supporters have already created some kind of loyalty towards the club.

HIF, Anonymous 1: *Event = Loyalty (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

HIF, Anonymous 2: *Buying players = Loyalty (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Kalmar FF, Anonymous 3: *Event = Loyalty (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 4: *Event and Buying players = Loyalty (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

MFF, Anonymous 5: *Event and Sponsorship = Loyalty (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

AIK, Anonymous 6: *Sponsorship and Buying players (Interview, 2013-04-28)*

Buying players and event are most frequent, as the reader can see above. One explanation to the pattern can be that event are one of the activities that are very close to the supporters, where the supporters can participate and feel that they are “apart of” the team. An explanation regarding why they connect buying players with loyalty, can be (according to the authors) that when teams are buying players, the supporters maybe feel that the club wants to win more

matches and are going for winning 'Allsvenskan'. Also, if a team buy a player that is a success in the team and score many goals, the supporters have a person to look up to and be proud of.

4.3 Web- survey

As the authors have already established the supporters that answered the general web-survey can cheer on bigger or smaller teams within Sweden or outside Sweden.

4.3.1 Sponsorship

Regarding this thesis general web-survey which was placed on various different sites on the Internet, the respondents got the same question as the supporters from the investigated teams, which was if the supporters consider sponsorships as an effective communication tool when a team wants to strengthen its brand. A total of 301 respondents answered the web-survey and answered this question. The question was disposed from 1 to 5, where 5 was that the supporter thought it was a very good communication tool when a team wants to strengthen its brand and 1 was not good. 113 of the 301 (38%) respondents thought that sponsorships are a very good communication tool when a team wants to strengthen its brand. 32 % (96 respondents) answered 4, 20 % answered 3 (61 respondents) and 10 % answered 1 and 2.

The authors can see a connection between the qualitative interviews with the supporters of the investigated teams and the answers of the more general web-survey. That is, sponsorships are a very good communication tool when a team wants to get a stronger brand and increase brand equity.

4.3.2 Event

Regarding event in the general web-survey, the writers can see a huge majority that consider event as a great communication tool for strengthen a football brand in general. The supporters could answered the question from 1 to 5, where 1 means that events are not a good communication tool to use when a football team wants to strengthen their brand and 5 is the opposite, i.e. a great tool to use. 127 respondents out of 301 answered a 5, which is 42%, 36 % chose the number 4 and only 7 % chose 1 and 2. In other words, the majority of the respondents on the general web-survey answered that event are a very good tool to use when a team wants to strengthen its brand. If the authors compare the result from the general web-survey with the supporters of the teams' answers the writers can see the connection that event are a powerful tool to use.

4.3.3 Stadium

When asking the question if supporters believe the stadium to be an effective communication tool in order to strengthen their brand in the questionnaire, 77 % of the respondents answered in a scale of 1-5, 4 and 5. In this online survey, the researchers of this master thesis, had 301 respondent and only 25 (9%) respondents rated stadium as a 1 and 2, which implied that the majority consider this communication tool as effective and useful. As mentioned before a 1 in our empirical study means bad and 5 means good.

4.3.4 Buying players

I consider 'buying players' as an effective communication tool when a club wants to strengthen their brand

From this question the researchers received positive reactions. 78 % answered either 4 or 5 on our scale 1-5 where 1 was considered not true and 5 was counted as the supporters completely agreed. Therefore based on this survey done on different social media groups online this communication tool is experienced as a rather good and effective tool even though the investigated teams do not actively use it when trying to build a brand.

Regarding how fans perceive buying players as a communication tool the researchers of this master thesis intercepts indications that suggest the supporters of having a homogeneous opinion on this topic. From studying our online survey, the authors discern a relative clear pattern indicating that supporters of any kind generally perceive buying players as an effective and positive action from the club, in order to achieve stronger brand.

4.3.5 Ranking

When asking the same type of question in our online survey the authors got slight different results. However, in the questionnaire the writers did not have the opportunity to make an identical question due to the system of the web-survey. Therefore the question asked was:

Which of the following communication tools do you consider is the most effective for a club's brand building purpose?

Then the respondents could choose between our four communication tools.

The result of this question lead to that 48 % of our respondents considered buying players as the most effective tool. In second place comes sponsorship with 21 %. Thereafter the general supporter felt that both the stadium and event is rather equal with 16 % of the votes. The interesting in this case is how the general supporter considers sponsorship to have second most effective impact (not by far) of them all. This maybe because, as previously mentioned, that sponsorship has an indirect impact on the brand building. It is also interesting that event and stadium receive equal many votes and it is more interesting that Niklas Nestlander (AIK) put these together as previously described.

From this web-survey one could see both similarities and differences between the general supporter and the interviewed clubs. It is also rather strange for supporters to rank Stadium lowest together with event due to it is connected most to them. The authors of this master thesis see it as even though the last two tools is most connected to the supporters they are more connected to the loyalty of the supporters rather as the most effective communication tool for the club, which could emphasized by the results of the quantitative data.

