

Saila Saraniemi

# DESTINATION BRANDING IN A COUNTRY CONTEXT

A CASE STUDY OF FINLAND IN THE BRITISH MARKET

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# ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the theoretically emerging phenomenon of tourism destination branding within a country context. The purpose of the study is to develop the concepts needed to describe and analyse the destination branding process in the country context. Its focus is on the national tourism organisation. Today place branding, particularly its tourism-related sub-area of destination branding, is a common approach towards tourism destination promotion. The academic destination branding discourse however has been under-theorised.

The theoretical basis of this study lies within multidisciplinary image, identity and branding research (especially corporate branding), drawing particularly from marketing and organisational research. The tradition of image studies in tourism research provides a contextual basis. The brand is a contextually-bounded concept. This study is an intensive single-case study, using abductive logic as its scientific approach. The multiple sets of data consisting of conversational interviews, standardised personal interviews, press articles, and the documents and web pages of the Finnish Tourist Board, are used to provide a holistic description of the image building and destination branding processes used to sell Finland in the British market. The analysed market serves as a sub-analysis unit of the case phenomenon.

This research report consists of an introductory section, and five intertwined papers, which aim to provide a thorough understanding of the Finnish Tourist Board's image building efforts (supply side/ induced image formation), the press media influence (independent- /autonomous), and the perceptions of tourists (demand side/organic). Image, as a dimension of brand, emerges from this analysis.

As a result of this dissertation, 'brand' is defined in a number of hierarchically connected ways. First, it is a subjective impression that conveys the core values, commitments and promises uniquely associated with a particular place, emerging from the identities of the destination and its stakeholders. Second, it is a holistic and co-created identity, based on a destination's core values, interpreted by both supply and demand side stakeholders. Third, the destination identity emerges from interaction between all stakeholders. Fourth, destination should be viewed as an evolving process, and not as a fixed and completed identity.

Empirically, a story of the image building and branding efforts of Finland during the past three decades is presented. Theoretically, as a concluding conceptual contribution, the typology of four different branding philosophies is presented: product-bound branding, corporate branding, co-created branding, and identity-based branding. It is suggested that branding philosophy, rather than being only an implementation strategy for image promotion, relates to a way of understanding the branding process within an organisation. The branding philosophy is manifested in 1) how the destination is understood (e.g. as a product, or as a process with blurring roles of producers and customers), 2) in the ownership of the destination brand and in the management of that brand, 3) in the level of involvement of external stakeholders and 4) in the destination values related to the branding process. The typology of destination branding philosophy has in no way been categorised to show 'the best alternative'. Instead, it may serve as a tool for analysing the practices of destination marketing organisations. In Finland, the product-bound branding process of enhancing favourable images has changed towards co-created branding, with a deepened involvement of stakeholders to the branding process.

*Keywords:* Destination, destination image, destination branding, corporate branding, identity-based branding, country branding

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirja tarkastelee teoreettisesti matkailukohteen brändin rakennusta maakontekstissa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on kehittää käsitteitä kuvaamaan ja analysoimaan matkakohteen brändin rakentamista maatasolla. Tutkimus keskittyy kansalliseen matkailuorganisaatioon. Nykyään paikan markkinointi ja erityisesti matkakohteen markkinointi ovat yleisiä matkailumarkkinoinnin muotoja. Akateeminen matkailubränditutkimus on kuitenkin ollut vähäistä.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen perusta on monitieteisessä imago-, identiteetti- ja bränditutkimuksessa (erityisesti yritysbränditutkimuksessa), jonka juuret ovat markkinointi- ja organisaatioiden johtamiskirjallisuudessa. Matkailututkimuksen imagotutkimustraditio tarjoaa kontekstuaalisen perustan tutkimukselle. Brändi on kontekstisidonnainen käsite.

Tutkimus on intensiivinen, yhden tapauksen tutkimus, joka noudattaa abduktiivista logiikkaa. Aineistona käytettiin keskusteluhaastatteluja, standardoituja henkilökohtaisia haastatteluja, lehtiartikkeleita sekä Matkailun edistämiskeskuksen arkistoja muun muassa markkinointimateriaalin osalta, sekä kotisivuja. Siten saatiin kokonaisvaltainen kuva Suomen imagon ja brändin rakentamisprosesseista Iso-Britanniassa. Analysoitu markkina toimii kohdeilmion yhtenä analyysiyksikkönä. Tutkimus koostuu johdanto-osuudesta ja viidestä toisiinsa liittyvästä tutkimuspaperista, jotka tarkastelevat Matkailun edistämiskeskuksen imagon rakentamistoimenpiteitä eri näkökulmista. Kohdemarkkinoilla tutkitaan maaimagoa sekä kysynnän että tarjonnan näkökulmasta eli vallitsevan yleisen käsityksen sekä lehdistön välittämän imagon näkökulmasta. Lehdistön luomaa kuvaa tarkastellaan erityisesti siitä näkökulmasta, miten MEK:n julkisuustyöllä on pystytty siihen vaikuttamaan. Analyysin tuloksena imago ilmenee brändin ulottuvuutena.

Tutkimuksessa brändi määritellään lukuisin, hierarkkisin tavoin. Ensiksi, se on subjektiivinen vaikutelma, joka ilmaisee ydinarvoja, sitoumuksia ja lupauksia, jotka liittyvät tiettyyn paikkaan, ja ilmentyvät matkakohteen sidosryhmien identiteeteistä. Toiseksi se on kokonaisvaltainen yhdessä luotu identiteetti, joka perustuu kohteen ydinarvoihin, joita tulkitsevat sekä kysyntää ja tarjontaa edustavat osapuolet. Identiteetti syntyy eri osapuolten vuorovaikutuksessa. Neljänneksi matkakohde tulee nähdä jatkuvasti kehittyvänä prosessina, ei muuttumattomana identiteettinä.

Empiirisesti esitetään MEK:n imagon rakentamisen ja brändäämisen prosessit kolmen viime vuosikymmenen ajalta. Kokoavana teoreettisena kontribuutiona esitetään neljän eri brändinrakennusfilosofian typologia: tuoteperustainen, yritysbrändääminen, yhdessäluotu brändääminen sekä identiteettiperustainen. Tutkimus ehdottaa, että brändäysfilosofia ei ole vain imagon edistämisen toteuttamisstrategia, vaan liittyy siihen, miten brändääminen ymmärretään organisaatiossa. Brändäysfilosofiaa ilmaistaan seuraavien seikkojen kautta: 1) miten matkakohde ymmärretään (tuotteena vai prosessina, jonka rajat tarjoajan ja ostajan välillä häilyvät), 2) brändin omistamisen ja hallinnan kautta, 3) ulkoisten sidosryhmien osallistumisella brändin rakentamiseen ja 4) brändäykseen liittyvillä kohteen arvoilla. Typologia ei luokittele parasta mahdollista vaihtoehtoa, vaan palvelee käytäntöjen analysoinnin tukena matkailuorganisaatioissa. Suomessa tuoteperustainen, imagoa ylläpitävä tyyppi on muuttunut kohti yhdessä luotavaa, syvempää sidosryhmäyhteistyötä huomioivaa prosessia. Tutkimuksen kontribuutio liittyy erityisesti matkailuorganisaation sisäisten tekijöiden huomioimiseen brändinrakennuksessa. Tärkeää onkin osata erottaa matkakohteeseen liittyvät tekijät ja matkailuorganisaatioon liittyvät tekijät matkakohteen brändäystä kehitettäessä. Huomioitava on myös matkailijoiden ja muiden sidosryhmien muuttuvat identiteetit matkakohteen vetovoimaisuutta kehitettäessä.

Tutkimuksen kohdemarkkinana oli Iso-Britannia, joka näyttää säilyttäneen vakaan asemansa viiden eniten Suomeen matkustavan kansallisuuden joukossa. Tulevaisuudessa myös tämä markkina tarvitsee entistä enemmän huomiota markkinoiden eriytyessä yhä pienempiin ryhmiin. Tutkimusajankohtana imago oli edelleen niin mahdollisten matkailijoiden kuin lehdistönkin näkökulmasta stereotyyppinen pohjoiseen sijaintiin liittyvä. Tämä on haaste erityisesti siitä näkökulmasta, miten kääntää kylmyys edelleen positiiviseksi, Lapin lisäksi koko maata hyödyttäväksi tekijäksi.

*Asiasanat:* matkakohteen brändin rakennus, matkakohde, yritysbrändi, brändäysfilosofia

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Oulu, August 2009

Saila Saraniemi

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# LIST OF PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE DISSERTATION

- I Saraniemi, S. and Kylänen, M. (2009), Problematising the concept of tourism destination. An Analysis of Different Theoretical Approaches. Accepted for publication in Journal of Travel Research. Forthcoming
- II Komppula, R. and Saraniemi, S. (2004), Organic images of Finland in European Market. *Tourism Today*, 4 (Autumn), 37-51
- III Saraniemi, S. (2009), Country image represented in the press – component of the destination image. Manuscript. First version of this paper presented in Imagination, media power and reputation –conference, Hague 30.-31.5.2007
- IV Saraniemi, S. (2009), From Familiarity Tours to Media Representations: Finland in the British Press. *Tourism Analysis* Vol 14 No 2 In press
- V Saraniemi, S. (2009), How does destination branding differ from building a favourable image? Insights into a country context. Manuscript. First version of this paper published in Proceedings of the Travel and Tourism Research Association Europe Annual Conference, 23-25 April 2008, Helsinki, Finland, Competition in Tourism: Business and Destination Perspectives

# 1 INTRODUCTION

“The FTB has been engaged in promoting the country’s image for as long as it [FTB] has existed.”

“We always had to consider the perspective. The perspective of the forest industry is somewhat different to that of the tourism industry, to that of Finnair, and to that of Invest in Finland”.

“We approve that perception of the country, the country image, and its brand, are all one and the same”.

“A new way of thinking is needed... and a new kind of knowledge”.

“They [tour operators] did not know that the ‘Refreshing Journey’ campaign was on”.

“The central and visible responsibility of profiling should lie with firms, associations, and with other non-governmental organisations.”

*The extracts are from my interviews with the management of the studied national tourism organisation*

## 1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

The above interview extracts are examples of the research arena of this focal dissertation. Representing the views of different levels of management in the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB), they describe the starting point of this study. Tourism destinations have promoted their images in numerous ways throughout their history of attracting visitors from different markets. Some destinations have become popular, or at least well-known, around the world, whereas others have remained less familiar, despite the time and money spent on their marketing efforts.

Today place branding, and especially its tourism-related sub-area - destination branding (c.f. Gnoth, 2007), is now a common approach to tourism destination promotion, and has even become a trend amongst tourism destinations marketers. Academic destination branding studies are often legitimated through the assumption that destination images are the main influence over customer choice in leisure travel markets (e.g. Hanlan and Kelly, 2005). A choice of travel destination, especially a holiday destination, is nowadays a lifestyle symbol for customers (e.g. Morgan *et al.*, 2005). At the same time, a virtual, and moreover a globalised world, forces destinations to extensively compete for customers, be it a last minute reservation for a vacation or a conference trip. Changes in the marketplace, like increased competition, more extensive use of the Internet, and the need to involve stakeholder perspectives in marketing campaigns (rather than seeing them only as targets), call for a ‘new kind of thinking’, as the manager in one extract above mentioned. Although the phenomenon of differentiation of a place, for instance, may be the same both with building the destination image, and with branding the destination, the ways of implementing this image building or branding process vary.

Many tourism destinations around the world, including resorts, cities and countries, have launched branding campaigns to differentiate themselves from their competitors

and to attract more tourists. Of countries, the examples of Thailand, Singapore, Australia and Denmark are the best known due to their successful branding efforts. Personally, I became interested in destination branding through the various phases of the research process described in this dissertation. The starting point for this specific journey was in the year 2002, when a new director general of the National Tourism Organisation (NTO), Jaakko Lehtonen, started at the FTB. Mr Lehtonen, before starting at the NTO, had a career as a manager in Valio, a Finnish dairy product company, and had many new ideas developing the tourism business. One of his innovative ideas was to develop the country as a brand, just like consumer products. According to him, the first task should be to clarify Finland's position and image in the European markets.<sup>1</sup> The objective was to clarify the existing positive images of Finland as a basis for branding the country as a tourism destination. Soon, this journey ended up as a dissertation project with further theoretical objectives which will be described in the following chapters of this book.

In short, there were two riddles that inspired and irritated me during this research process. The first is summarised in Hanlan and Kelly's article (2005, 175), which summarises the current research of destination branding: "*Research findings suggest to marketers who wish to develop a strong destination brand firstly to identify the image attributes generated through destination experience within a specific market segment. The branding entity may then identify a small number of positive and meaningful image attributes on which to position the destination.*" This refers to very customer specific considerations, forgetting other stakeholders, but also relates the destination with a consumer product which has attributes to be marketed to specific segments. For me, particularly when large entities such as countries are the focus, the destination is more than a product in the traditional manufacturing sense, (see e.g. Morgan and Pritchard, 2003). At least, the destination consists of several components (Buhalis, 2000), and involves socio-cultural aspects (Saarinen 1998; 2001; Shaw and Williams, 2004). Hankinson (2007, 241) based on previous literature, described the distinct features of complex destination product as follows: 1) the co-production of the place product, 2) the co-consumption of the place product, 3) the variability of the place product, 4) the legal definition of boundaries, 5) administrative overlap (e.g. inconsistent strategies in a region), and 6) political accountability (e.g. short-term decisions due to regional elected members of the governmental offices) (see also Moilanen, 2008).

The second riddle concerns the concepts of 'image' and 'brand', which have been a challenge for me. What is the difference between them? For a long time, I avoided speaking about brands or branding in a destination context, and read only destination image literature. In this study my empirical case study forced me to dive into the world of branding; I found that I was not alone when hesitating with the branding discussion in a tourism destination context (e.g. Blichfeldt, 2005; Pike, 2005; Gnoth *et al.*, 2007). I am also not alone having conceptual challenges with image and brand (Ekinci, 2003; Tasci and Kozak, 2006). The problems with conceptualisation of the destination branding relate to insufficient theorising and concepts within marketing literature concerning branding, and destination branding, in particularly. Finding solutions for these riddles are my motivations for this dissertation. The perspective to the branding in this dissertation is that of the National Tourism Organisation which often has responsibility of tourism marketing at a country level. Later, the specific research questions will be presented.

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<sup>1</sup> The view expressed by Mr Lehtonen in our first meeting in spring 2002

## 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the following chapter, I describe the need for this study more precisely. Hankinson (2007) proposed that the destinations differ e.g. in terms of both their institutional infrastructure and their potential as a brand. Therefore, empirical research is needed to identify the specific characteristics determining the destination branding process and to further conceptualise this phenomenon. This study aims to increase the rare empirical knowledge on destination branding and has following argumentations for the need of this study:

- A problematic concept of a brand and an image, difficult to define, diversified definitions in the literature (e.g. Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2006; Louro and Cunha, 2001; Rindell, 2008).
- There is still a need for the development of a commonly accepted framework for destination branding theory (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998; Koneznik and Gartner, 2007).
- A destination is not a traditional product (e.g. and Pritchard, 2003) but it is not a company (Ooi, 2004) or service either: current branding literature lacks with theorising in this context. Maybe, therefore, many governments, consultants, and scholars persist in a superficial interpretation of place branding that is nothing more than product promotion (Anholt, 2008).
- A common debate has been whether branding is suitable to a complex destination context (e.g. Williams, Gill and Chura, 2004).
- The unmanageable place brand (Blichfeldt, 2005): ownership of the place brand is not obvious, but there are numerous stakeholders involved (e.g. Morgan *et al.*, 2003)
- The stakeholder perspective is, however, undertheorised in branding discussion as a whole (see Gregory, 2007). According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), a corporate brand needs to deal with the requirements of multiple stakeholders, for instance.
- Over ten years ago, Balmer (1998) posed that “Strong corporate brands require clear corporate missions and philosophies; the brand personality and identity need to be understood and each stakeholder’s perspective of these perspectives need to be measured”. Still, until today, this note of stakeholder identities has not created fully theorising in the area.
- Traditionally, brand is defined as a promise (e.g. Kapferer 1994; 1997). From the perspective of the destination and the Destination Marketing Organisation, it is not obvious who defines the identity and promise in a multi-stakeholder destination. Furthermore, from the perspective of the destination and the Destination Management Organisation, particularly, it is interesting who defines the identity in a multi-stakeholder destination.
- The geographical dimension brings in the light yet another characteristic, namely, the notion that branding may well be different in the regions and in the countries (e.g. Anholt, 2002).

Some researchers (e.g. Morgan *et al.* 2005) see destinations as being parallel with brands in relation to the product and service markets. Indeed, the brand was originally a product level concept of the marketing management approach (e.g. Kotler, 1988). Here the brand treats the product as a marketing tool. According to Knox and Bickerton (2003),

attitudes in marketing towards branding have evolved away from the primacy of customer demand. This approach views the brand as a strategic resource, which can be used to guide the business processes, generating brand value for customers (Urde, 1999). Later on, the customers evaluating the organisation conclude a brand to be more holistic than the functional benefits perspective would allow, calling for a broader scope than merely the relationship between the customers, the product and the growth of business (see Roper and Davies, 2007).