Based on the answers made by the investigated teams' supporters (mentioned earlier) and the more general web-survey the researchers can say that it is a strong connection regarding how the supporters answered.

4.3.6 Connection to brand equity

The researchers of this master thesis asked the supporters of the general web-survey to link these communication tools the writers have chosen to investigate (sponsorship, events, stadium and buying players) with Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty).

4.3.6.1 Awareness

When the authors asked the supporters in the general web-survey, which of Aaker's (2010) factors that are connected to sponsorship, awareness got the highest result with 33 % of the answers. The authors can see a clear connection between the supporters' answers of each investigated team and the answers of the web-survey. Regarding the connection between event and Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors, awareness got the majority even here with 33 % of the answers. When the authors asked what they considered stadium was connected to, the answers between the respondents of the web-survey were similar. Awareness got the least answers and was placed last with 20 % of the answers.

As mentioned in the theoretical part, Aaker (2010) stated that recognition alone can create feelings towards a brand and the supporters' feelings towards a football brand are, according to the authors, highly relevant in the football industry, this can be an explanation why the connection is so clear regarding awareness and sponsorships.

4.3.6.2 Associations

Regarding the general web-survey, the respondents considered sponsorship most connected to awareness (as the authors have already established), however on second place the respondents considered associations and there were only seven answers that separated them apart. According to the authors one explanation can be that if for example a supporter see another person drinking a Åbro-beer the supporter associate the beer label with (in this example) AIK, because Åbro has been a sponsor for the team for several years.

Many respondents of the investigated teams answered that event are connected to associations, this was the case in the web-survey as well. 119 respondents (30 %) answered that event is connected to their associations with the brand, which was the second highest after awareness. However, one part that surprised the authors was that the answers between the supporters of the investigated teams' and the web-survey regarding stadium and awareness were very different. Only 22 % of the respondents on the web-survey thought that stadium was connected to their associations, which is on third place, just eight more answers than awareness. Buying players connection with the respondents associations towards the club collected 107 answers, just seven answers different from the second place, awareness.

4.3.6.3 Perceived quality

The majority of the respondents didn't think that sponsorship was connected to perceived quality, due only 17 % answered that it was. Neither did the majority think that event was connected to perceived quality (15 % of the answers). 125 respondents (27 %) answered that the stadium was connected to perceived quality, which was the second highest result, only loyalty was higher with 31 %. However, 159 respondents (34 %) thought that buying players was connected with perceived quality, which is 45 more answers than the second placed awareness.

A pattern can be seen based on the web-survey and the interviews with the investigated teams, Stadium and Buying players is important regarding the supporters perceived quality.

4.3.6.4 Loyalty

When the authors asked the same question in the web-survey there are some differences comparing to the supporters for the investigated teams. The question regarding, if sponsorship is connected to the supporters loyalty towards a club, only 69 (17 %) respondents thought that it was. 23 % said that event are connected to their loyalty towards the club and only 19 % said that buying players was connected to their loyalty. However, whole 31 % (146 respondents) said that the stadium is connected to their loyalty towards the club. This is a huge different if the authors compare it with the qualitative interviews of the supporters. One explanation can be that, the stadium is were the team plays their home matches, where the club has their history and supporters have seen many matches there through the years. One other explanation can be that supporters outside Sweden are more use to that the international clubs are buying players more frequently than the clubs within 'Allsvenskan'.

4.4 Comparison and discussion

Based on the researchers empirical findings Malmö FF, Helsingborgs IF, Kalmar FF and AIK are using sponsorship, event and the stadium as communication tools in order to strengthen their brand equity. The investigated clubs did not use buying players as a communication tool to strengthen their brand equity. An explanation of this can be their limitation of financial means. Instead the teams focused more on players that could contribute to the success of the team rather to the brand itself.

Regarding sponsorship, neither of the clubs are purchasing Sponsorship to strengthen their brand. However, they sell exposure areas both on their jerseys and at the stadium to other companies in order to create revenues and to increase brand equity. The majority of the clubs ranked sponsorship relatively low comparing to stadium and buying players. However, all the supporters (both from the teams and the web-survey) believed that buying and selling sponsorship is a very good tool to use when a team wants to increase brand equity. But the teams' supporters agreed with the clubs that sponsorship wasn't the most important communication tool when a smaller team wants to strengthen its brand. Here, the general web-survey didn't support the supporters' answers and the teams, due the general web-survey ranked it relatively high. The authors can see a huge gap, but also some similarities between all the supporters and the clubs. Based on the empirical findings the clubs doesn't include buying sponsorship in their portfolio and the authors are very thoughtful if the clubs really listen to their customers (supporters)?

Based on the empirical findings the majority of the four investigated teams actively include and use the communication tool event to increase their brand equity, by arranging different types of activities for an instance: match events, girls night, kick-off, family days etcetera. The teams did also say that event is a great communication tool, which the web-survey and the other supporters agreed with. However despite that, all the supporters and the teams ranked it quite similar, that is in the lower part of the ranking list. The authors can see many similarities with the web-survey, supporters of the teams and the teams here, and maybe Rickard Nilsson from HIF will change their way of event-activities?

Stadium is another communication tool that these four teams use to strengthen their brand by connecting it with match events and to create a whole experience for the supporters including comfortable seats, access to food and beverage and the framing of the stadium. The teams

agreed with each other and ranked stadium on first or second place. Stadium is perceived as an effective communication tool and considered by the majority of the investigated teams' supporters as top two of four in the ranking list. The web-survey did support the teams' fans regarding that Stadium is a great tool to use when strengthen its brand equity, however they didn't really support the answers of the teams' supporters' and ranked stadium lower down (16 %).

Finally the last communication tool, buying players, is perceived as an effective communication tool to increase brand equity, both out of a supporter's perceptive (both regarding the web-survey and the teams' supporters) and from a team's perspective. However, as already mentioned further up in this section, the teams doesn't buy players in order to increase their brand equity, instead their first focus is on that the player they buy can bring sporting success to the teams. All the respondents including the web-survey ranked buying players at the top. In this case regarding buying players, the authors believe that it is hard for the teams to listen to the supporters, due to there are many factors that are included when buying a player such as the financial question. According to the authors, why the web-survey believe so strongly on buying players is because the web-survey got respondents within Sweden and outside Sweden, were the teams outside Sweden are bigger and have for example more assets to bring when a player are being bought.

During the process of this master thesis there are a few aspects that really have made the authors started to think about the clubs' actions. First of all is the connection between the clubs and their supporters. According to Fisher et al (2010) successful brand building is mostly depending on how customers' predispositions are towards a brand and according to this thesis there are several things that indicate huge differences between the team and their supporters. The authors' wonder if the teams really consider what their supporters think about which communication tools they will use to create stronger brand equity for the brand. After all, according to the authors, the customers (supporter) are companies (team) most valuable asset.

Also, having heard what the teams have said about buying players, the authors thought in the beginning of this thesis that the teams would purchase players with more focus on their brand equity than the teams' sporting success. The authors are highly aware of that the success of the teams are very important in many ways, but even though the smaller teams can't compare them selves to the bigger teams outside Sweden they can still purchase players that make a different for their supporters and their brand within Sweden.

5. Conclusion

In this section the authors will present their conclusions for this master thesis, based on the analysis and empirical collected data of this paper. Quantitative and qualitative data has been collected with insights from the theoretical framework in order to fulfil the purpose of this thesis and come to a conclusion regarding the thesis research questions.

This master thesis has researched *how smaller elite football teams build their brand through, Sponsorship, Events, Stadium and Buying players and how these communication tools are perceived by existing fans and teams, also how these tools are connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty)*. This has been done by investigating four teams with six belonging supporters in the top football league in Sweden, 'Allsvenskan'. Furthermore, in order to get a broader perspective, the authors have examined supporters in general by implementing a web-survey. The web-survey has been as a support to the embedded case study. The empirical findings of this study have been analysed and compared based on suggestion theories within the field and previous research.

The authors of this master thesis have seen a smaller team as a product, with Doyle's (1989) definition in mind, that *"a product is anything which meets the needs of customers"* (p.78). By having this kind of perspective this thesis has proven that Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory is applicable in the football industry for smaller teams. Based on previous research this hasn't been investigated before and therefore a huge breakthrough for further research within this field.

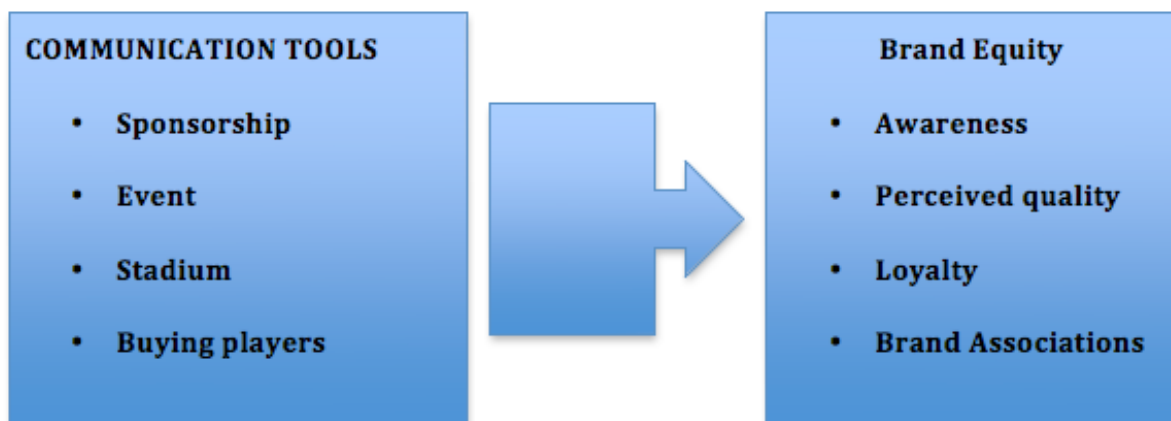
Based on previous research the chosen communication tools Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players haven't been investigated together as communication tools for smaller teams and also never been connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors. However, the authors can stress that the chosen communication tools Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players can be connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors (Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty) in the football industry for smaller teams. This study has also proven that the smaller teams are using Sponsorship, Event and Stadium as communication tools to increase their brand equity. Although, this case study couldn't prove that smaller teams are buying players to increase their brand equity, the study proved that smaller teams are buying players for the sporting success of the teams, due to the smaller teams financial means. However, as recently mentioned, the connection between Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors and Buying players are clear due to the empirical findings.