They have developed the discussion towards corporate branding, which is more useful for e.g. non-profit organisations. After the first wave of branding literature, the development towards a branding concept at a corporate level in the 21st century has been called the second wave of branding by Schultz, Antorini and Csaba (2005). The corporate branding discussion holds on to the value foundation of the organisation, and takes into account a broader stakeholder perspective. It also has a long term perspective, instead of merely focusing on advertising (see Roper and Davies, 2007). As a consequence, it seems better suited for destination branding.

Therefore, as my theoretical lenses I have chosen the multidisciplinary approaches of destination image formation (e.g. Gartner, 1993; Gallarza *et al.*, 2002) and corporate branding (cf. Knox and Bickerton, 2003). For finding conceptualisations needed specifically for destination branding, I have in this dissertation used emerging ideas of identity-based branding (e.g. Burmann *et al.*, 2009) and co-created brand (e.g. Boyle, 2007; Kay, 2006; Payne *et al.*, 2009). These concepts are discussed further later in my dissertation. To the reader, I wish to note that these relatively new concepts in branding literature were adopted into an analysis after collecting and initially analysing the interview data. The broadening of the corporate branding discussions with these new perspectives and the fairly recent destination context may well contribute to a marketing discipline beyond a tourism context and place marketing. In the following, based on the theoretical justifications of this chapter, I present the purpose of this study.

### 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This doctoral dissertation consists of five individual papers following the introduction.

*The purpose of this study is to develop the concepts needed to describe and analyse the destination branding process on the country level.* The Finnish Tourist Board is a national tourist organisation (NTO) that is responsible for building the image of the country. In this study, I have followed a change process of the NTO's image building activities, mainly using interviews and secondary data as my sources. I started my research process by investigating the prevailing images of Finland in important target markets to form the basis of a brand strategy for the NTO. I continued the process by examining how these images of Finland were created and managed by the NTO in certain important markets, like Great Britain. I examined this image management from the perspective of publicity management, due to the strong position which media familiarity tours hold as a means of image building with the NTO. I conceptualised the specific context of the tourism destination in detail in the first research article of this dissertation. It forms a basis for understanding the complexities of country branding described in the last article, which summarises the change process of image building activities which the NTO has used during the last three decades.

The main research question addressed in this dissertation is: *How does destination branding take place at the country level?*

The verb “take place” is used here to give to the reader a connotation of the *partially active course of events* in the destination, from the perspective of a Destination Management Organisation. A debate has taken place in literature over whether branding is always a deliberate and strategic action on the part of a certain brand manager (see e.g. Leitch and Richardson, 2003).

*Sub-questions are:*

1. *How can a tourism destination concept be understood in order to build a destination-wide brand?*
2. *What are the prevailing images of Finland in the different target markets?*
3. *How does the demand-side image formation process work?*
4. *How does the general country image in the market contribute to the destination image?*
5. *How does the National Tourist Organisation implement publicity management in order to project destination image?*
6. *How have the planning and implementation stages of image building developed in the National Tourist Organisation during the past three decades?*
7. *How are destination image building and destination branding concepts related?*

The questions 1, 3, 4 and 7 are theoretical sub-questions, while sub-questions 2, 5 and 6 are more empirically oriented research questions. In the following section, I shed light on the theoretical discussions justifying my research questions.

*The nature of the tourism destination context* provides interesting opportunities to study branding. It is well established that a destination is not a product in a traditional sense, but more a bundle of different components, both tangible (e.g. attractions) and intangible (e.g. socio-cultural) (see Buhalis, 2000; Morgan *et al.* 2003; Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). In this study, *destination* refers to *a certain area which is marketed to tourists as a place to visit*. More specifically here, a destination refers to *a country*, instead of smaller geographical units like a city or a skiing centre (cf. Moilanen, 2008). According to Caldwell and Freire (2004, 59) the factors which influence the image of a country are different from the factors which affect a region and city. Thus, branding a country can be seen as a different activity from that of branding a region or a city.

*Tourism destination image* has undoubtedly become one of the most important topics in tourism research during the past three decades (Pike, 2002; Seaton, 1989). At the same time, the tourism industry has adopted an image as a crucial marketing concept (see Pike, 2002). Destination image research has focused on several different topics. These include the relationship of image to destination choice (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Goodrich, 1978; Mayo and Jarvis, 1981), image modification and change (Chon, 1991; Pearce, 1982), and image measurement (Echtner and Ritchie, 1991; Gartner, 1993). Much emphasis has been placed on examining the image formation process (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993; Gunn, 1972; Suh and Gartner, 2004; Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Govers *et al.*, 2007b). In the 2000's, some comprehensive literature reviews on destination image studies have been executed (see Gallarza *et al.*, 2002; Pike 2002).

*The country level as a context* is interesting in tourism marketing, because *a country as an advertising or branding object* is most visible to the wide audiences. Parallel concepts and discussions exist in the international marketing arena, where e.g. concepts of *country of origin* and *country image* are well known (see Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005; Nadeau *et al.*, 2008). Many researchers (e.g. Anholt, 2008; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002) argue that every place has an image no matter what the source of that image is. Furthermore, in international marketing research a country image consists of all associations related



to a given country. It also acts as an image source for other product-related associations, like the country-of-origin (Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005). Similarly, when the context is a country as a place to visit, the image can be conceptualised as an overall country image impacting on images of local destinations in the country and vice versa. *That is, the country image is an element of the destination image.*

In his later publications (e.g. 2007; 2008), among others, Simon Anholt has questioned the *legitimacy of the branding term within the place context*. Perhaps because of this, my research is encouraged by Anholt (2002), who argues that in the branding sense, a country is closer to the corporate level than to the product or service level. According to Anholt (2002), the *“country itself may not be the primary brand, but (is) more the manager of a group of related sub-brands”*. In so saying, Anholt refers to all forms of country branding, with sub-brands being activities related to the country, like the country as a place to invest, to live in and to visit. In this study, I admit that all of these aspects are intertwined, but the perspective is that of the country as a tourism destination.

In businesses, corporate level branding requires organisation-wide support; it needs the integration of internal and external communications, and it needs close cooperation between different departments (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Balmer, 2001). In a destination context, this brings the perspective of *destination marketing organisations* into the focus. In country level tourism marketing, National Tourism marketing Organisations (NTOs) are in a key position to coordinate the messages delivered. Thus, this study aims to *identify certain important elements* during the process of moving from traditional image building activities towards a period of country branding, from the perspective of a national tourism organisation. In the following Figure 1, I illustrate the image-related concepts of *image building*, *image management*, *publicity management* and *projecting destination image* under the main concept of destination branding. During my research, my understanding of this phenomenon has developed in such a way that I see all of them contributing to this phenomenon of destination branding.

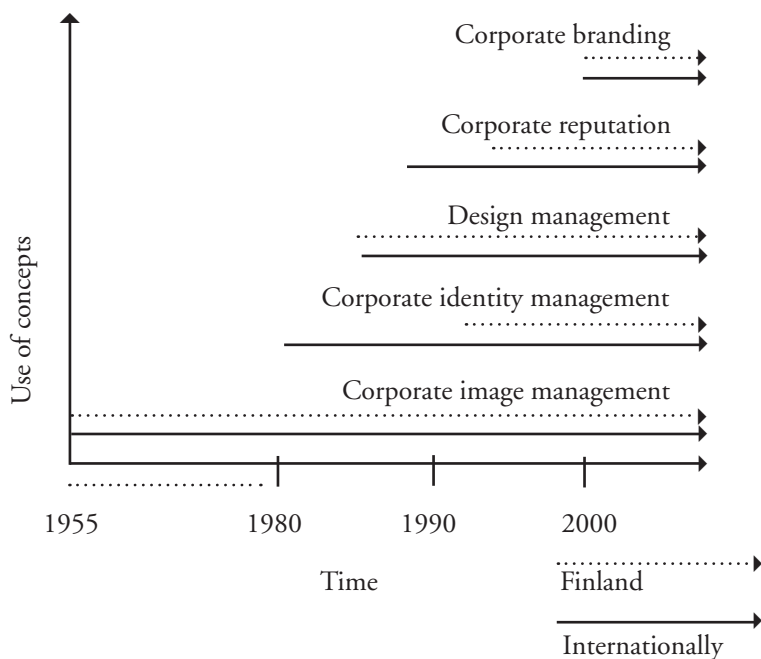


**FIGURE 1.** Image-related concepts of this study from a perspective of a national tourism organisation.

Despite the frequent use of the image concept within the general marketing research tradition, Balmer and Greyser (2003) emphasise difficulties in its usage. Images are impossible for companies to control; there is a multiplicity of images, and different images affect different stakeholder groups. Balmer and Greyser suggest that this is the reason why

recently concepts of *brand* and *reputation* have become more popular (Balmer and Greyser 2003). Rindell (2008) argues that from a theoretical and managerial point of view it is difficult to see how changing one concept to another can help our understanding of how a company's actions influence the consumer's construction of images, brands or reputation. In this study, from an organisation's perspective, I consider it more important to clarify the structures and elements behind the concepts, while at the same time developing the theory to be more consistent.

The *confusion about concepts* is at the root of image, identity and brand research is confusion about the concepts. Both marketing and organisational research have contributed to the discussion of product and corporate images (see e.g. Knox and Bickerton, 2003). As a result, new concepts have evolved, but their relationships to existing ones have often remained unclear. Rindell (2008) in her dissertation describes the evolution of image-related concepts in a corporate context, both internationally, and nationally in Finland (Figure 2).



**FIGURE 2.** Historiography of concepts used within corporate image research internationally and within a Finnish business context (Modified and developed based on Balmer and Greyser 2003 by Rindell, 2008, p. 52).

Since the late 1990s, branding discussions have been adopted from traditional product or service branding contexts to others, such as the corporate context (Knox and Bickerton, 2003), and the place marketing context. Gold (1994) was one of the first researchers to theorise this phenomenon, naming it *place promotion*. Later, Kotler *et al.* (1999) has been one of the first authors introducing place marketing as a research concept. Olins (2004) notes that analogous and much older activity for place branding, especially coun-

try branding, includes the projection of national identity and reputation. In this study I define destination as being *a place to visit*, and thus, the tourism context can be seen as a part of broader place marketing phenomenon (c.f. e.g. Moilanen, 2008).

In a tourism context, while the destination image has been extensively studied over decades, literature on the destination branding is still sparse (see e.g. Morgan *et al.*, 2005; Konecnik and Go, 2008), although emerging (e.g. Cai 2002, Hankinson, 2004; Moilanen, 2008). In spite of growing academic interest and an increasing trend towards branding among tourism destinations, there still seems to be a lack of conceptualisation in the field. Although Pritchard and Morgan published their seminal *destination branding related* journal article already in 1998, and a textbook, *Tourism Promotion and Power: Creating Images, Creating Identities*, in the same year, there is still a need for the development of a commonly accepted framework for destination branding theory (see e.g. Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998; Konecnik and Gartner, 2007). Destination branding discussion has often used classical product branding theories as an assumed conceptualisation (e.g. Hall, 1999; Hankinson, 2005; Murphy *et al.*, 2007) and left the premises of the product branding overlooked.

Empirical studies (e.g. Moilanen, 2008) have shown that practitioners have often understood destination branding from a product branding perspective. A rather narrow understanding of the brand, as a name or a logo, has been emphasised in the discussion (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). Moreover, as Cai (2002) pointed out, another unclear conceptualisation is the distinction between image building and branding. One may question, does differentiating them benefit us? Cornelissen and Elving (2006) argue that thus, energy from systematic empirical research on image-related topics is wasted. Arguably, we are discussing the same phenomenon of building and delivering favourable images, but it is important here to consider how the activities and operations of these tourism marketing operations are conducted.

## 1.4 KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

In the following table, the key concepts of the study are shortly defined.

**TABLE 1.** The main concepts of the study.

The concept	The definition
Tourism	“A social phenomenon which involves the movement of people to various destinations and their (temporary) stay there” (Sharpley, 2002)
Tourist	“A temporary visitor to a destination”. See Pike (2008, 23).
Destination marketing organisation	Local, regional (RTO) or national (NTO) tourism destination marketing organisation. See chapter 2.1.
Destination	In this study, a country instead of a smaller geographical unit, which is marketed to tourists as a place to visit. Destination is further conceptualised in the study.
Destination image	Destination image is a mental association held by a tourist (see Gunn, 1972; Gartner, 1996).
Destination identity	Destination identity refers to the “core” of the destination; the internal aspects of the brand. Identity is further conceptualised in the study.
Destination brand	Destination brand conveys the core values and commitments of a destination, and makes promises uniquely associated with the place, based on dynamic identities of the destination and its stakeholders.
Destination branding	Destination branding is holistic, dynamic, co-created and committed identity management, based on core values of the destination and its stakeholders both on the demand and supply side, in order to build a promise uniquely associated with the place.

Often, *corporate brand* is defined following using the product brand definition given by the American Marketing Association: a brand is “a name, term, sign, symbol or design or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition”. It is however recognised that a corporate brand is more than that; it has meaning for all stakeholders, both internal and external. For them, a brand represents a set of values and promises and even a personality (Daly and Moloney, 2004.) *Corporate branding*, on the other hand, can be defined as “a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a favourable image and, consequently, a favourable reputation for the company as a whole, by sending signals to all stakeholders, and by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism” (Einwiller and Will 2002, 101).

## 1.5 POSITIONING OF THE STUDY

Tourism destination branding research has its roots in the branding of products and companies. In this study, the existing literature of destination branding is extended by using multidisciplinary research streams, including identity management and corporate branding, as a backbone of the research. Due to this multidisciplinary research area, destination image formation and image building research are used in addition to the existing place and destination branding discussion (Figure 3).

Recent branding research in Finland includes a few doctoral dissertations that aim to conceptualise the brand and the branding in different contexts (Lindberg-Repo, 2001; Aspara, 2007; Moilanen, 2008). Qualitative methods and strong emphasis on empirical research are typical characteristics for this fairly new research topic. In addition, the certain perspectives in marketing or related literature (e.g. customer relationship communication, network management, actor-network theory) are typically used to approach the branding phenomenon. This study operates within the branding research.

This dissertation contributes first and foremost to destination branding research. The study draws particularly from values-based corporate branding discussion (e.g. van Riel, 1995; Urde, 2003; Edvardsson *et al.*, 2006). In the data analysis phase, emerging identity-based branding literature within corporate branding literature (see e.g. Burmann *et al.*, 2009; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005; de Chernatony and Harris, 2000; Dunn and Davies, 2003) was adopted due to characteristics of the empirical data (e.g. significance of the NTOs characteristics). Identity-based branding emphasises internal aspects, like the supportive culture of the organisation in branding. In addition, this approach calls for further research on relationships between the identity and image dimensions of organisations (see Burmann *et al.*, 2009).

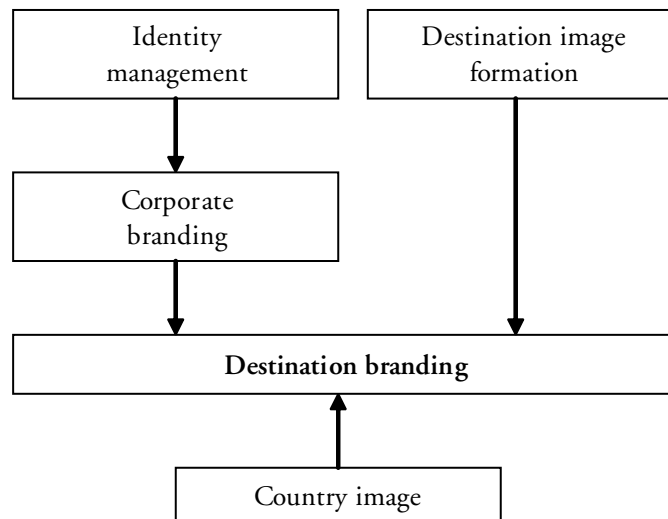


FIGURE 3. Positioning of the study.

Alsem and Kosteljik (2008) even suggest that incorporating the brand identity into the general marketing paradigm bridges the gap between general marketing science and practice, which could lead to a more balanced paradigm, appealing to both supply and

demand sides in the market. Alsem and Kosteljik (2008) however mainly consider the product to be brand identities, not corporate or destination brands, although they suggest that corporate reputation management discussion could be fruitful for branding theory. To sum up these emerging discussions, it could be said that taking a holistic view and examining the organisation from the supply and demand side (and from the perspective of the other stakeholders, if possible) are both valuable exercises that contribute to the corporate branding discussion.

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the impact of *identity perspective* on *destination branding* (e.g. Konecnik and Gartner, 2007; Konecnik and Go, 2008). Park and Petrick (2006) emphasise the meaning of identity by suggesting that destination branding strategies would be effective if a nation is undergoing a redefinition of identity. Cai (2002) argues that *brand identity* is a critical missing link between branding and image building; image building does not consider brand identity. As a theoretical contribution of this study, the corporate branding discussion as a whole can benefit from holistic insights into place branding, and specifically to destination branding. Branding-related concepts will be clarified when the identity perspective on branding is examined.