Having the above written in mind the authors have answered the first research question of this master thesis, which was:

1. Do elite football teams from a smaller league use sponsorship, stadium, events and buying players as communication tools to enhance their brand equity?

In this study the authors have done research from both a supporter point of view and from a team's point of view, and therefore enlighten the reader of how the both sides perceived the communication tools (Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players). As mention earlier in 'Conclusion', the communication tools have been proven that they can be connected to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors.

A conclusion can be drawn that all the teams and the teams' belonging supporters perceived Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players as effective communication tools to use when a smaller team wants to increase its brand equity. This was supported also by the general web survey. According to the teams, mixed answers were received regarding the ranking of which tool that was most effective. Overall a conclusion can be drawn that Buying players and Stadium are more effective communication tools than Sponsorship and Event, when a smaller team wants to increase its brand equity. However, a clearer pattern was received from the supporters' of the smaller teams and the authors can draw the conclusion that Buying players and Stadium were ranked as number one and two, and Sponsorship and Event in third respectively fourth place. When the authors' asked the respondents in the general web- survey which communication tools they thought was the most effective one when a team (in generally) wants to increase their brand equity, the respondents thought Buying players and Sponsorship as the most effective tools. Further on, Stadium and Event shared the third place.



(Model created by the authors)

Regarding Awareness, the teams connected it with Buying players, Event and Stadium, were Event was most frequent. However, the supporters of the teams chose to connect Awareness with Sponsorship. Here the general web-survey supported partly the answers of the teams' supporters and did connect it with sponsorship, but also with Event and Buying players.

A conclusion can be drawn that the smaller teams connected Association with Stadium and the majority of the teams' supporters connected Association with Stadium and Event. However, the general web-survey connected Association with Sponsorship and Event.

The authors can stress that the smaller teams connected Perceived quality to Buying players, and the smaller teams' supporters connected Buying players and Stadium to Perceived quality. The web-survey answered that Buying players are highly connected to Perceived quality. The general web-survey supported the teams' supporters and responded that Perceived quality is connected to Buying players and Stadium.

A conclusion can be drawn that the smaller teams connect Event to Loyalty, and the teams' supporter as well, but they also connected it to Buying players. The general web- survey connected Loyalty to Stadium.

Having the above written in mind the authors have answered the second research question of this master thesis, which was:

2. How do existing fans and smaller teams perceive the communication of Sponsorship, Stadium, Event and Buying players and how do these communication tools connect to Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors?

Through focusing on these two research questions the authors have fulfilled the purpose of this master thesis.

Worth having in mind, is that these research findings can't be generalized to other contexts outside this case. In other words this study doesn't prove that, the fact and the findings in this case are the same in other football leagues or for other smaller teams around the world. This includes the investigated teams' supporters and the web-survey as well, due to the huge amount of supporters that exist.

However, according to Yin (2009) a case study can rely on analytic generalisation. Having that said, Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory and the authors chosen communication tools that have been proven to functional for smaller teams in the football industry and that the communication tools can be connected with Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory, can be generalized to other contexts with similar, nearly exact conditions (Yin, 2009).

5.1 Suggestions to further research

This study has proven that smaller elite football teams in 'Allsvenskan' are using Sponsorships, Events and Stadium as communication tools to enhance their brand equity. This research has also proven that Aaker's (2010) brand equity factors can be connected to these communications tools and that Aaker's (2010) theory about brand equity also is applicable in the football industry.

Due to the lack of this types of research regarding the combination of the chosen communication tools and Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory in the football industry (based on previous research about the subject from the authors), the authors would like to see further research that include the same communication tools with teams and supporters within a bigger football league in Europe, that have bigger financial resources, and further on see possible differences and similarities the teams in 'Allsvenskan' have with the international league outside Sweden.

Another suggestion for further research is to investigate if Aaker's (2010) brand equity theory is applicable in another sport industry (American football, Ice-Hockey etcetera), and also do research about if the chosen communication tools (that were used in this study) enhance brand equity for the teams. It would also be interesting to see if similarities and differences can be found between two sport industries and also between a supporter's perspective and from a team's perspective.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Interview questions (Clubs)

- 1. Name?**
- 2. Age?**
- 3. Belonging club (AIK, Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, Helsingborgs IF)?**
- 4. Position in the club?**
- 5. What do you have for tasks within the club?**
- 6. Do you consider branding important within football clubs?**
- 7. Do you consider your club to have a strong brand?**
- 8. Which communication tools do you currently use in you club in order to affect the branding of the club?**
- 9. Does your football team use Sponsorship to build its brand (increase brand equity)?**
- 10. Does your football team use Event to build its brand (increase brand equity)?**
- 11. Does your football team use Stadium to build its brand (increase brand equity)?**
- 12. Does your football team use Buying players to build its brand (increase brand equity)?**
- 13. Can you give some examples of how these communication tools have led to positive/negative building of the brand?**
- 14. Can you rank which of these communication tools (Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players) have the highest and lowest impact/effect on smaller clubs' brand building. (From 1st to 4th)**
- 15. How would you connect these communication tools (Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players) to Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty.**

7.2 Interview questions (Supporters)

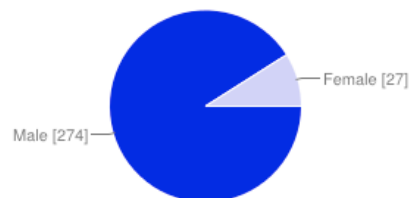
1. Name?
2. Gender?
3. Age?
4. Occupation?
5. Belonging club (AIK, Malmö FF, Kalmar FF, Helsingborgs IF)?
6. What communication tools have you heard about regarding a smaller football clubs brand building?
7. How much impact do you think Sponsorship has on a smaller football team's brand building?
8. How much impact do you think Event has on a smaller football team's brand building?
9. How much impact do you think Stadium has on a smaller football team's brand building?
10. How much impact do you think Buying players has on a smaller football team's brand building?
11. Do you consider that these communication tools are a great way to build their brand?
12. Can you give some examples of how these communication tools has led to positive/negative building of the brand?
13. Can you rank which of these communication tools (Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players) have the highest and lowest impact/effect on smaller clubs' brand building? (From 1st to 4th)
14. How would you connect these communication tools (Sponsorship, Event, Stadium and Buying players) to Awareness, Associations, Perceived quality and Loyalty?

7.3 Web-Survey

301 svar

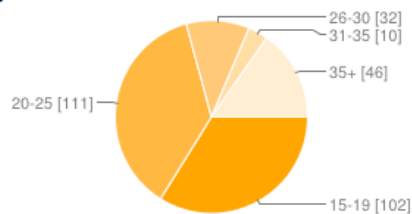
Sammanfattning [Se hela svar](#) [Publicera analyser](#)

1. Sex?



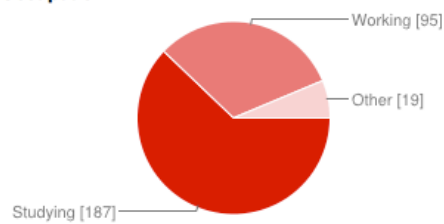
Male	274	91%
Female	27	9%

2. Age?



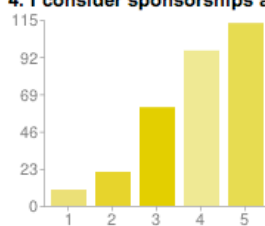
15-19	102	34%
20-25	111	37%
26-30	32	11%
31-35	10	3%
35+	46	15%

3. Occupation?



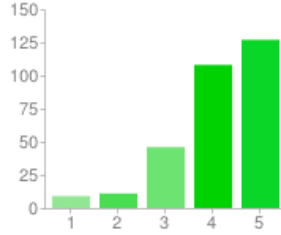
Studying	187	62%
Working	95	32%
Other	19	6%

4. I consider sponsorships as an effective communication tool when a club wants to strengthen their brand



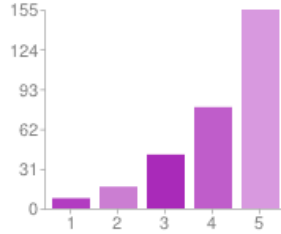
1	10	3%
2	21	7%
3	61	20%
4	96	32%
5	113	38%

5. I consider events as an effective communication tool when a club wants to strenghten their brand



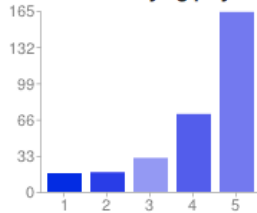
1	9	3%
2	11	4%
3	46	15%
4	108	36%
5	127	42%

6. I consider the stadium as an effective communication tool when a club wants to strenghten their brand



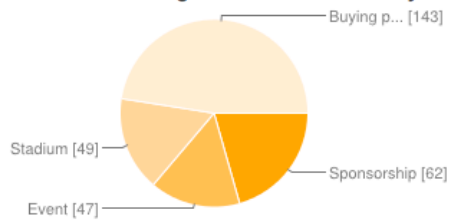
1	8	3%
2	17	6%
3	42	14%
4	79	26%
5	155	51%