Empirically, the inspiration for this study was the plan of the National Tourism Organisation in Finland, the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB), to formulate a brand strategy. This NTO is an interesting case because it recently, according to many exposures in the media<sup>2</sup>, has adopted the country branding. *The voicing of branding efforts, that is, speaking about branding*, was put forward internally in the NTO in early 2000's, as the NTO gained a new general manager. Image building has been, however, one of the main tasks of the FTB for much longer. This case study introduces the story of FTB's efforts to build Finland's country image, and its attempts to craft a brand strategy during the last decades.

Great Britain is selected as the research market of this study as it has in many ways been a pioneer in Finnish tourism. At the destination organisation level, all marketing efforts emphasise the importance of group and charter travelling over individual travelling as a means to gain critical mass. For Finland, in this charter segment, British tourists have been the most important leisure travel market for years. In the last few decades there has been a remarkable increasing in the number of tourists visiting Finland from the UK, and there has also been a change in the travel behaviour of British travellers. Great Britain is not however the biggest market for Finland. It has for a long time (see e.g. Bord Interview Survey, 2009) been the fifth largest country of residence for visitors coming to Finland. In 2007, 312 000 visitors travelled from Great Britain to Finland. In 2008 the number was slightly bigger (see e.g. Border Interview Survey, 2009). Still, British leisure tourists have been for Finnish Lapland the biggest market and they have given the faces for charter tourism to Lapland and to Finland. Naturally, economic considerations in this research have limited the focus to this one specific market.

## 1.6 THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH – ABDUCTIVE LOGIC

Being an essay-based dissertation, with several research phases, I find identifying my scientific philosophical position to be important. One often used distinction in the philosophical continuum is that between subjectivism and objectivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Subjectivist approaches relate to phenomenology, which is one broad paradigm within the field of social sciences, the other being positivism (Neilimo and Näsi, 1980).

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<sup>2</sup>The brand Finland discussion has been a popular topic in the Finnish press and on internet discussion forums, especially since the official "brand team", with a former Nokia director Jorma Ollila as a chairman, was established in autumn 2008.

During my research process, I have found the borders of the different philosophical positions blurring (see Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Different data collection and analysis methods especially in my study would refer to the different positions in the philosophical continuum. The view expressed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) however, that too strong dichotomising of subject and object may lead to ignoring their inseparable relationship, feels comfortable to me. I see that my overall understanding of the world, as being socially constructed, most importantly guides my scientific approach.

Phenomenology sees the reality as a social construct (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Furthermore, it is closely linked to nominalism, an ontology which sees the world as a social process created by the individuals concerned (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Epistemologically close to this approach is anti-positivism, which sees knowledge as something that has to be individually experienced (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). On the contrary, according to positivism, research produces facts and accounts that correspond, free of values, to an independent reality (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, 18).

This study focuses on one case study. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), different philosophical traditions can be applied to case studies, as the data in case study may involve qualitative data, quantitative data, or both (Yin, 2003). In this study, several different data collection methods were used: 1) standardised personal interviews<sup>3</sup> (open-ended questions) 2) narrative, conversational interviews 3) press articles (British and Finnish) 4) e-mails and homepages, and 5) archives of the Finnish Tourist Board (e.g. marketing plans and journalists' itineraries of familiarity tours in Finland). The data was thus mainly qualitative, with analysis methods only differing depending of the data. The fact that this data collection comes from multiple sources is seen as an advantage for case studies, as it allows a holistic picture of the phenomenon to develop (Yin, 2003). The phenomenon being studied in this dissertation, destination branding, is deeply context-bound, as are the concepts to which it relates. The starting point for this research was strongly empirically-oriented. As a result, the context here is something which I must know about in order to understand an action or process (see Alajoutsijärvi and Eriksson, 1998). My background as a tourism lecturer, and as the project manager of a regional tourism development project, has allowed me easier access to the data and also a more holistic pre-understanding (Gummesson, 2000) of the phenomenon. In addition, I acquired this knowledge by using multiple data analysis methods, seeking a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Due to the pragmatically evolved research question of this study, the variety of methodological choices which *an abductive form of logic* offers make this logic the natural choice to guide my approach to this study. The abductive approach aims to develop new knowledge by considering earlier theories as a background for research, but during the research process, to formulate the research framework with empirical phenomenon. (Danemark, 2001; Kovács and Spens, 2005). Instead of being deductive, as many business studies traditionally are, or inductive, like the Grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), abductive research logic combines the principles of these two approaches (e.g. Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994). Dubois and Gadde (2002) encourage this kind of *systematic combining* to be used, especially in case studies.

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<sup>3</sup> A standardised interview is considered qualitative when responses given by participants are open-ended. They usually consist of "what"-questions (see Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In this research this approach is taken when studying the spontaneous images of Finland (e.g. "When you hear the word Finland, what comes to your mind?") Some qualitative researchers however argue that these question types are unnatural and restrictive, and should not be used in qualitative studies (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, 82).



In Figure 4, an abductive research process is illustrated. The research process can be seen as being more inductive than deductive, as it begins with a real-life observation (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 1994, 45). Analytical frameworks for empirical observation are based on prior theoretical knowledge, gained from earlier literature. As a result, empirical data is rarely approached without any preconceptions from prior literature (Kovács and Spens, 2005, 139).

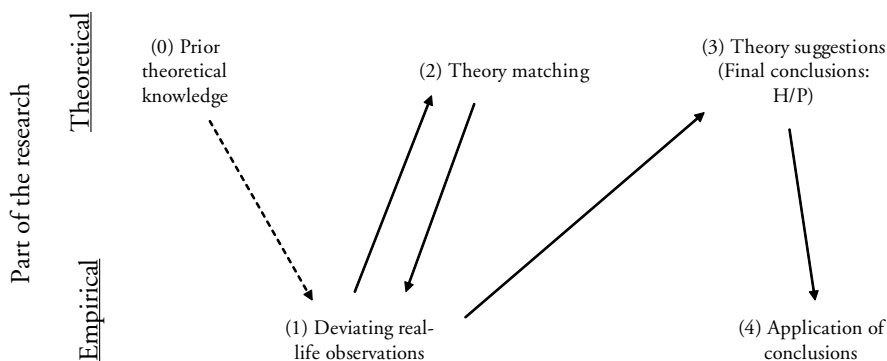


FIGURE 4. Abductive research process (Kovács and Spens, 2005, 139).

Dubois and Gadde (2002) suggest *that a tight and evolving analytical framework<sup>4</sup>* is suitable for abductive approach. This means that the framework emphasises firstly the researcher's and study's relationship to earlier theories, and secondly the evolving nature of the framework, based on empirical observations over time. An abductive research process continues by considering which parts of the prior theories match the empirical observations, and which do not. This *theory matching* (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Kovács and Spens, 2005) makes the abductive research process more flexible than only on certain theoretical basis committed deductive, or pure empirical observations trusting inductive approaches.

In abductive logic, no single model of scientific research is used, as the whole research process consists of various forms of reasoning (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, 23). In this process, my reasoning has evolved following the evolution of branding discussion in the literature during the past few years. As a result, in addition to being the story of image building and branding of Finland, this dissertation is also a story of progress of in my reasoning. Along the process, the emerging, increasing knowledge from the case guided my choices of concepts, methodology and empirical data.

Finally, I adjust my scientific approach to the dominant paradigmatic and methodological views in the current branding literature. According to Bengtsson and Ostberg (2006), the research stream focusing on corporate branding operates with the approach whereby case study analyses of companies' corporate branding efforts are used to prove their effect (e.g. Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Schultz and Hatch, 2003). Bengtsson and Ostberg (2006) call for qualitative research into brands which seek to integrate the various perspectives of the *cultures of the brand*. According to the cultural brand production theory (product-brand), a brand's meaning is co-constructed by the brand owner, consumers, popular culture and other important stakeholders. In this sense a brand can be

<sup>4</sup> See Miles & Huberman (1994) for two distinct analytical frameworks: 1) tight and pre-structured (deductive) and 2) loose and emergent (inductive)



understood as a multicultural entity whose special characteristics need to be examined from different perspectives. My definition of the destination brand as a co-created and dynamic entity, answers this call. In this dissertation, the cultural approach is mostly seen in the research paper 1, which provides an alternative, postmodern interpretation of the destination following my analysis of different theoretical approaches.

## 1.7 HOW TO READ THIS DISSERTATION – STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is essay-based, which means that it consists of the introduction and the original essays. The introduction started with the motivation for the study, the positioning of the study, definitions of key concepts, and the dissertation’s scientific approach. In this chapter, I will also shortly represent the original essays. After that, I will introduce the theoretical framework for the study, and in the following sections, I will discuss the research process and the methodological aspects. Then, I review and discuss the results of the original essays and, finally, I will evaluate this study, and represent the theoretical and managerial contribution of this study to branding literature, and will suggest some ideas for the future research. The last part of the study consists of the original essays. In the following Figure 5, I illustrate the structure of this dissertation including the original essays and research questions.

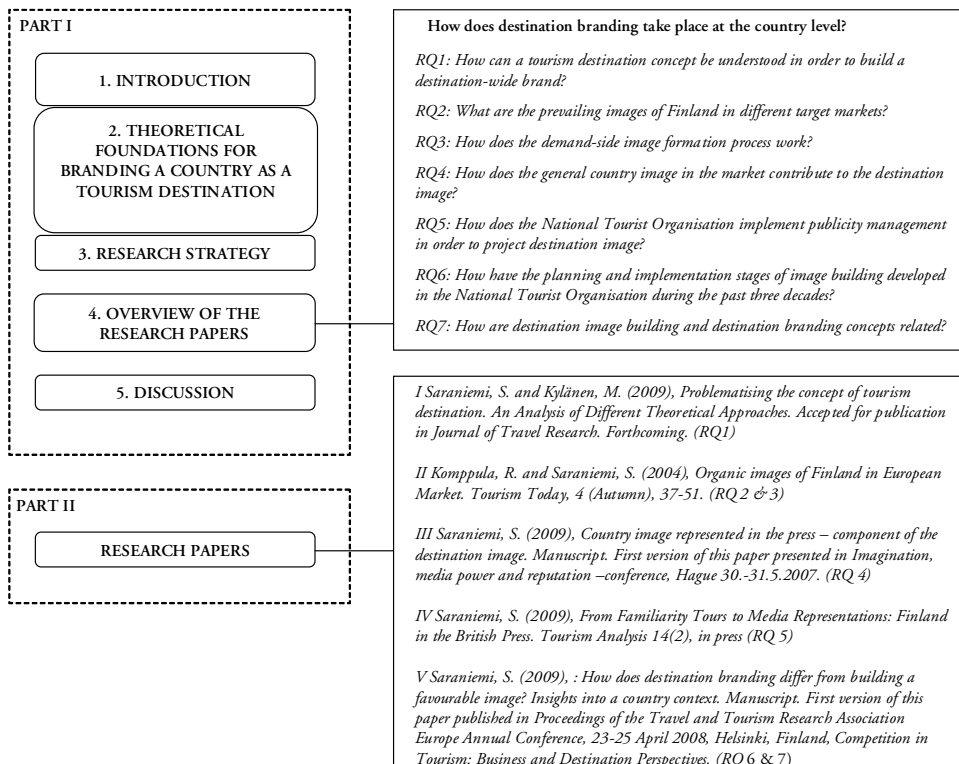


FIGURE 5. The structure of this dissertation.

## 2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR BRANDING A COUNTRY AS A TOURISM DESTINATION

### 2.1 TOURISM DESTINATION AS A CONTEXT TO STUDY IMAGE AND BRANDS

The destination branding literature is still far from the level of research quality we find in the generic product and services marketing literature, mostly because of the complexity of the connotations that come with the term 'destination' (Gnoth *et al.*, 2007).

Several studies (e.g. Haywood, 1986; Lew, 1987; Framke, 2002; Saarinen, 2004) have suggested that too little attention has been given to the identification of what is, arguably, the most appropriate unit of analysis in tourism research - the tourism destination. Destination is usually the unit of action where different stakeholders, such as companies, public organisations, service providers, locals and visitors, interact through the co-creation of experiences (cf. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Tourism is increasingly about experiences rather than about places and things. Whether building a destination-wide brand or promoting co-operation amongst different stakeholders of the same region, one must understand the nature of tourism destinations.

In tourism literature, destinations have been studied from several perspectives (see e.g. Framke, 2002). The following discussions can be identified: 1) economy geography-oriented (e.g. Medlik and Middleton, 1973), 2) marketing management-oriented (e.g. Kotler *et al.*, 1993; Middleton and Clarke, 2001), 3) customer-oriented (e.g. Lumsdon, 1997; Komppula, 2005), and 4) cultural (e.g. Pritchard and Morgan, 2001; Saarinen, 2001).<sup>5</sup> The discussion has developed from a 'destination as a product' approach towards more holistic perspectives.

Tourism marketing, particularly at a country level, is often organised in three distinctive types of tourism bodies, with interests in destination tourism development. The destination marketing organisation (DMO) is responsible for promotion. It is a government ministry, tasked with providing policy advice for government, and also acts as an umbrella industry association for the private sector, as it is responsible for the causes of member organisations (Pike, 2008, 30-31). Usually the country level DMO is a national tourism organisation (NTO)<sup>6</sup> that is responsible for marketing the country as a tourism destination. In Finland, the NTO is The Finnish Tourist Board. NTO, local DMOs, or regional destination marketing organisations (RTO), various associations, as well as private sector firms, form the basic organisational structure of the destination at the country level (Figure 6).

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<sup>5</sup> These research streams have been identified in the first research paper of this dissertation, Saraniemi and Kylänen (2009): 'Problematising the concept of tourism destination. An analysis of different theoretical approaches'.

<sup>6</sup> NTO is sometimes used to refer to a 'national tourism office' (see Pike, 2008)

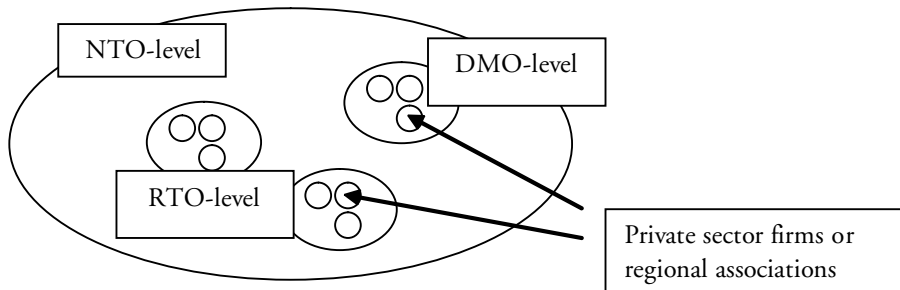


FIGURE 6. The basic organisational structure of the destination at the country level.

## 2.2 CONCEPTUALISING DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION AND IMAGE BUILDING

*Image formation and image building.* Since the term ‘image’ first appeared in the marketing literature (Boulding, 1956; Martineau, 1958), it has signified many things to many people. Research focus has varied depending on the aspect of image being studied. The term denotes either an object in the external world, or a perception in the consumer’s mind (Stern *et al.*, 2001, 202-203). Research into the effects of individuals’ corporate associations, especially in the marketing and organisational disciplines, has placed concepts such as ‘identity’, ‘image’, and ‘reputation’, into key roles (e.g., Albert *et al.*, 2000; Brown *et al.*, 2006; Fombrun, 1996; Schultz, Hatch and Larsen, 2000; Puusa, 2007). Balmer and Greyser (2003) identified four main schools of thoughts in image studies: 1) *transmitted images (image management categories)*, 2) *receiver-image categories*, 3) *focus-of-image categories* and 4) *construed-image categories*.

Despite a wide interest, our understanding of ‘image’ and ‘identity’ is still in its infancy, in both a general marketing (see Brown *et al.*, 2006), and in tourism marketing research. Destination image studies have been criticised as being atheoretical, and of lacking a conceptual framework (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gartner, 1993). Of the different destinations, the country image context has been one of the most extensively studied (see Gallarza *et al.*, 2002), and still the complex nature of it provides a broad arena to study image building practices.

Traditionally, most destination image studies have largely focused on static structures, by examining the relationship between image and behaviour (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). It is common to see destination image, either from the customer’s side as a *perceived image*, or from the producer’s side as a *projected image* (Bramwell and Rawding, 1996). In the literature, the destination image formation process refers to the tourist’s formation of a single mental image of the destination (see Gartner, 1993; Beerli and Martín, 2004). Several stimulus factors, (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999) or image formation agents (Gartner, 1993; Tasci and Gartner, 2007), affect the formation of perceptions.

*Image building*, on the other hand, refers to the activities of destination marketing organisations to enhance positive images of the destination (see e.g. Cai, 2002). These promotional activities, such as marketing programs, strategies and positioning, and marketing communications (Cai 2002; Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Govers *et al.*, 2007a), can

affect the individual's *image formation* process. The destination-originated activities and promotional materials aim to deliver a projected (e.g. Selby and Morgan, 1996) and *desired image* of the destination.