7. I consider 'buying players' as an effective communication tool when a club wants to strenghten their brand



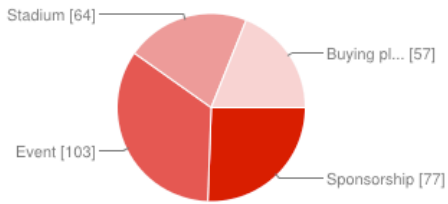
1	17	6%
2	18	6%
3	31	10%
4	71	24%
5	164	54%

8. Which of the following communication tool do you consider is the most effective for a club's brand building purpose?



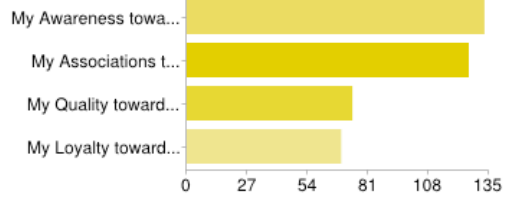
Sponsorship	62	21%
Event	47	16%
Stadium	49	16%
Buying players	143	48%

9. Which of the following communication tool do you consider is the least effective for a club's brand building purpose?



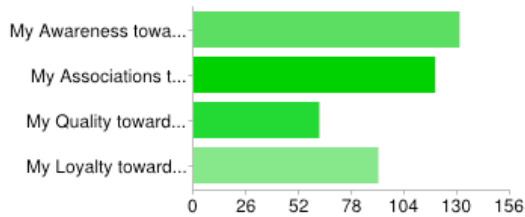
Sponsorship	77	26%
Event	103	34%
Stadium	64	21%
Buying players	57	19%

10. I consider that a sponsorship is connected to:



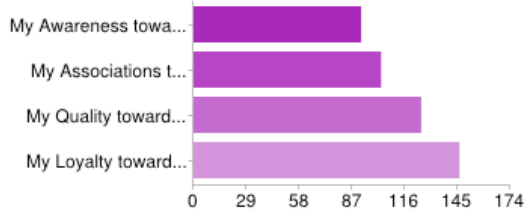
My Awareness towards a club	133	33%
My Associations towards a club	126	31%
My Quality towards a club	74	18%
My Loyalty towards a club	69	17%

11. I consider that an event is connected to:



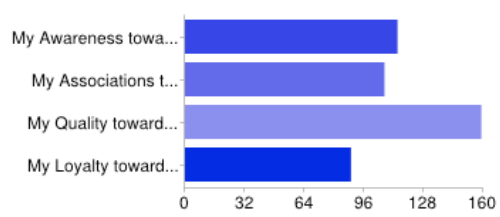
My Awareness towards a club	131	33%
My Associations towards a club	119	30%
My Quality towards a club	62	15%
My Loyalty towards a club	91	23%

12. I consider that the stadium is connected to:



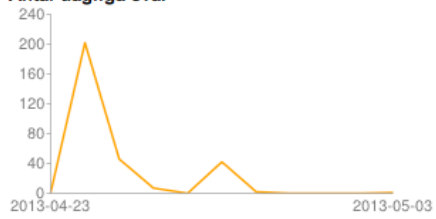
My Awareness towards the a club	92	20%
My Associations towards a club	103	22%
My Quality towards a club	125	27%
My Loyalty towards a club	146	31%

13. I consider that 'buying players' is connected to:



My Awareness towards a club	114	24%
My Associations towards a club	107	23%
My Quality towards a club	159	34%
My Loyalty towards a club	89	19%

Antal dagliga svar



7.4 Quotes

7.4.1 Clubs

”Absolut, Jag skulle säga att det är ett av Sveriges starkaste varumärke. Det kan du fråga vem som helst och till vad AIK är och då har alla hört någon form av de. Antingen hatar man AIK eller älskar man de.” (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26, p. 28)

Ja, alla mätningar vi gör tyder på det. Vi tillhör ett av de absolut starkaste sportvarumärkena i Sverige och du kan mäta det på väldigt många olika sätt. Vi hade t.ex. förra året, 2012, den största publiksiffra i hela Norden. Var ingen klubb som hade mer publik än vad vi hade.(Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 39)

Det är väldigt starkt, ja. Jag såg nyligen att det är Kalmars största varumärke för närvarande, en undersökning de har gjort som stod i tidningen. Jämfört med resten av fotbollssverige ligger vi i mitten någonstans, men jag tycker ändå vi ligger högre än Norrköping. Det är ju storstans lagen, Malmö, Göteborg, Helsingborg, AIK, Djurgården, Hammarby, de är större varumärken men sen kommer nog vi. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26, p. 39)