There are arguably two perspectives regarding destination image creation<sup>7</sup>. Govers *et al.* (2007a), in their three-gap tourism destination image formation model, recognised the demand and supply-side perspectives on the image formation process. Already Stabler (1988) had divided the factors influencing the formation of a consumers' destination image into demand and supply factors. This division of destination image studies led to two focuses; 1) a focus on supply-side aspects, like marketing operations, and 2) a focus on demand-side aspects, like tourist decision-making. This division was also introduced by Tasci and Gartner (2007). The latter seems to be more common, reflecting the general focus in tourism marketing studies (see Li and Petrick, 2008). In destination image and branding research, this struggle with concepts has been a source the subject of many studies, including this dissertation. In Figure 7, I illustrate the supply-side and demand-side image concepts in a simplified form in order to demonstrate the main concepts on both sides. The concepts are typically used inconsistently in the literature, so it is useful to illustrate my understanding of them. Demand-side receivers may be tourists, potential tourists, other stakeholders, or anyone else who may have the opportunity to receive information about the destination.

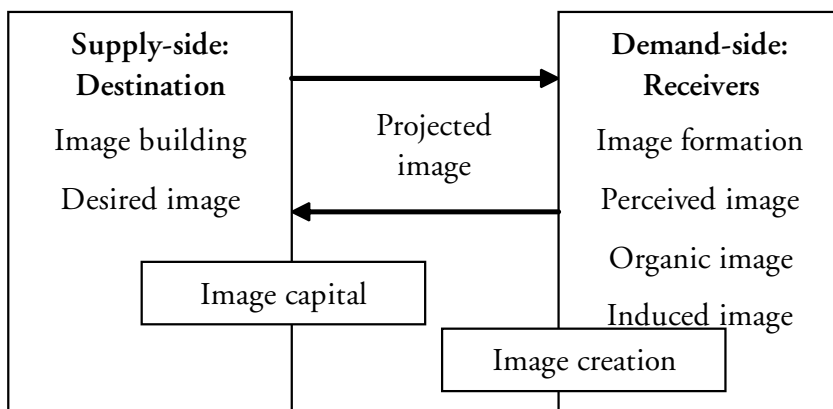


FIGURE 7. Two-folded image concept.

Attempts have been made to capture the dynamism of the image building process under holistic models<sup>8</sup>. As Govers *et al.* (2007b) suggested, image formation is no longer seen as one-way “push” process, but is instead seen as being dynamic. Selecting, sharing, reflecting and experiencing hold key roles. As a result, both the supply and demand side are interactively involved in the process. Cai (2002) also acknowledges the emphasis on the tourist-oriented approach in image research, and with his model of destination branding, he aimed to combine the two perspectives. He calls for a distinction to be made between

<sup>7</sup> At this point, image creation refers to the image-related activities of both sides, although I place emphasis on the customer's activity (see e.g. Keller (1993) on customer brand image creation).

<sup>8</sup> For example, based on literature review, Gallarza *et al.* (2002) proposed a theoretical model for destination image consisting of complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic aspects.

the formation of a destination image (by a destination organisation, not a customer) and the branding of it. When claiming however that image building is in a way less important than branding, Cai was one of the first to acknowledge the meaning of the brand identity, in addition to the customer's received image, and the destination marketing organisation's projected image.

During the 21st century, an emphasis on understanding branding as a dynamic process has emerged in general branding discussions. Despite this, dynamic models incorporating both identity and image, which are founded on dynamic and relational thinking, are rare within the field (Rindell, 2008). Rindell (2008) introduces the concept of the consumer's 'image heritage' as the core of future branding. Rindell's (2008) definition of consumer constructed corporate images is as follows: "*Consumer's corporate images are constructed through dynamic relational processes based on a multifaceted network of earlier images from multiple sources over time*". This definition takes into account both the temporal dimension, and change over time, in the consumer's image formation process.

*Components of Destination Image.* Tasci and Gartner (2007) presented a model of the destination image and its relationships, which aims to capture the different aspects affecting the image formation process. The model suggests that both the image capital of the destination, and different image formation factors, affect the destination image. As a result, destination image is a composite of different inputs or elements which, at least in the short run, gives a destination its image capital (Tasci and Gartner, 2007, 421), and is seen as being the outcome of a formation process. The inputs are often called the image formation agents, which Tasci and Gartner (2007) conclude to three main sources: 1) supply-side, ie. destination, 2) independent or autonomous, and 3) demand-side or image receivers.

The role of autonomous image formation agents, particularly the media, appears to have powerful effects on destination image formation. Because of this, the initial image formation stage before the trip has for a long time been seen as the most important phase in the tourists' destination selection processes (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Gunn, 1972). In his seminal study, Gunn (1972) proposed that tourists' destination image has two different dimensions: 1) the *organic image*, which is a potential tourist's impression of a destination before visiting, and 2) the *induced image*, which is formed by promotional materials, or by actual visitation to the area. Whether the images are stereotypes, or based on real experiences, the level of familiarity with a destination strongly influences the characteristics of perceived images (Andsager and Drzewiecka, 2002; Baloglu, 2001). Therefore, in order to develop a destination marketing strategy it is crucial to examine how familiar the place is among target audiences, and what the image attributes related to the destination are. According to Konecnik (2004), the process of evaluating the image of a destination can be seen as a self-analysis process towards building a brand. Tasci and Gartner (2007) noted that studies concerning these "*deliberated supply-side image formation processes*" are rare in the literature. The authors interpreted this lack of image building process research as proof of either a lack of such activity amongst destination organisations, or of a lack of access to such case studies.

*Country image.* Finally, when conceptualising the destination image at the country level, an important aspect is the country-of-origin, and the country image concepts detailed in international marketing literature (see. e.g. de Chernatony, 2008; Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005). A country image consists of all associations related to a given country. It then also acts as an image source for other product-related associations, such as the country-of-origin (Mossberg and Kleppe, 2005). According to Mossberg and Kleppe (2005), a destination image is also a generic concept that has product-specific dimensions. The

concept overlaps the three hierarchical levels of country images detailed in international marketing literature. Following this idea, it is possible to understand a ‘general country image’ as being the component of a destination image, whether the destination is a country, state, city or a smaller area.

In the following Figure 8, the main concepts of this chapter are illustrated in order to show the relationship between the concepts of destination image, country image, image formation, image building, and destination identity. The latter is further discussed in the next chapter. Figure 8 shows a simplified illustration of this phenomenon, and attempts to show dynamism.

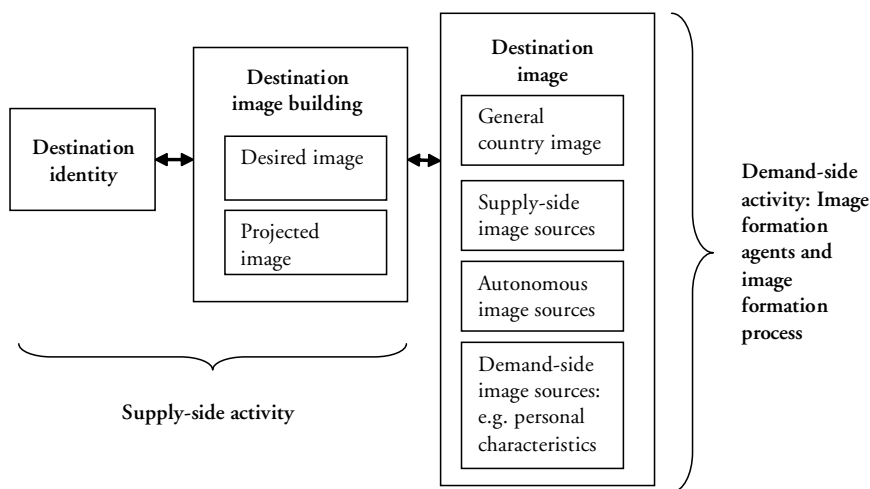


FIGURE 8. The relationship between supply and demand side image concepts and a destination identity.

### 2.3 DESTINATION IDENTITY CONCEPT

In the following chapter, the concept of identity is introduced to the reader in order to describe its crucial role in destination branding. The organisation of this chapter is inspired by the three level distinction in identity types proposed by Urde (2003), who suggested that identity operates at brand and organisational levels (internal identity), and customer levels (external identity) (Figure 9). According to Urde (2003), a *brand identity* is developed as a continual and ongoing interaction between the identities of the organisation and its customers. Furthermore, identities are in interaction with the values of these three levels. Instead of organisational identity however, I use the concept of *corporate identity*, due to the development of this concept towards a holistic focus (see He and Balmer, 2007). For the same reason, customer identity is replaced by *stakeholder identity*. At the end of this chapter, I summarise the components of *destination identity*, and propose a four level model of interaction between value and identity in a destination context<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> The idea is described in detail in the research paper 5 of this dissertation, which discusses the NTO’s (corporate) identity in relation to destination branding. This chapter opens up the other identity concepts involved in the branding process, especially the concept of destination identity.



FIGURE 9. Interaction between value and identity in three levels (Urde, 2003, 1020.)

There are several approaches to studying tourism destination identity. The approaches which are inspired by marketing discipline (e.g. Morgan, Pritchard *et al.*, 2002; Hankinson, 2004) have in recent literature suggested that destination identity is even more important than image from a strategic point of view (Cai, 2002). This emerges from the view that the positioning and communication of the destination brand need to be rooted in reality to fulfil their promised experience to visitors (Hankinson, 2004). In this chapter, the roots of discussions related to brand identity and corporate identity are reviewed in order to provide a basis for a definition of the destination identity concept.

*Brand identity.* Traditionally in marketing literature, the brand identity concept has referred to how managers and employees make brands unique (e.g. Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 1997; de Chernatony, 1999). Aaker (1991) defines brand identity as “*a unique set of brand associations that the company aspires to create or maintain*”. The concept has been used in both product (e.g. Aaker 1991; Keller 1993; Aaker 1996) and company related (e.g. de Chernatony, 1999; McDonald *et al.*, 2001) contexts. The brand leadership model for instance, put forward by Aaker and Joachimstahler (2000), and the brand identity prism model, originating with Kapferer (1997), are utilised both in product and corporate brand identity contexts. The first is a normative model for managing brand identity and the latter illustrates the components of brand identity. All these perspectives focus on the company’s internal attributes which affect the product or corporate brand. Another approach to brand identity has been to emphasise visual identity (e.g. Abratt, 1989; Olins 1978; 1995). This approach focuses more on graphic design, like the communication of logos<sup>10</sup>.

*Corporate identity.* The differences between the concepts of brand identity and corporate identity are blurred. Both concepts have a strong practitioner background, and both theoretical bases are still underdeveloped (see He and Balmer, 2007). In recent marketing literature (Balmer and Greyser, 2003; He and Balmer, 2007), it is suggested that the concept of corporate identity may form the platform for understanding other corporate-level concepts, such as corporate branding (Balmer 1995; Balmer and Gray, 2003), corpo-

<sup>10</sup> Lippincott and Margulies (1957) first used the term “corporate identity” in relation to an organisation’s logos and symbols, as these were seen as being the identifying feature of the organization to third parties.



rate communications (van Riel, 1995; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001), corporate image (Abratt 1989; Grunig 1993), and corporate reputation (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and van Riel, 1997). According to Kay (2006), corporate branding can be identified as the way in which an organisation communicates its identity. According to Balmer and Gray, (2003) and He and Balmer (2007), corporate identities and corporate brands are inseparable. They argue that the identity is the essence of a company and thus, its competitive advantage. Furthermore, corporate identity and strategy are now seen to be inseparable (He and Balmer, 2007).

In their study on the corporate identity metaphor, Cornelissen and Harris (2001) identified three theories of corporate identity: 1) corporate identity as an expression of corporate personality, 2) corporate identity as organisational reality, and 3) multiple managing identities. The latter states that an identity emerges when a person expresses himself to others. An identity is not something which a company perennially has, but something that emerges in *enactment and social interaction*.

Balmer (2008) mentions the key traits of corporate identity: strategy, structure, history, and culture (see also Balmer 2001; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). To this new corporate identity mix, Balmer (2008) adds four elements: strategy, structure, communication, and culture (Figure 10). According to him, it is important to differentiate these from other elements, like environment, the influence of stakeholders, and reputations, which are also part of the *identity management mix*.

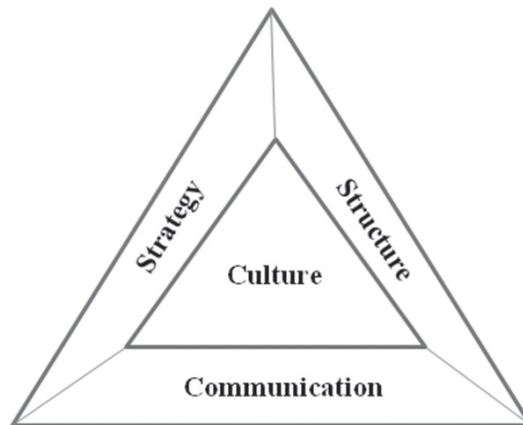


FIGURE 10. Balmer’s new corporate identity mix (2001).

Corporate identity discussion has multidisciplinary roots<sup>11</sup>. The academic discussion increasingly is adopting a strategic approach to corporate identity (see He and Balmer, 2007). As a result, the conceptualisation of corporate identity has evolved in the following three ways (see He and Balmer, 2007):

- From peripheral elements to central elements. Focus has moved from graphic design to strategy, structure and culture.
- From external focus to internal focus, and then to a holistic focus. The focus is now not only on customers, but also on employees and stakeholders.
- From a tactical to a more strategic approach. Corporate identity and strategy are now seen to be inseparable.

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive literature review on different identity types see Balmer (2008).



The corporate identity can be seen as a strategic tool for an organisation. Balmer (2001) used the concept of 'business identity', which comprises the multidisciplinary identity discussions of *corporate*, *organisational* and *visual identity*. In organisational identity studies, every entity has an identity, which defines that entity and represents the essence of that entity. Thus, an organisation's identity defines the characteristics of an organisation (e.g. Albert and Whetten, 1985). Others define an organisation's identity by its members' perceptions of the defining characteristics of their organisation (e.g. Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Gioia *et al.*, 2000). Organisational identity on the other hand refers to a special form of social identity, with focus on the employees in the given organisation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989).

Corporate identity studies have been criticised as having overly managerial, whereas organisational identity studies have been criticised for holding an excessively internal perspective (see He and Balmer, 2007). In corporate identity studies however, the focus has expanded to include not only customers, but also employees and other stakeholders, in order to be holistic (He and Balmer, 2007). Moreover, it is acknowledged that multiple (Balmer, 1998; Kiriakidou and Milward 2000) and dynamic (Gioia *et al.*, 2000) identities can exist within a single company. This has raised paradoxical notions: multiple identities in the organisation may result in an *inconsistent brand identity*, which, however, is more realistic than consistent identity. This view is against the usual corporate branding practices, which emphasise a consistent communication of the brand. Still, it is possible to display different identities and values to different audiences (see Waeraas, 2008).

*Stakeholder identity.* According to Leitch and Richardson (2003), an understanding of an organisation's identity by stakeholders is a continuously evolving, and to some extent, unpredictable process. The corporate brand is considered to be the outcome of an interactive process between stakeholders. Thus, it is well argued that the stakeholder's identities interact in the brand creation process. These stakeholders may involve not only customers (cf. Urde, 2003), but also subcontractors, financiers, distributors, politicians, associations etc.

*Destination identity.* Olins (2002) claimed that, despite the fact that countries change their names and political contexts, countries have always been engaged in building and transforming their identities. In academia, marketing and organisational disciplines can be identified in the background of the fairly rare destination identity research. The problematic destination concept has been only one reason why, in the destination context, the identity discussion is underdeveloped. Brand identity and destination identity concepts are often used interchangeably. Morgan *et al.* (2002) state that the brand essence represents a destination's identity. It is relevant across markets, with products being the core of the country's proposition. Hankinson (2004) mentions the destination *brand core*, which represents a place's identity. It includes a statement of the brand personality, a statement of the brand's positioning, and a brand reality. Sometimes the terms "brand personality" and "identity" are used as synonyms (see Morgan *et al.*, 2002). In this study, brand personality differs from identity, as it is associated with the human traits associated with a destination (cf. e.g. Aaker, 1992; Ekinici and Hosany, 2006). Furthermore, brand identity forms only one part of the destination's identity.

Tourism research has traditionally drawn from economic and cultural geography. Approaches inspired by cultural geography view identity as being the essence of nationhood and community (e.g. Palmer, 1999; Ballesteros and Ramiréz, 2007). This approach discusses the destination's cultural and political identities (see Pritchard and Morgan, 2001). The marketing and the culturally inspired approaches to identity may be seen as being contradictory, because sometimes branding is seen to undermine a sense of place,

“detracting from a country’s essence, and superficially commodifying nationhood” (see Morgan *et al.*, 2003, 286). ). However, both of these approaches seem to view identity as *the reality of a destination* or restricted to being *an expression of a brand personality* (cf. Cornelissen and Harris, 2001).

Recently, in place marketing discussion, Anholt (2007) has introduced the concept of a *place’s competitive identity*, replacing the place brand concept. His hexagon of competitive identity (figure 11) illustrates six *channels for communicating the national identity*. This illustration however does not explicitly address the content of the place identity.

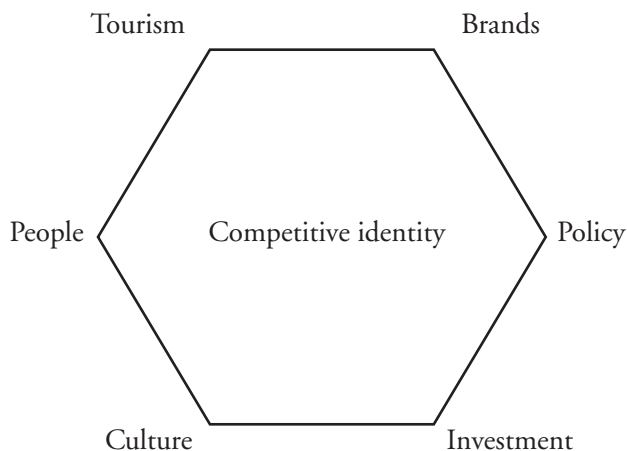


FIGURE 11. The hexagon of competitive identity. (Anholt, 2007)

Drawing from identity discussions in the marketing and organisational literature, attempts have been made to gain a more holistic approach to destination identity, especially with the concept of *meaning* in relation to the destination identity. A meaning is not only the “customer’s dominant perceptions of the brand” (Berry, 2000), but is also constructed in an ongoing relationship with the brand, adding meaning to a person’s life (Fournier, 1998).

Tourists and residents define the *meanings of place* by being present at places, and by consuming and interacting with others at the place, thereby forming a social communication system (Snepenger *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, *brand meanings* are seen to grow out from place’s own identity (Peters *et al.*, 2006). Williams, Reilly *et al.* (2006) have stated that the brand identity is determined by the visitor’s values, and how well they align with the experiences encountered. This view emphasises the visitor’s perspective as the source of destination brand identity. To conclude, these approaches seem to view destination identity as being not something that a destination has, but instead something that *emerges in social interaction* (see Cornelissen and Harris, 2001). The difference between ‘*destination identity*’ and ‘*place identity*’ is not an issue to be explored here. I prefer to pursue the consistency of these concepts.

In the following section, the components of the destination identity are discussed. Destination identity draws from destination culture and structure. *Destination culture* involves the location and resources of the destination, as well as the meanings and values

of the destination. It involves a destination's stories, history and local residents as *the core of the destination identity*. *Destination structure* involves the organisational structure (for example national tourism organisation, local DMOs), and brand structures. The latter determines how, if at all, specific tourism products or firms in the destination relate to the destination brand illustrating the destination brand architecture (cf. Olins, 1989).

A destination's culture and structure impact on its *destination strategy*, which defines its positioning statements. Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006)<sup>12</sup> suggest that corporate culture guides corporate strategy formation, which then guides both corporate structure and corporate communications. Unlike them, I propose that in a destination context, destination culture and structure may guide destination strategy formation. Destination structure – both organisational structure and brand structure – impacts on destination design as well. *Destination design* includes visual identity, comprised of slogans, website, and physical lay-out of the destination, whereas *destination communication* encompasses all of the ways in which a destination can communicate with different stakeholders – both the local and tourist – and can be both controlled and uncontrolled. In the destination context however, *the culture* formulates the *core of the identity*, especially from the attractiveness perspective. It is possible therefore that identity exists without any strategies or structures. Specific features of the environment e.g. the political environment and the infrastructure relates to the culture.

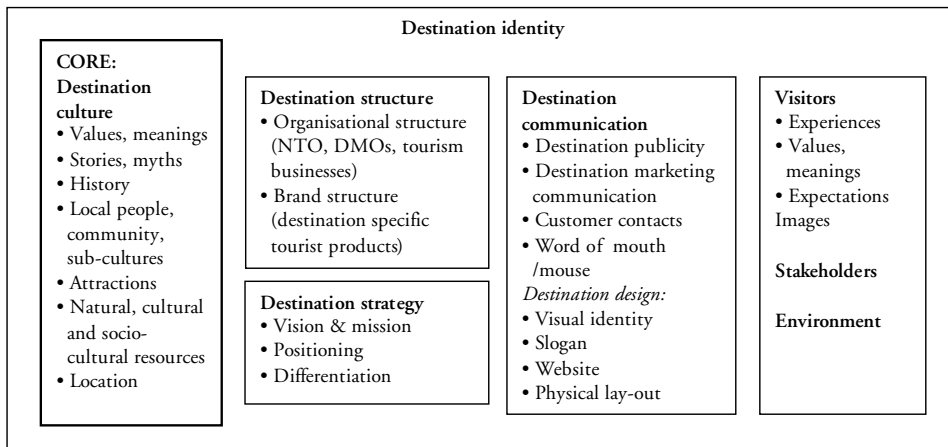
I see all of the components of the destination identity mentioned above as being dynamic, since sometimes the location of a destination is understood, and even its history can be interpreted differently. The identity is not formed in isolation, as there are always several factors influencing it. In the destination context, identity originates in the interaction of all stakeholders, including visitors, residents, tourism businesses, tourism organisations, and authorities. Furthermore, destination identity is not stable, but it changes and develops continuously, becoming a part of the destination's history and stories. It can also have a possible impact on a destination's organisational structures. Especially in the country context, multiple identities (see e.g. Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006) of different actors can exist.

In figure 12, I present the above described components of the destination identity<sup>13</sup>. The most manageable parts of the identity seem to be 1) destination structure, 2) destination strategy and 3) destination communication that may be under the control of e.g. DMO. The other parts are 4) stakeholders (including the possible visitors), 5) culture and 6) environment. Management of stakeholders and actors of the culture and environment is possible by using destination communication, for instance. These are, however, often issues, to whom the DMO cannot impact (e.g. location, history). Destination communication does have less manageable parts, as well, like destination publicity.

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<sup>12</sup> Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) present a categorisation of corporate identity dimensions, including corporate structure, corporate strategy, corporate culture, corporate behaviour, corporate design, corporate communication, and their sub-items. In their model, industry identity also impacts on corporate identity.

<sup>13</sup> Ahonen, Saraniemi and Tähtinen (2007) proposed a model of components of destination identity. Their modelling followed the corporate identity model by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006. This Figure 12 presents a simple modification of their model.



**FIGURE 12.** The components of destination identity (modified from Ahonen, Saraniemi and Tähtinen, 2007).

In this study, the holistic approach to the destination identity is taken. *The destination identity is defined as originating in the interaction by all the components, characteristics and stakeholders of the place.* This differs from the *customer-centric view* (cf. Konecnik and Go, 2008), which suggests that the destination brand identity is a perceptual entity in the minds of the customers, (see e.g. Moilanen, 2008, 18), and the *destination-centric view*, which defines brand identity in terms of how the owners of the brand want the brand to be seen (e.g. Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006). It differs also from Hankinson's (2004) term *core brand*, which emphasises the interaction<sup>14</sup> between different actors in brand identity creation.

The dynamism of the destination identity can be better illustrated in figure 13, where the environment and destination image are also included (cf. Balmer, 2001). According to Balmer (2001), a company's stakeholders, reputation and environment are tools for identity management (see also Stuart, 1999). In this study, they are a part of the dynamic destination identity itself. In the following section of this dissertation, I discuss different perspectives on branding. As a result, it is worth mentioning that corporate identity management, in its first definitions,<sup>15</sup> differs from 'traditional brand marketing', as it takes into account stakeholders, and emphasises the development of the company's mission and ethos (see Balmer and Greyser, 1995). In my opinion, as a concept and especially as a phenomenon, identity management is similar to branding, especially corporate branding<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Urde (2003) has proposed that the brand identity is developed as a continual and ongoing interaction between the identities of the organization and the customers.

<sup>15</sup> "Corporate identity management is concerned with the conception, development, and communication of an organisation's mission, philosophy and ethos. Its orientation is strategic and is based on a company's values, cultures and behaviours" (Balmer & Greyser, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Rindell (2008) also notes that the corporate identity management process model, put forwards by Stuart (1999), may have been based on the brand management model as well.

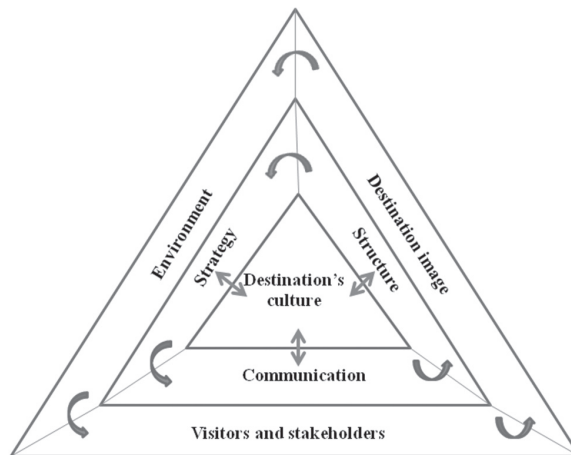


FIGURE 13. Dynamic components of destination identity (cf. Corporate management identity mix (Balmer, 2001).

To conclude this chapter, I illustrate the four levels of identity: *brand*, *corporate (DMO)*, *stakeholders*, and *destination*, in figure 14. It is worth mentioning that corporate identity here is the identity of a Destination Management Organisation,<sup>17</sup> with emphasis on the impact which the inner characteristics of the DMO may have on destination branding.

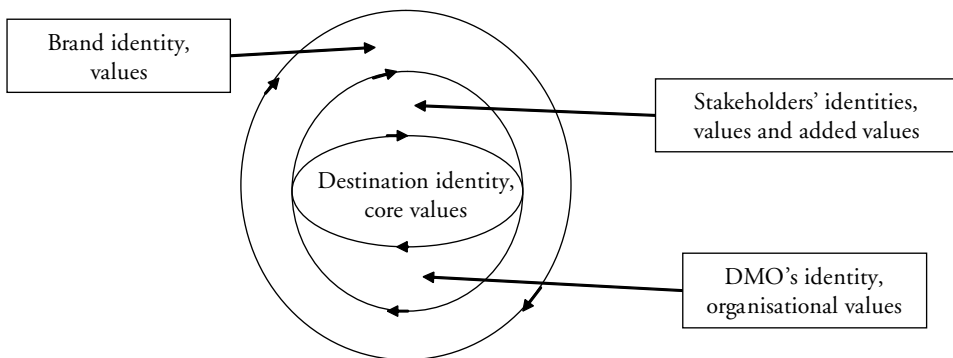


FIGURE 14. Interaction between value and identity in four levels (modified and developed from Urde (2003).

<sup>17</sup> At the country level NTO. Note: Hankinson (2007) suggested a theoretical framework for the management of place brands with the idea of external and internal brand identity of a destination that the DMO manages. In the article, Hankinson seems to refer to identity of the DMO instead of the identity of the destination.

## 2.4 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON BRANDING DISCUSSION

In the following section, the current branding literature is reviewed in order to describe the roots of destination branding literature. In marketing discipline, the discussion has developed from *brand image* (Boulding, 1956) to *brand identity* (Kapferer, 1997) and more recently to *corporate branding* (Bickerton, 2000). It is suggested that corporate branding perspective is especially valuable in understanding destination-wide branding<sup>18</sup>. Case studies for this however are still rare. Furthermore, corporate branding alone is still insufficient, because distinctions between the destination, a country, particularly, and companies exist (see e.g. Ooi, 2004). Therefore, product and service branding are also useful in conceptualising destination branding (see figure 15).

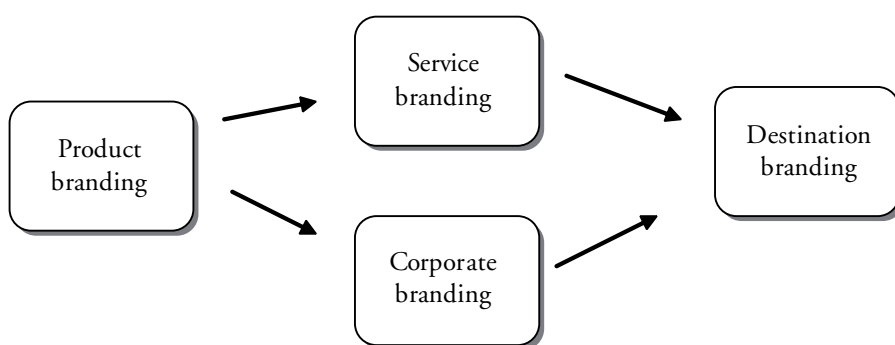


FIGURE 15. The product-destination brand continuum (modified from de Chernatony, 2009).

*Product branding.* Early attempts at brand management concentrated on creating a positive brand image for a product in the mind of a customer (Boulding, 1956). This idea was followed by the development of brand positioning in the minds of existing and potential customers (Ries and Trout, 1982). The concepts of positioning and *unique selling proposition*, together with 4Ps, have formed the basis for product brand marketing since the early 1960s (cf. Knox and Bickerton, 2003). For a customer, the brand acts as a signal of a product's quality (e.g. Aaker, 1996) and as reducer of perceived risk and searching costs (Randall 1997; Riley and de Chernatony, 2000). It is also *a promise of advantages*, both economically and symbolically (see Kapferer, 1994; O'Cass and Crace, 2003). The earlier literature on brands was consumer focused. According to Lindberg-Repo (2001), the most central outcomes from the consumer's perspective are the concepts of brand meaning, brand value, and brand experience.

Understanding of the brand concept has differed according to the approach taken. The contribution of postmodern brand meaning for instance, and relationship research (Fournier, 1998; Cova, 1997), has led to an understanding that organisations cannot control consumer constructed corporate images to the extent that previously has been

<sup>18</sup> de Chernatony (2009) argues that corporate branding is the closest type of country level branding

supposed. On the contrary, consumers construct images and use them in various contexts. Furthermore, in relationship marketing research, the image concept is not deeply researched, although it is recognised (Grönroos, 2001; Rindell, 2008). Table 2 summarises product branding literature originated concepts.

TABLE 2. Product branding literature originated concepts.

Concept	Example of an author
Image	Boulding (1956)
Brand meaning	Duncan & Moriarty (1997)
Brand value	Murphy (1989)
Brand equity	Aaker (1991), Keller (1993)
Brand experience	Fournier (1998)
Brand as a promise	Kapferer (1994)
Brand relationship	Lindberg-Repo (2001)
Positioning	Ries & Trout (1982)

*Corporate branding.* Literature offers only a few explicit definitions for corporate branding. It seems easier to identify characteristics of the phenomenon (e.g. Balmer and Gray, 2003). Initially, corporate brand has been regarded as the sum of the corporation's marketing efforts to present a controlled representation of the corporation's value system and identity (Ind, 1997; Balmer, 2001). The fast innovation, increased service levels and diminishing brand loyalty characterising today's marketplaces have led to corporate branding becoming a strategic marketing tool (Morsing and Kristensen, 2001). Einwiller and Will (2002) defined corporate branding as "*a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a favourable image and consequently a favourable reputation for the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behaviour, communication, and symbolism.*" This view emphasises stakeholder perspective and positions corporate branding as "*a process through which an organisation can continually work out its purpose – a purpose that is meaningful to people inside and outside the organisation*" (see Schultz, Antorini *et al.*, 2005, 16).

According to Hatch and Schultz (2003), corporate branding differs from product branding in six aspects: 1) focus (product or corporation), 2) scope (broader in the corporate brand), 3) who the brand relates to in terms of attraction and support (with product brands, mainly consumers or customers, with corporate brands all company stakeholders), 4) who is responsible for the branding effort (with product branding, the marketing department, with corporate branding, organisation-wide support), 5) temporal dimension (product brands live in the present, corporate brands both in the past and the future), and 6) strategic importance (product brand functional, corporate brand strategic). Furthermore, when comparing to the traditional product branding, literature on corporate branding emphasises the importance of brand values (de Chernatony, 1999; Tilley, 1999; Urde, 1999; Urde, 2003). According to Urde (2003) developing a corporate brand is synonymous with developing the core values that summarise the brand's identity (Urde, 2003). According to Balmer (2001), the core of the corporate brand is an explicit covenant, or promise, between an organisation and its key stakeholder groups.



In corporate branding literature, corporate brand equity and value (e.g. Badenhausen, 1997; Gaines-Ross, 1997; Gregory, 1997, 1998) are some of the oldest research issues (Ahonen, 2008)<sup>19</sup>. Some of the newest research topics are internal brand building (Hardaker and Fill, 2005; Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006; Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006) and corporate brand co-creation (Boyle, 2007) perspectives. Research suggests that corporate brands are applicable to other entities (e.g. He and Balmer, 2006), including places (Vitiello & Willcocks, 2006), and more specifically cities and regions (Parkerson and Saunders, 2005; Trueman *et al.*, 2004), and countries (Wetzel, 2006).

**TABLE 3.** Corporate branding discussion originated concepts.

Concept	Example of an author
Wider scope of branding	Balmer & Gray (2003)
Core values	Urde (1999)
Value system	Urde (2003)
Corporate identity	Olins (1989)
Multiple stakeholders	Balmer (2001)
Organisation-wide support	King (1991)
Strategic importance	Shoker <i>et al.</i> (1994)
Wider temporal dimension	Hatch and Schultz (2003)
Internal brand-building	Vallaster & de Chernatony (2006)
Brand co-creation	Boyle (2007)

*Service branding.* Service branding shares many similarities with corporate branding. It involves multiple interfaces (Bitner *et al.*, 1994), employees are central to the process (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001), and the company becomes the primary brand (Berry 2000; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005). However, when comparing to corporate brands, service brands may promise to customers particular benefits that do not primarily draw on the reputation of the corporation (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). Comparing to product brands, understanding a brand as ‘a promise’ is somewhat different. Due to service characteristics and salience of the service encounter, it is difficult to ensure consistent standards to meet such expectations. Thus, the monolithic brand structure (Olins, 1978) and its consistency is challenged (cf. de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003). Moreover, the service brand is a holistic experience for customers (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005).