Våra två andra huvudsponsorer är ju Adidas och stadium och där känner vi att vi får ut mest både de och vi får ut mest av sponsorskapet för att vi jobbar mot en liknande publik och vi står för liknande värderingar och vi har liknande intressen. Så att det är kanske oftast lättare att jobba med såna sponsorer där man agerar i samma värld. Samtidigt har vi haft Åbro i 20 år och det har varit otroligt framgångsrikt. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29, p. 40)

Självklart bryr vi oss om vilka sponsorer vi har på matchtröjan. Vi väljer ju de, vi söker aktivt de företagen. (Interview, Rickard Nilsson, 2013-04-24, p. 41)

Vad tänker du med sponsring, vi sponsrar ingenting, så att säga, Men våra sponsorer vi använder, de är en del i de i vårt varumärkesbyggande, ja, att vi har en annan sponsorstruktur. Men även den är framtagen för att den ger en större effekt. Absolut, vilka sponsorer vi har är naturligtvis intressanta och viktiga. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 41)

Sponsring är mer viktigt för klubbens överlevnad och det är den stora delen av inkomsterna kommer ifrån och när vi syns ihop med företag som är kända så påverkar det naturligtvis vårt varumärke. (Interview, Björn Andersson, 2013-04-26, p.41)

Ja, vi gör en hel del. En del event gör vi tillsammans med våra sponsorer som är stadium eller Adidas har happening så är vi bland med i dem. Sen har vi en del event i samband med våra matcher som igår hade match söndag eftermiddag, då hade vi gngisland som har ett familjeevent för att locka familjer att komma. För att få en 5 åring att komma till en match lockar mer om det är band och ansiktsmålning tycker de att de är roligt och då lockar vi de att komma på våra matcher. Så, ja det gör vi på olika sätt. (Interview, Gabriella Blombäck, 2013-04-29, p. 42)

Vi jobbar mycket med utomhus aktiviteter (utanför arenan). På söndagar har vi gngisland som är för barn, där vi har byggt upp olika hoppborgar och såna saker för att då bredda och stärka varumärket mot barnfamiljer. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander. 2013-04-26, p. 42)

Events använder vi oss väldigt mycket av för att lyfta varumärket, det gör vi. Vi gör kick-off t.ex, där vi bjuder in allmänheten till kick-off, lite mer showaktigt där vi bygger upp med ljud och ljus, videopresentationer osv, vi gör FF galan där man avslutar säsongen med prisutdelningar. Kör girls night, familjens dag, vi har ett stort event där vi bygger upp hela arenan. Hoppborgar, sawegway race, go-cart race på läktarna och hela a-laget på plats för att skriva autografer, dela ut gratis t-shirt till alla barn. Vi jobbar med dessa för att stärka varumärket. (Interview, Per Rosenqvist, 2013-04-26, p. 42)

Arenan är i fokus för de 15 huvud evenemang (matcherna) laget AIK erbjuder per år, och därmed bör kunna erbjuda fans av utomhusaktiviteter, innan matchen, men också för att skapa en känsla för sina fans på arenan och när du går till arenan. Man bör känna till att en AIK match händer och möjligheten att klubben har för att locka nya fans och sponsorer. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26, p. 42)

Vilken klubb som helst som helt plötsligt får pengar och får för sig att köpa fem stjärnor skulle över en natt bli jätte berömda och omtalade. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 45)

Om du tittar på awareness så återigen spelarköp, det kopplas ut till alla media, det är de som skapar bred uppmärksamhet. Du har stadium, det är det som omnämns väldigt mycket, det rapporteras mer från fullsatt stadium om den är stor än en fullsatt mindre stadium. En ny och modern stadium skapar mycket mer uppmärksamhet och det skulle jag säga följer exakt samma linje medan när det gäller hur det genomförs, och nu menar jag event, matcheventen. Sen kan du liksom MFF arrangera speciella matchen som att möta Milan och det bygger awareness på väldigt hög nivå. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 46)

Awareness så klart är en viktig del i evenemanget att man blir uppmärksam vad som skrivs. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26, p. 47)

Stadium påverkar på alla nivåer, När vi byggde Swedbank stadium så var det första klubben som byggde något stort och nytt och modern och det har ju självklart fått ett enorm impact naturligtvis på den biten. Vi brukar vinna varje år, det är den stadium där det är mest stämning. Där alla spelare vill spela på och det påverkar hur vi bygger vårt varumärke mycket, hela vägen ner. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 47)

Angående spelarköp skulle jag nog säga hur man uppfattar klubben då perceived quality. Det är en kvalitet på laget, vad du har för spelare, har du inga bra spelare uppfattas kvalitén som ganska låg. (Interview, Niklas Nestlander, 2013-04-26, p. 48)

Fansens lojalitet mot klubben skulle jag vilja säga beror på vilka event vi har och hur vi genomför de. Speciellt för de som är här hela tiden. Den delen är jätte viktigt. Att man sköter den relationen väldigt noga mellan klubb och supportrar. Den påverkar oerhört mycket. (Interview, Per Welinder, 2013-04-25, p. 48)