In service branding literature, challenging the consistency of the brand is seen as a possibility. ‘Loose’ or ‘tight’ styles of brand management are discussed (de Chernatony, 2001; de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005). Tight brand management operates towards integrated brand, while loose style allows personalising the experience. Brand values define the boundaries of appropriateness (see de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005). While employee’s role is crucial in service encounters, concepts as a brand as an ethos in the company (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2005), corporate culture (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn, 2003), and deeply embedded core values (de Chernatony and Segal-Horn,

<sup>19</sup> For a comprehensive literature review on corporate branding research see Ahonen (2008).



2003; Edvardsson *et al.*, 2006) have been emphasised. These all refer to the importance of the corporate identity for the brand.

TABLE 4. Service branding originated concepts.

Concept	Example of an author
Challenging consistency of the brand and communications	de Chernatony & Segal-Horn (2003)
Brand as a holistic experience	de Chernatony & Cottam (2005)
Loose or tight style of brand management	de Chernatony (2001)
Brand as an ethos of the organisation	de Chernatony & Cottam (2005)
Core values as embedded in the culture	Edvardsson, Enquist & Hay (2006)

## 2.5 PLACE BRANDING AND ITS SUB-SECTOR, DESTINATION BRANDING

In the previous chapter, I presented an overview of the current branding streams from the perspective of their usefulness for destination branding. Indeed, many of those ideas are not yet fully utilised in practice or in research<sup>20</sup>. The following chapter presents the current state of place branding and its tourism-related sub-sector, destination branding. Special attention is paid to country-level branding. At the end of this chapter, the relationships between the different branding types discussed in this dissertation are illustrated.

Place marketing represents a growing body of literature among marketing disciplines (see Anholt, 2002; Hankinson, 2004; Hankinson, 2005; Kotler *et al.*, 1993; Rainisto, 2003). For example, new academic journals in the field are published (e.g. Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, Journal of Place Management), and conferences organised. Simon Anholt, as a practitioner, is one of the first authors to discuss place branding and, in particular, country or nation branding (e.g. 2002). Well-documented empirical evidence of successful place branding campaigns are however rare. Access to the data has often been challenging and the reputation of branding in this new context has been questioned. Anholt introduced the new concepts of public diplomacy and competitive identity (2007) to place marketing discussion. Recently, (2008) he has even claimed that places cannot be branded and image cannot be constructed. By doing this he wishes to emphasise first and foremost that 'nation branding campaigns', being merely advertising and marketing communications, are not useful and sufficient. The phenomenon is arguably the same, but there is a perceived need to change the understanding of it. The changing of terms has been a distinctive feature of branding literature as a whole. Probably for many researchers it has also been the reason for not contributing to these discussions. The research area is undoubtedly new and fresh conceptualisations are needed, but consistent constructs are important elements in order for theory development to take place (see Stern *et al.*, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> In the research paper 5 of this dissertation, certain concepts from especially corporate branding literature are utilised in order to model destination branding.

Hankinson (2004, 109) identifies four streams of thought as regards the nature of brands. These include the brand as a communicator, the brand as a perceptual entity or image, the brand as a value enhancer and the brand as a relationship. The focus to date has been on place brands as perceptual entities or images. Both place and corporate branding have a multidisciplinary nature; they deal with numerous stakeholders and are characterised by being intangible and complex. For both fields, social responsibility is an important factor and both have multiple identities to consider (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). Place branding is far more complex than corporate branding, however, with place branding involving multifaceted offers, cross-sector stakeholder co-operation with potentially different local perspectives and, finally, whole populations (Therkelsen and Halkier, 2008). In addition, particularly at country level diverse geographical and cultural entities are a challenge for consistent image building (see Cai, 2002). Today, the tourism destination brand is often seen as a sub-sector of the place brand.

One of the most cited definitions for destination brand is that introduced by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998): “*A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the pleasurable memories of the place experience*” (italics added). This definition delimits a brand being only a symbol of the place, but clearly infers that ‘brand’ is related to differentiation and is something that happens in relation to competitors. During the past years, the characteristics of the brand mentioned by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) are repeated in the destination branding literature. These definitions have their roots clearly in traditional product branding literature represented by, for example, Aaker, Keller, Joachimstahler and Kapferer.

More recently, destination brands are seen to convey core values that are linked to the destination’s ‘sense of place’ (Williams, Gill *et al.*, 2004). As Niininen *et al.*, (2007) pointed out; branding is about defining the borders of ‘what was already there’. Also, of late it has been acknowledged that cultural and historical aspects of the place should not be overlooked in the destination branding process (Morgan *et al.*, 2005; Konecnik and Go, 2008). These new ideas related to destination branding mirror the principles of fast growing corporate branding discussion (e.g. Urde, 2003; Balmer, 2001; Knox and Bickerton, 2003).

According to Pike (2008), most of the case studies on destination branding are written by practitioners who have been involved in the branding processes. He also pointed out that the discussion has, in the main, focused on brand development. According to Ooi (2004), the research on destination branding has concentrated on communicating the brand message. Differences in branding places and commercial organisations and manufactured products or services are largely ignored (Ooi, 2004).

The destination branding literature is summarised in the review that comprises the destination branding articles from 1999-2007 (Saraniemi and Ahonen, 2008). Relevant material for the study was scattered across various journals during January 2008. The study was limited to online articles only. Consequently, the following online journal databases were searched to provide a comprehensive bibliography of the academic literature: ABI Inform, EBSCO (Academic Search Premier and EconLit), Emerald Fulltext, JSTOR, ISI Web of Knowledge, SpringerLink, Illumina, Oxford University Press Online Journals, and Google Scholar. These were chosen because of their wide access to most valuable academic business journals, and because of the researcher’s online access into these. Therefore, of important tourism journals at least Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing is not included in the analysis.

In order to concentrate particularly on destination branding, terms ‘destination brand’ and ‘destination branding’ were searched both as a phrase and as separately from article title, abstract, or keywords. In addition, the terms ‘place brand’ and ‘place branding’ were also searched, since there was a possibility that these terms were used instead of destination brand (e.g. Gnoth, 2007). Only those articles closely related to tourism research, and having branding as a central focus were included in the analysis. The search of electronic databases revealed 60 articles.

Table 5 presents the 60 destination branding articles of this literature review. It is worth mentioning that the first article on destination branding was published in 1998 by Pritchard and Morgan. The number of published articles has grown in the past five years, with a particularly sudden increase in 2007. During 2008 and 2009, there was a demand for the papers of several conferences on the topic, and special issues also in general marketing journals, reflecting the broadened interest in place and destination marketing. In addition to tourism journals, the Journal of Brand Management has published several articles on the topic.

**TABLE 5.** Published destination branding articles in the time period 1999-2007.

	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	TOTAL
Journal of Vacation Marketing	3	-	1	-	1	2	-	2	1	10
Journal of Place Branding (and Public Diplomacy)	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	4	3	10
Journal of Brand Management	-	-	-	5	-	2	-	1	-	8
Journal of Travel Research	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	1	2	7
Tourism Management	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	6
Tourism Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Annals of Tourism Research	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Scandinavian Hospitality and Tourism	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Tourism review	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
CoDesign	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
e-Review of Tourism Research	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Journal of Services Marketing	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Journal of Product and Brand Management	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Journal of Business Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Multinational Business Review	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Journal of Promotion Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
The Journal of Corporate Communication	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>60</b>

The literature review revealed that destination branding has adapted several perspectives from general branding literature. For example, Aaker's (1992) brand personality scale (e.g. Ekinci and Hosany, 2006) and de Chernatony's and McWilliam's (1990) Brand Box model (Caldwell and Freire, 2004) are tested in a destination context. In addition, the effect of nation's brand (identity) on company brands has been studied (Jaworski and Foshier, 2003). Brand loyalty (Oppermann, 2000), customer-based brand equity (e.g. Konecnik and Gartner, 2007) and communicating the brand (e.g. Pitt *et al.*, 2007) are also looked at in the destination context. So far, evaluating brand image has been a dominating issue in destination context (e.g. Hankinson, 2005; Hosany *et al.*, 2006; Prebensen, 2007). The place to be branded in these articles was most often the country/state (27 articles), followed by the city (10) and region (10). In the articles analysed, brand management and image evaluation were emphasised.

For investigating the usefulness of the novel branding discussions in destination context, we decided to concentrate on articles using concepts familiar from corporate branding literature. As Gnoth (2007) pointed out, the shape of a destination brand is more like a corporate or umbrella brand rather than a product brand. There is no obvious owner of the destination brand, but there are number of stakeholders involved. Since Anholt's (2002) encouraging article, interestingly, only a few researchers have applied corporate branding in destination context. 15 articles used ideas and concepts familiar from corporate branding literature and these were analysed more closely. According to reference lists, only two of these discussed corporate branding in detail. Many of the studies (e.g. Blichfeldt, 2005; Gnoth, 2007; Wetzel, 2006) emphasised the values of the local people in destination branding. Branding a destination means offering place values for tourist consumption. Cultural, social, natural and economic values are transformed into capital on which the promises of the brand must be based. They form the essence of the place (Gnoth, 2007). One of the main criticisms of nation branding (e.g. Widler, 2007) in particular is that nation branding does not allow for citizens to play a significant role in the branding process.

## 2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS: IMAGE BUILDING AS A DESTINATION BRANDING ACTIVITY

In this chapter, the comparison of the destination image to brand concepts is illustrated. It is only recently that branding became a focus of study for tourism researchers. The destination branding topic has been partly covered under the label of destination image studies (Konecnik and Gartner, 2007) and vice versa. Moreover, confusion between brand and image has been recognised (cf. Tasci and Kozak, 2006).

In the following Table 6, the selected characteristics of the concepts 'brand' and 'image' are summarised according to literature review. Admittedly, this review does not include all the features, but is a description of the main characteristics. Common features for the both concepts are in the middle of the table. It seems that both image and brand can be seen from either *supply* or *demand side*. Both are simplifications of a given place, and are important influences of tourists' behaviour. They also present competitive advantages for the place, and are communicated through destination promotion. This summary confirms the destination image building as a branding activity.

TABLE 6. Selected definitions and characteristics related to the destination image building and branding.

Destination Branding	Brand and image	Destination image building
<p>“A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place...conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place...” (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1998)</p> <p>A long-term commitment (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002)</p> <p>Involves identity creation (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002)</p> <p>Convey core values (Williams et al, 2004)</p> <p>“Selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building” (Cai, 2002)</p> <p>“Defines that which was already there” (Niininen <i>et al.</i>, 2007)</p>	<p><b>Important role in tourists’ destination behaviour</b></p> <p>A simplification of a place (Williams <i>et al.</i>, 2004; Kotler and Gertner, 2002)</p> <p><b>Competitive advantage</b> (Morgan and Pritchard, 2002)</p> <p>Communicated/influenced through destination promotion (Pike, 2004; Hanlan and Kelly, 2005)</p> <p><b>Perceived image / projected image</b> (Bramwell and Rawding, 1996)</p>	<p><b>Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions held by people about the destination</b> (Crompton, 1979)</p> <p>Knowledge structure (Kotler and Gertner, 2002)</p> <p><b>Perception about a place</b> (Pike, 2002; Cai, 2002)</p> <p>An isolated perception (Konecnik and Go, 2008)</p> <p><b>Can be positive or negative</b> (Pike, 2002)</p> <p>The basis of destination brand building (Konecnik, 2004)</p> <p><b>Core concept of the branding</b> (Cai, 2002)</p> <p>Includes the brand (Ekinici, 2003)</p>

## 3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

### 3.1 INTENSIVE, SINGLE CASE STUDY

This study is an intensive single case study. In their review of case studies in published tourism research during 2000-2004, Xiao and Smith (2006) found that case studies were often related to place-specific research objectives. Furthermore, they found that single-case studies were most often used in published tourism research articles. This study is, therefore, a typical case study among tourism research.

Several researchers make a core distinction between single-case studies and multiple or collective case studies. Dyer and Wilkins (1991) present vigorous evidence in favour of single-case studies. According to Stoecker (1991), there is key difference between intensive and extensive case study research (see Harré, 1979). When extensive research aims at mapping common patterns and properties across cases, intensive case study focuses on finding out as much as possible on one or a few cases. The key interest is in the case itself, although the research is theoretically informed and capable of developing theory (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), extensive case study research, on the contrary, aims at elaboration, testing or generation of theoretical constructs by comparing several cases.

Classic case studies are connected to the interpretative, ethnographic and field-research traditions (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991; David, 2006). In business studies, case study as a research strategy is often seen as appropriate when addressing complex organisational or other business issues are considered too difficult to study with quantitative methodologies (see Yin, 2003; Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005; 171). Case study research avoids overly simplistic research designs and emphasises the production of detailed and holistic knowledge of the case (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008, 117).

The overall purpose of intensive case study is to construct a narrative, “a good story worth hearing” (Dyer and Wilkins, 1991). According to Stoecker (1991), case studies in social sciences should be defined as “projects, which attempt to explain holistically the dynamics of a certain historical period of a particular social unit”. Thus, dynamic research designs and looking at development over time are fairly typical in intensive, longitudinal, process-related and historical case studies. (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). This study was intended to produce *a story of image building activities* of the Finnish Tourist Board. *The case is bounded to be the phenomenon of destination branding at country level.* Thus, the context is the country. The setting, on the other hand, describes the actors in the case (Stake, 2000). In this study, the setting is the Finnish Tourist Board. The example market for destination branding is the British market. The target market focus is on the British market for several practical reasons, such as research-economical and language reasons. The British market is, according to the statistics of the Finnish Tourist Board, also among the most important markets for Finland (MEK, Border Interview Survey, 2009). I investigate the destination branding phenomenon from different points of view: supply side perspective (destination marketing organisation level), and demand side perspective (target market level; potential visitors and press). These are my “units of analysis”. Theory and concept development are usually typical for extensive case studies (see Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008) and thus, this intensive study design has some characteristics of extensive case study, as well. However, this is characteristically a development story whose internal changes are important to identify. Otherwise, some influential phases may stay in the shadows. The demand side data in this study is clearly restricted to the certain market

and to the certain communications channel. This may cause bias for the results. Knowing the restricted resources of the FTB for operational activities, e.g. for TV advertising, in the studied period, media work has kept its place as a very important marketing tool. Furthermore, analysing the supply side activities from the wider perspective than only one market's, gives complementary knowledge about branding process in FTB.

This dissertation makes an exception for case study reporting by providing the detailed descriptions (see Geertz, 1973) of different analysis levels in different research papers. Each of the papers have their own data or own method for understanding the phenomenon and analysing the data. This is not a very common way to conduct a qualitative dissertation and has some problems. For example, the fact, that data is collected in different phases of the research process, may cause fragmentation to the results. However, in this study, for gaining a holistic understanding of the destination branding both empirically and theoretically during the study period, it has been useful.

In an analysis, however, the different analysis levels present themselves differently and their significance for the understanding of the phenomenon are different. The case is bounded by time and place (see Creswell, 2007). The data allows us to concentrate on the years 1984-2008, in particular. For example marketing material data and complementary documents from the Finnish Tourist Board are from that period. The standardised interviews in the market and the detailed analysed press data, as well as the itineraries for journalists are concentrated on 2001-2002. The interviews were made during 2005-2007, but their content relates to the whole research period.

The Finnish Tourist Board was established as long ago as 1973. Some of the informants therefore described their memories or understanding of that earlier period. I had also gained an understanding of that period based on various sources including my previous tourism studies and experiences of teaching history of tourism. However, the information from that first decade of the FTB should be taken as complementary data for the other findings. Based on this, I use the term 'in the last three decades' in the text when referring to the studied time period.

According to Eisenhardt (1989, 1991) theory building is the primary goal for case study research. The aim of intensive case studies, however, is not to produce knowledge that could be generalised to other contexts in the conventional meaning. The exceptional nature of the case is a key issue of research interest (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Such a case refers to the intrinsic case study introduced by Stake (1995). The researcher's task is to confirm that the case is somehow unique, critical or extreme. The destination branding of Finland case is rare but not a unique case world-wide. The destination branding processes also at the country level are increasingly implemented globally. From local or national perspective, the process is, however, unique and exceptional. I argue that first and foremost with the vast public debate that has occurred in Finland, recently.

The empirical, 'real-life' starting point for this study was the need for establishing a brand strategy for Finland as a tourism destination. Although the research purpose steering this study was initiated from practical needs, the unique chance to data gathering was utilised for theory development purposes. Researcher's experiences and contacts with the tourism industry led to a single-case study approach (see Humphrey and Scapens, 1996). Furthermore, for such a case, empirical starting point and research driven by practical issues and problems instead of concerns of theorists, is justified (see Humphrey & Scapens, 1996).



## 3.2 CASE DESCRIPTION

### – INTRODUCING THE CONTEXT

Whilst tourism provides a context for studying image formation and branding, it is also an interesting object of study in its own right. Firstly, it is stated that a country is parallel with a corporate in branding sense (Anholt, 2002), but empirical evidences of this statement are rare. Secondly, actors in destination marketing have little control over the different sectors of tourism businesses, but they still have to promote an identity acceptable to a range of public and private sector constituencies. (Morgan *et al.*, 2003.)

This research process started during an empirically interesting time when the national tourism organisation in Finland, the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) was about to formulate a brand strategy for the country. At the beginning of the 21st century, the FTB wished to determine the spontaneous images of Finland in the European market in order to discover the positive associations of the country. The aim was to base the country branding on the existing positive images. Knowing the uniqueness of the situation and the very rare opportunities for collecting such data from a country context, I started to plan the image study in a research group together with the FTB authorities. Figure 16 below describes the timeline of the activities in the FTB before and during my research process. At the same time, it serves as a rough case description of this study. To avoid losing e.g. internal changes of the FTB from case description, I have not used any external classifications for describing the research period (cf. Lähteenmäki, 2006). However, the empirical analysis revealed at least two clear periods: Image building –period before 2002 and initial branding period after 2002. Towards 2009, activities increasingly aim at co-operation with stakeholders (e.g. determining the philosophy behind the destination identity, strategic planning, and following up of measures.

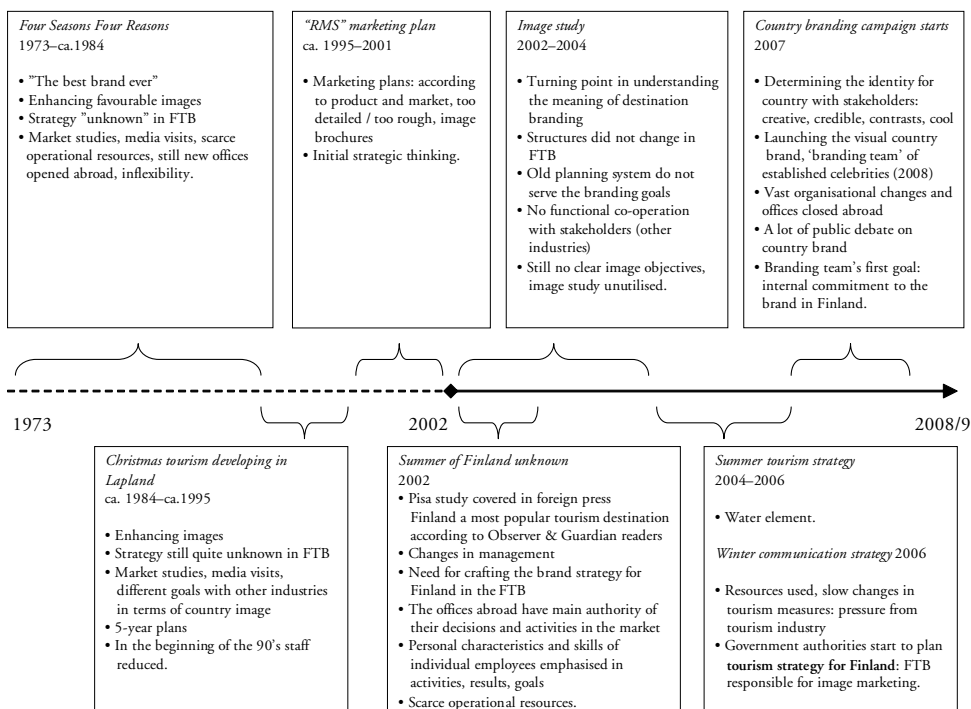


FIGURE 16. Timeline of the activities in the Finnish Tourist Board during the research process 2002-2009.



### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The research papers in this dissertation portray several data collection and analysis methods. This is useful when conducting case study research, which typically draws on multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). I have chosen the methods used in individual papers to best fit the research problem studied, and to provide rich data, and a holistic understanding of the destination branding phenomenon. The theoretical and empirical content of this study are strongly intertwined and thus qualitative methods, as an underlying research design, are appropriate. Despite the qualitative nature of case study research, quantitative data can also be used to construct the 'case' (see Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). A summary of research methods and data is illustrated in Table 7. Both data and analytical themes are detailed in appendices.

**TABLE 7.** Research methods of the individual papers.

Paper	Data collection method	Data analysis method	Data
I	Literature review on destination concept.	'Analytical approach', an overview of the literature.	Selected but representative body of tourism, marketing, geography, sociology and marketing literature.
II	Standardised, personal interviews in seven market areas in Europe, Literature review.	Categorisation of qualitative data with the help of the theoretically informed framework of the main themes, SPSS as a help of content analysis.	Standardised personal interviews (n=2001) in 2002, open-ended responses. Literature on image formation.
III	Press articles compiled by a media research firm, the Finnish Embassy and the FTB office in London. (Archives of FTB).	Re-categorising the data based on categorisation done in FTB. Content analysis of text and pictures, themes created inductively. In texts focus on headlines, overall narrative points, tone and mode of writing.	Initial data 155 press articles about Finland published in British press in 2001; all 285 pictures of them and texts of 50 articles in final analysis (journalistic writings).
IV	Press articles compiled by a media research firm, the Finnish Embassy and the FTB office in London. (Archives of FTB), Conversational interviews and e-mails with FTB managers and employees	Content analysis of travel itineraries of FTB, rhetorical analysis of articles resulted from familiarity tours for British press, Theme-based categorisation of interviews, focus of analysis media work.	Initial data 50 journalistic writings about Finland published in British press in 2001, the FTB's itineraries of familiarity tours for British journalists in 2000 and 2001, In final analysis 17 articles resulted from familiarity tours, 5 interviewees, conversational interviews.
V	Conversational interviews and e-mails with FTB managers and tourism industry practitioners, Secondary data: Meetings, seminars, Newspaper articles, Marketing plans of FTB, Observing Web-pages of FTB during the research process, Documents achieved from FTB on country branding plans.	Theme-based categorisation of interviews, focus of analysis destination image building, marketing and branding, further perspective of FTBs inner characteristics and relationships with external stakeholders during three decades.	Interviews: 8 managers of FTB as main informants, 11 other tourism industry practitioners from Great Britain and Finland, E-mails with them, Meetings in FTB, seminars, Web-pages of FTB, Newspaper articles (Finnish on FTBs activities and tourism to Finland from Great Britain, British on Finland), marketing plans of FTB, documents concerning country branding and marketing in FTB.

The whole research process includes 1) the initial spontaneous image research with standardised, personal interviews (n=2001), 2) analysis of text and picture in British press articles (n=155), 3) analysis of conversational interviews with tourism practitioners in Finland and the UK (18 interviews, 21 interviewees) and 4) analysis of secondary data from newspaper articles, web-pages, and documents from the FTB (as described in Figure 17). The literature review extended throughout the research process, starting with the tourism image studies and methodology, and later moving on to publicity management and branding literature (particularly destination and corporate branding, and corporate identity). In Figure 17, interaction between theoretical and empirical research activities is illustrated.

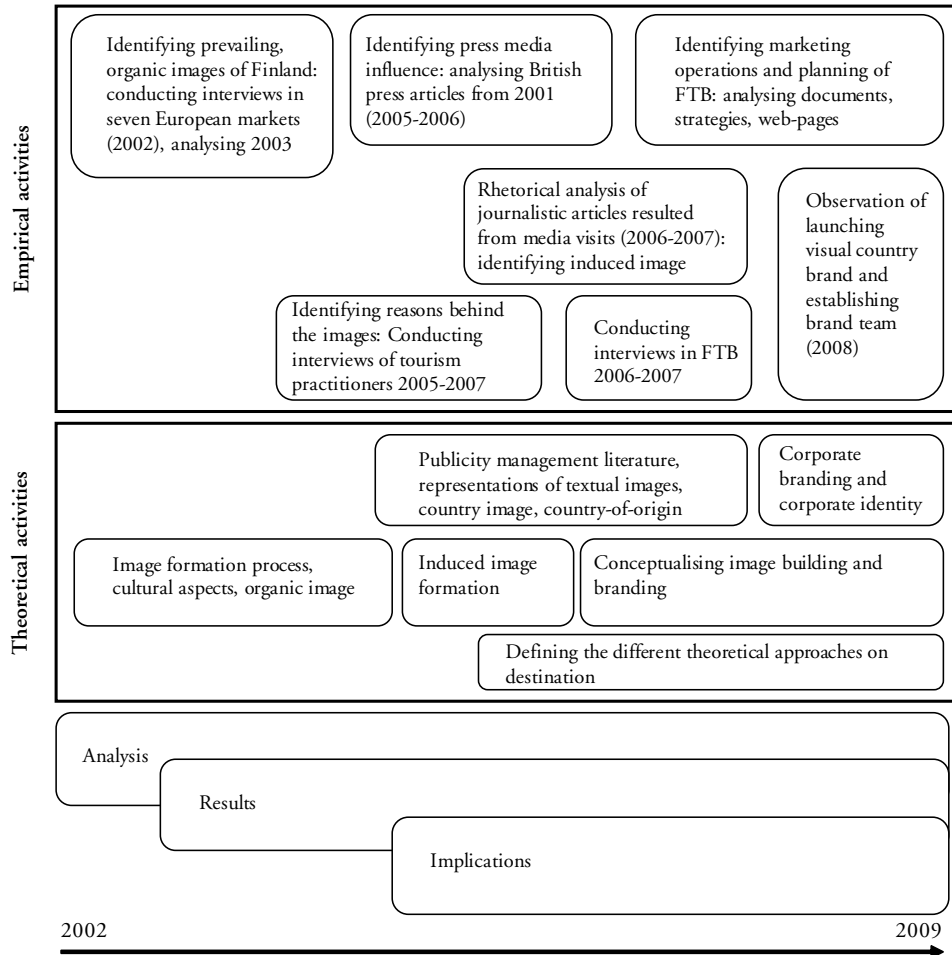


FIGURE 17. Time-line of the research process 2002-2009 from the perspective of a researcher.

During the process, I have used theoretical concepts to sensitise empirical data that I have used prior research in describing and analysing central features of empirical data. In addition, I have analysed indigenous concepts evolving from the participants of the study (Eisenhardt 1989; Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008).

As this is a qualitative case study, describing this research process only by the publishing sequence of the essays is not adequate, as phases of the research process often overlapped and intertwined. For this reason, the array of essays in this dissertation follows the timeline of the data collection. The first paper (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2009), which identifies the different theoretical approaches to “destination” as a concept, is an exception.

The research process started in 2002 when I began conducting standardised interviews, with open responses, in the seven European markets of the Finnish Tourist Board. The aim of the spontaneous image research was to identify the prevailing images of Finland to provide the basis of brand strategy. The focus of this dissertation are the results from the British market. The personal interviews (organic images) are analysed in paper 2 (Komppula and Saraniemi, 2004). Then for identification the vague, winter-related image of Finland in the British market press articles filed by the FTB in 2001 were analysed. The results of paper 3 indicate what influence the press media has on general country image. The first two steps of the research process focused on image in the market. At this point the focus turned towards the image building activities of the Finnish Tourist Board. At the same time, image as a dimension of the destination brand started to emerge. The fourth paper deepens understanding of the media’s influence on the demand side image. It also studies the publicity management and media work of the Finnish Tourist Board. Next, the destination was manifested as a basis for understanding the destination brand, in paper 1, as the underlying unit of analysis. Finally, paper 5 is based on a comprehensive literature review of the destination image, destination branding, and corporate branding concepts. It analyses the image building and branding activities of the FTB during the three decades. The data consists of different manager-level interviews in the FTB, and of tourism practitioner interviews, and also the secondary data illustrated in the appendix 2. The last two steps were complemented by the conceptualisations of the second chapter of this introduction. They conclude the analysis of the destination branding process at a country level.

In the following section, I discuss my data collection and analysis conduct in more detail.

### 3.3.1 STANDARDISED PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

The data for spontaneous image research consists of standardised personal interviews (n=2001) with open-ended responses. The personal interviews were compiled as follows between July and November 2002: Great Britain (339), Russia (400), the Netherlands (252), Sweden (231), Germany (338), Italy (190), and France (242). The interviews were conducted in each native language by seven research assistants. The standardised method reduced the possible variety caused by the involvement of several interviewers (Eriksson & Koistinen, 2008). The interviews in each country took place in several cities which were chosen jointly with representatives of the Finnish Tourist Board. The aim was to cover the most important target areas from Finland’s perspective. The interviews took place in promenades, parks and shopping centres, where the interviewees were randomly selected. Special attention was paid to ensuring an equal representation of different age groups with both male and female interviewees. I was collecting the data in four cities in Great Britain and two cities in Germany. The interviews were conducted using the free elicitation method. The interviewees’ images of Finland were investigated with an open ended question: “When you hear the word “Finland”, what does it bring to your mind?”

The next question was “How would you describe Finland as a tourist destination?” Thus, the method may be treated as qualitative (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The replies to both questions were written down. In addition, possible previous visits to Finland, intention to travel to Finland, gender, age, and the level of the respondent’s education, were all recorded.

I analysed the qualitative data first using the Excel programme, and then transferred the data to the SPSS-programme. These quantitative analysis programmes however were mainly used for categorising the textual data. The main focus of the analysis was on the first three spontaneous associations of the respondent. An analytical framework was created first by using the seminal destination image categorisation of Echtner and Ritchie (1993), and then by inductively letting the data impact the framework. First, the analysis was very detailed, revealing over 100 different categories for both general and travel destination images of Finland. Then, the data was reduced by dividing the images to functional and psychological images, following Echtner and Ritchie (1993), and was furthermore divided into nature and people, following the categorisations of Lew (1987). Keeping in mind however the managerial objectives of the image study, the most common associations were identified from each country. The comparisons between different countries were made using the SPSS programme. The results are descriptive, creating the basis for the further studies of this dissertation in the chosen market, Great Britain.

### 3.3.2 PRESS ARTICLES FROM THE BRITISH PRESS

The initial press article data consisted of 155 travel articles about Finland published in the British press in 2001. This year was chosen because the data of spontaneous images in Britain was gathered in 2002, and I wished to examine if there were any interconnections between these images. Finland should have received greater than normal publicity in 2001 for several reasons. In 2000 Helsinki was the European cultural capital, and in 2001 Finland was chosen as the most popular tourism destination by readers of the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, and was rated by the World Economic Forum as the most competitive country in Europe. Both texts and pictures were analysed from the articles. The analysed articles focused on writing about Finland from a travelling perspective.

Most of the press clippings were compiled by one media research firm, and they were partly the result of PR activities of the FTB. The Finnish Embassy and the FTB office in London have also collected clippings, some of them advertisements. The archivist has divided the articles into initial categories which were, in her opinion, useful. In 2001 those categories were 1) Christmas, 2) Helsinki, 3) Miscellaneous and 4) Winter General.

The first stage of the analysis involved reading through the clippings several times to find the overall narrative points and main themes. Secondly, the headlines of the articles were read more closely. Thirdly, the articles were divided into groups by the contents of headlines. The headline is a summary of the destination image of the article.

Next, the content of the articles was summarised in a few sentences. The focus was on the tone and mode of writing, and the role of the journalists in the articles. With extensive textual data, it is useful to adapt a method that is economical. In this study, the main focus was in journalistic travel writings. These were rich condensations of meanings. They consist of narratives, the journalist’s own travel experiences and opinions. Lists of tourism activities, products in Finland, adverts, or articles where Finland is mentioned only briefly, are excluded from the analysis. The final textual data contained 50 articles. Of these, a few articles were read closely, and the rest in less detail, to interpret the discourses

representing Finland. Discourse here means a mode of speech, and the main images of Finland present in the articles. The image of Finland in the British press has three main discourses: 1. Christmas, 2. Helsinki and cities and 3. Activities in Finland.

The last part of the study was a content analysis of the pictures used in all 155 articles. The ultimate aim was to compare the discourses representing Finland with the pictures used. Altogether 285 pictures were present in the 155 articles, and they were categorised inductively. Eight inductive categories were found: i) winter/summer, ii) human/nature, iii) active/passive, iv) reality/myths, v) humans and characters, vi) activities, vii) city/elsewhere and viii) buildings or sceneries in pictures.

### 3.3.3 RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRESS ARTICLES

At the next phase of the research process, the focus turned to the image building activities of the Finnish Tourist Board. Itineraries of FTB hosted media familiarisation tours were analysed in comparison with the initial data of 50 journalistic articles published in the British press in 2001. The FTB arranged media visits for about 40 journalists in 2000, and for 30 British journalists in 2001. The final data of the rhetorical analysis included 17 travel articles, which are the result of media visits from those two years. Among these 50 articles, some resulting from other trips are included, both paid and self-paid.

The first stage of the analysis involved reading through the 17 articles several times. Next, the main idea of each article was written down in a few sentences. To give a simplified definition, rhetoric is about persuading the audience of the validity of an argument (Jokinen, 1999). Rhetorical analysis is thus suited for analysing the results of media work. For this reason, the way in which the audience was persuaded and the means of persuasion were scrutinised. The core message of the articles and their argument were made the focus of the scrutiny. More specifically, the author of the present study examined how journalists presented Finland, what their arguments achieved and how they positioned themselves in their writing. Also important in the rhetorical analysis is issue of which audience the journalists are targeting in their writing. The present study paid attention to the tone and mode of writing of the journalists and the role of the journalists in the articles. It is not always easy to categorise the arguments according to rhetorical strategies (Koistinen, 1998), and analysis is always subjective. For the purpose of this study, it was deemed more important to understand the origins of the arguments not how they should be categorised.