7.4.2 Supporters

Extremt stor inverkan. Åbro har funnits på AIKs tröjor en väldigt lång tid, vilket skulle kännas jobbigt om det försvann! Jag är avsevärt mer benägen att köpa produkter som sponsrar mitt favoritlag. (Interview 6, Anonymous, 2013-04-28, p. 49- 50)

Jag bryr mig om vilka sponsorer Malmö FF har på sina tröjor, då laget spelar oftast i ljusblått och vitt. (Interview 5, Anonymous, 2013-04-28, p. 50)

Väldigt mycket, genom sponsorskap kan ett lag nå ut till en konsument som har en specifik attraktion eller kärlek mot ett bestämt varumärke. Malmö har en ny arena pga till stor del sponsring. Jag kan tänka mig att Malmö FF fått ett lyft med hjälp av den nya arenan och dra till sig ny publik. Genom sponsorskap kan man även bygga upp en konsuments förväntningar mot ett lag. Jag bryr mig om vilka sponsorer Malmö FF har på sina tröjor, då laget spelar oftast i ljusblått och vitt. (Interview 5, Anonymous, 2013-04-28, p. 50)

Relativt stor, omger man sig med starka företag så kan det säkert stärka fotbollslagets varumärke. (Interview, Anonymous 2, HIF, 2013-04-28, p. 50)

Ser man en match som event har det självklart en positiv inverkan på varumärkesuppbyggnad. Åskådare ser och hör varumärket och får en 'känsla' av Kalmar FF. (Interview, Anonymous 3, 2013-04-28, p. 50)

Eftersom jag inte bor i närheten av Stockholm för tillfället, så har det för min personliga del ingen stor inverkan. Dock tror jag att supportrar som bor i närheten har större inverkan av events (ex "Gnagisland") utanför arenan. (Interview, Anonymous 6, 2013-04-28, p. 51)

Beror på hur stort eventet är och hur stor uppmärksamhet det fått. Event är nog viktigt för att locka nya kunder och för att tillfredsställa de nuvarande. (Interview, Anonymous 1, 2013-04-28, p. 51)

Arenan har väldigt stor påverkar då det fungerar som samlingsplatsen där man kan uttrycka sina känslor. Det är den gemensamma platsen där ens själ, kropp och sinne smälter samman med exempelvis 80 000 andra. Oavsett bakgrund, språk, tankesätt, politisk gren eller demografiska egenskaper smälter man samman tillsammans med alla andra. Detta är precis som när kristna går till kyrkan på söndagar så är en arena den heligaste platsen. Atmosfären och känslan i arenan är den största anledningen till att jag går på matcherna. Självklart även för att heja på mitt lag och titta på en bra fotbollsmatch. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28, p. 51)

Ju bättre/fräschare arena desto bättre men det är oftast bara trogna supportrar som är återkommande oavsett arenan. Men ut mot resten av "världen" är arenan väldigt viktig. Atmosfären och hur inramningen är och hur stämningen är på plats är viktigt hur personer utanför klubben ser på arenan. Något man som supporter kan vara stolt över och få en att längta till matcherna ännu mer. (Interview, Anonymous 1, 2013-04-28, p. 51)

Självklart väldigt stor, spelarköpen ingår i ett större kretslopp. Genom spelarköpen så blir man bättre på plan vilket kan leda till högre positioner i spelet som i sin tur genererar mer pengar och större sponsor pengar där man kan förbättra sin arena, sina events, sin solidaritet med sina supportrar och därmed bygga mer och mer. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28, p. 52)

En spelare med väldigt bra image, på grund av hans atletiska egenskaper och andra PR egenskaper kan även ge ett rejält lyft då en större supporter bas skapas vilket i sin tur genererar större publicitet och därmed större inkomster. Att vara en fan innebär inte endast att man köper en tröja eller besöker arenan, är du en fan så har du en brinnande passion för att se sitt lag spela vilket innebär att kanaler köper rättigheter för att tillgodose sina konsumenter vilket innebär mer pengar till ligan och därmed lagen. (Interview, Anonymous 4, 2013-04-28, p. 52)

Det går inte att jämföra med klubbar i Europa som kan öka sin tröjförsäljning etc genom ett spelarköp. Kalmar FF har inte kapital att gör ett sådant köp och jag tror därför att spelarköpen har väldigt liten inverkan på varumärkesuppbyggnaden. Det skulle vara om man köper en utländsk landslagsspelare från en liten nation då varumärkets kännedom kan öka i det landet. (Interview, Anonymous 3, 2013-04-28, p. 52)

Om klubben sponsrar andra så uppmärksammas de såklart mera och därmed ökas awareness. (Interview, Anonymous 2, 2013-04-28, p. 54)

Kvaliteten på matchen samt arenan samtidigt som arenan associeras med lagets varumärke. (Interview, Anonymous 2, 2013-04-28, p. 55)