Rhetorical analysis focused on titles, subtitles and the pictures of the articles. Titles commonly represent in an argumentative manner the core content of the article (Koistinen, 1998). In addition to the article titles, sentences that clearly represented the journalists' own experiences about, and attitudes towards, the destination were analysed. The author categorised the articles according to their rhetorical types and strategies. Rhetoric could be either defensive or offensive. With a defensive rhetoric, the writer defends his/her own statements; with an offensive rhetoric, the aim is to detract from the opposing arguments. Several rhetorical strategies could be common to both types, for example, the use of metaphors, irony, repetition and use of expert statements (Perelman, 1979; Potter, 1996). Finally, itineraries from familiarity tours were compared to the analysed press articles.

### 3.3.4 CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEWS

For the final phase of the data collection and analysis, conversational interviews were conducted of FTB managers and employees, as well as tourism practitioners in Finland and Great Britain (18 interviews, 21 interviewees, 3 interviewers, see appendix 1). The interviews may in fact be seen as narrative interviews, while their themes, although broad, were pre-planned (appendix 3). Meetings were decided together with interviewees beforehand (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). The credibility of the data was enhanced by complementary interviews, in addition to interviews of the main informants. Depending on the respondents, interviewees were asked to describe with their own words their experiences of 1) tourism to Finland, particularly to Lapland from Great Britain, 2) the marketing activities of the FTB, 3) the image building activities of the FTB, and other actors in Finland during the past three decades, and 4) tourism brands of Finland. The informants were chosen by the 'snowball method'. Interviewees were chosen according to the suggestions of previous interviewees. In later interviews, the increased knowledge of the phenomenon gained from the previous interviews and the literature was utilised.

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The transcripts were sorted by first analysing the data using qualitative software Nvivo. These were read multiple times, allowing the data to reveal the key themes concerning image building and branding activities. The previous literature was used at first only loosely in the analysis.

The analysis focused on 1) the national tourist organisation, and 2) the destination, as units of analysis. The phenomenon has mainly been viewed from the perspective of the NTO's management, but I have also used as the data other complementary internal and external voices. As in all historical research, interviews do not reflect the "reality", but instead reflect the memories and constructed realities and understanding of the respondents. They are cross-checked several times and are also verified by secondary data in the archives with regard to, for example, marketing plans undertaken by the NTO over the years. To conclude, the data triangulation (Denzin, 1978) provides the rich data for the case study.

# 4 OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPERS

The overall purpose of this study was contributing to our understanding on how to *describe and analyse the destination branding process in the country context*.

The main research question was: *How does destination branding take place at the country level?* The research questions were answered with the help of five research papers. Each of them contributed to answering the main research question. The relationship between the research questions and research papers is depicted in the following Table 8.

**TABLE 8.** The relationship between research questions and research papers.

Main research question: how does destination branding take place at the country level?					
	Paper I	Paper II	Paper III	Paper IV	Paper V
Research questions	1. How can a tourism destination concept be understood in order to build a destination-wide brand?	2. What are the prevailing images of Finland in different target markets?  3. How does the demand-side image formation process work?	4. How does the general country image in the market contribute to the destination image?	5. How does the National Tourist Organisation implement publicity management in order to project destination image?	6. How have the planning and implementation stages of image building developed in the National Tourist Organisation during the past three decades?  7. How are destination image building and destination branding concepts related?

## 4.1 PROBLEMATISING THE CONCEPT OF TOURISM DESTINATION. AN ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT THEORETICAL APPROACHES

This research paper is one of the rare multidisciplinary conceptualisations of the main unit of analysis in the tourism studies, the tourism destination. Building a destination-wide brand, the nature of tourism destinations must be understood. The concept has not been identified in its entirety, however. This paper identifies four different approaches to tourism destinations in the previous literature: 1) economic-geographical, 2) marketing management-based, 3) customer-oriented, and 4) cultural. The research paper defines *a destination as a set of institutions and actors located in a physical or a virtual space where*



*marketing-related transactions and activities take place, challenging the traditional production-consumption dichotomy.*

This study is not intended to conduct a thorough review. Rather, the current study adopts an 'analytical approach' (see Li and Petrick 2008). In the review, a selected but representative body of literature is used to focus on different theoretical approaches. The aim is to provide an alternative view of tourism destination studies in general.

The research paper identifies three key characteristics differentiating the alternative, cultural approach to destination from the three more conventional ones: 1) the role of a tourist as a producer, i.e., blurring the roles of marketers and consumers; 2) the transition from the provision of products towards the creation of potentials and processes that enable tourists to gain experiences; and 3) fragmentation, rather than segmentation, of markets.

From destination branding perspective, cultural approach sees the consumer as a co-creator of the process instead of being reduced to the role of an end-user. The research paper suggests that in order to understand and, hence, to develop tourism destinations, it is vital to take into account the poly-vocal issues of tourism, the complex relationships between producers, consumers, local people and authorities, and the symbolic co-creation of tourist experiences based on a sign-value.

## 4.2 ORGANIC IMAGES OF FINLAND IN THE EUROPEAN MARKET

This research paper examines spontaneous destination images of Finland in the seven European marketing areas of the Finnish Tourist Board as the basis of the country brand strategy. Furthermore, the literature review conceptualises the demand-side image formation process by identifying the stimulus factors and personal factors that formulate the 'organic' (pre-visit) destination images. To the extensive image formation literature, this study brings a cross-cultural perspective suggesting that nationality, as a proxy for culture, is a strong factor in destination image formation.

The data for the study is based on 2001 personal interviews compiled in Great Britain (339), Russia (400), the Netherlands (252), Sweden (231), Germany (338), Italy (190) and France (242) between July and November in 2002. The interviews were conducted in the native language of each country by seven interviewers including myself. The interviews in each country took place in several cities that were chosen jointly with representatives of the Finnish Tourist Board. The interviews were conducted using the free elicitation method. The images of Finland were investigated with an open ended question: "When you hear the word "Finland", what does it bring to your mind?" The next question was "How would you describe Finland as a tourist destination?" The first, second etc. replies to both questions were written down. In addition, possible previous visits to Finland, intention to travel to Finland, gender, age, and the level of education were recorded.

The vast volume of qualitative textual data was analysed first with the help of the created framework of main themes. Next, the entire data was transferred to the SPSS programme where the comparisons between spontaneous images in different countries were further studied. The SPSS was mainly used as a help for the categorisation of the data, however, and thus any further statistical methods or results were not even aimed at. The results were divided as a general image and an image as a travel destination. They represent an 'organic' (prevailing country image or pre-visit) image of respondents. The results

show that the most common association mentioned was cold. Further than that, Finland remains a relatively little known country, especially as a tourism destination. In addition, summer in Finland was fairly unknown among the studied target markets. Although any further statistical analysis methods were not used, some differences between the images of different nationalities were found. After the study, the results of the study were validated by interviewing 34 selected researchers of tourism marketing and practitioners in tourism business in the target countries of the study.

### 4.3 COUNTRY IMAGE REPRESENTED IN THE PRESS – COMPONENT OF THE DESTINATION IMAGE

This research paper analyses the interconnections between the general country images revealed in the spontaneous images research and the country image portrayed by the press in the target market of Finnish Tourist Board, Great Britain. Although from destinations, the country image context has been one of the most extensively studied (see Gallarza *et al.*, 2002), its complex nature provides an interesting arena to study *to what extent the organic images (at pre-visit stage) reflect the image of textual representations*. As a consequence, *how the general country image contributes to the destination image* will also be investigated. The main initial data consisted of 155 travel articles about Finland published in the British press in 2001. Text and pictures were both analysed by using theme-based categorisation. In this study, first concepts of *country image* and *textual representations* are discussed.

In an analysis, the images of press representations are compared to spontaneous associations in the target market. As a result, three main discourses or main images of Finland were found in the British press: 1. *Christmas*, 2. *Helsinki and cities* and 3. *Activities in Finland*. Finally, implications for Finland's branding strategy are suggested. The Christmas-discourse is divided in mythical and critical subcategories, and also featured two subcategories: 1. the stereotypical, old discourse and 2. attitude-changing, modern discourse. According to picture analysis, winter in Finland is more activity-based whereas summer often featured empty sceneries in cities or nature locations, such as in the countryside. Images of winter dominate the discourse of imagery related to Finland. However, *the general country image* (organic image) is more unspecified and vague than *media portrayals* (autonomous or induced image) are. The difference is that the portrayals of Christmas and specific destinations, especially the capital Helsinki, are more the focus in the press than in the spontaneous images. Another difference is that journalists usually write positively about 'cold' themes, whereas the Finnish Tourist Board's initial image study found that the most common spontaneous association with 'cold' was that it is not a positive attribute.

International marketing literature understands the country image (all associations related to a country) as an element of a product. Within the tourism destination context, this leads to the interpretation that the general country image held by the public in a target market can be seen as a component of the destination, and particularly of the destination image, influencing on the destination choice. Both of these concepts, country image and destination image are generic (see Mossberg & Kleppe, 2005) and overlapping. As a main contribution, this study confirms the relationship between the organic image (general country image) and the press image. Furthermore, the study indicates that the country image contributes to the tourism destination image, and vice versa, the latter however being more unspecified at the pre-visit stage.

## 4.4 FROM FAMILIARITY TOURS TO MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: FINLAND IN THE BRITISH PRESS

In the extensively studied tourists' image formation process, non-commercial forms of media are almost invariably the most important travel information source, particularly with regard to unfamiliar destinations. Despite the media's importance, publicity management of destinations has been an overlooked topic in academic literature. This article aims to fill that gap by exploring the media work of the Finnish Tourist Board (FTB) in the British market. First the article discusses PR, publicity management, and particularly media visits, as a tool for promoting destination images.

The data included 17 travel articles about Finland published in the British press in 2001 and travel itineraries of FTB hosted media familiarisation tours for British press in 2000 and 2001. Rhetorical analysis was used. It is ideally suited for the analysis of promotional material, press releases and newspaper articles, because this form of analysis takes into consideration how an issue is represented in a certain context and for a certain reason. In addition, the itineraries of familiarity tours of British journalists are considered in the present study to express a desirable image (projected image) that the FTB wishes to communicate.

The 17 articles analysed were mostly results of the winter familiarity tours. In 2001, winter was clearly the dominant theme for tours; by contrast, only one media visit for British journalists was arranged in the summer-time. The year 2000 was somewhat different, probably because of the European cultural-capital events in Helsinki. Rhetorical strategies were mostly defensive, representing a favourable image of Finland, and stories were aimed at adults. The audience is given traditional stereotypes about Finland (Russian-like, expensive, cold, and gloomy), but also the tools to change their images. Three of the six Christmas articles had a slightly critical tone through the use of irony: "*...we sang Jingle Bells just the same, because you have to, don't you?*"

Rhetorical strategies (see Perelman, 1979; Potter, 1996) included extremities, irony, distinctions, humour, persuasion, facts, illustration, visualisation, naturalisation and metaphors. Interesting finding is that in the destination journalism for the British market, a more critical tone is allowed when writing about Christmas in Lapland than with other, more unfamiliar destinations in Finland. One reason might be that the Christmas-in-Lapland product is already so popular that it is possible to adopt a critical tone without much damage being done to the industry. Another interesting finding is that the 4 articles written in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person concerned summer in Finland or general descriptions about the destination. The image they create is perceived as not so detailed and not so experiential than descriptions in other, more personalised articles. To conclude, the messages conveyed through the chosen representations can be divided into two sorts: *old-fashioned, stereotyping and modern, more versatile*.

The images of Finland presented by the press can be seen as induced images: the articles in this study are the results of paid media visits. In addition, commercial information was included in all the articles that provided facts about possible accommodation facilities, attractions etc., appearing as a form of direct marketing (cf. Daye, 2005). For an ordinary reader, however, these articles represent independent and credible information about Finland (Gartner, 1993).

By comparing the travel itineraries with representations in the press, it was found that although itineraries are influential, the final word remains with the journalists. Finally, managerial implications are presented for implementing publicity management in the Finnish Tourist Board.

## 4.5 HOW DOES DESTINATION BRANDING DIFFER FROM BUILDING A FAVOURABLE IMAGE? INSIGHTS INTO A COUNTRY CONTEXT

After investigating the demand-side destination image formation process and the image management of the National Tourism Organisation via publicity management in the previous research papers, this study conceptualises image building and branding in the destination context comprehensively with the aim of finding differences between the concepts both theoretically and empirically. As well as finding numerous similarities between the concepts, such as their two-sidedness, differences were also found. Branding research involves value perspective, either the creation of customer/stakeholder value (see e.g. Lindberg-Repo, 2001; Urde, 1999) or organisational values (see e.g. Urde, 2003), while image discussion most often leave the value or values undiscussed. The study adopts corporate branding discussion and the emerging discussion of co-created brands in conceptualising the destination branding process. The case study of marketing planning and implementations of the NTO during the past three decades was conducted in order to identify the characteristics of the image building and branding.

For my primary data I interviewed eight current and former managers on different levels of the Finnish Tourist Board. Some of them were approached several times during the research process face-to-face or via e-mail to check the current situation and also my findings. In addition, two marketing employees of the FTB were approached via e-mail. During the research process, I was also able to interview 11 other tourism industry practitioners and experts in the target market, Great Britain, and in Finland. These interviews related to another research topic outside the focus of this study, namely Christmas tourism in Lapland (Hakulinen, Komppula, Saraniemi, 2007) that was closely bound with this dissertation. They greatly increased my understanding of this specific context. I also studied a vast volume of newspaper articles, FTP marketing plans, and plans for the country brand over a 30-year period.

The results propose that novel approaches to destination branding provide several theoretical contributions towards destination branding research, if not to branding research in general. First, this study suggests that destination identity emerges from the interaction between all stakeholders. Thus, the destination brand emerges from the identities of the destination and its stakeholders. Furthermore, this study proposes *a framework for a co-created destination branding process*, which emerges from analysis of the corporate branding discussion (e.g. Balmer, 2001; Urde, 2003), and from the idea that a brand is co-created (e.g. Boyle, 2007) or co-produced (e.g. de Chernatony and Harris, 2000) by producers and customers. Based on this framework, empirical analysis of the Finnish Tourist Board's destination marketing efforts during the last three decades, including image building, was conducted. It confirmed the phases of the framework, and moreover, characterised the components of the National Tourist Organisation's corporate identity (structure, strategy and culture) as being the important aspects of the destination branding process on the country level. Especially, co-operation with external stakeholders in image building was investigated.

This analysis was undertaken from 1) the perspective of the NTO as an organisation and 2) on destination (country) level. Over the years, the FTB has been a very inflexible governmental body with unspecified long-term planning at the higher level. The local offices abroad have been more like "commercial agencies" with autonomous activities. The results have been too dependent on the office manager's interests. Thus, corporate identity in the NTO has been very fragmented and individual, emphasising certain pro-

fessionals. Recently, cooperation with other industries and participants in the country image building has been increased.

The other analysis level is the destination level on which this analysis also provides some information. In particular, the stakeholder relationships of the NTO and the way the brand identity is determined illustrates to us the destination level perspective. The NTO seems to leverage the management of the country brand to the Finland Promotion Board, with the former being an important and visible actor, but not the sole owner of the brand. Thus, it is emphasised that the nation brand is a holistic place brand, and serves not only the objectives of the tourism destination. The Finland Promotion Board seems to have an important role in coordinating stakeholder relationships. Managing the country brand in its initial phase seems to be in just a few hands.

The branding activity in the NTO is possible to divide in internal and external factors of branding. For example, positioning, marketing communications, managing stakeholder relationships and strategic planning are internal branding factors. External factors include e.g. images of stakeholders, uncontrolled and controlled communications channels and experiences created through interactions (see also Figure 18).

The most important theoretical contribution of this study is the suggestion of the typology consisting of four different destination philosophies. In particular, branding philosophies are differentiated by the level of 1) involvement of stakeholders, and 2) involvement of the destination's internal values, towards the destination branding process. On one end is product-bound branding (traditional image building), and on the other is identity-based branding (c.f. Burmann *et al.*, 2009) featuring inside-out branding. The two other philosophies are corporate branding and co-created branding.

According to Burmann, Hegner and Riley (2009), inside-out-branding emphasises the brand owner/manager's role in the branding process, whereas outside-in-branding concentrates on the customer's perspectives regarding image and brand. From the perspective of the Finnish Tourist Board, analysed time period can be divided roughly into 1) the period of traditional image building, or "product-bound branding", concentrating on the customer's perspective on image, and 2) the initial period of "inside-out destination branding", where the basis of the brand promise, the destination values, are determined.

# 5 DISCUSSION

## 5.1 REVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the answers for the research questions of this study.

The overall purpose of this study was to develop concepts needed to describe and analyse the destination branding process in the country context. The main research question was: *How does destination branding take place at the country level?* The sub-questions aiming to partially solve this research question were: 1) How can a tourism destination concept be understood in order to build a destination-wide brand? 2) What are the prevailing images of Finland in different target markets? 3) How does the demand-side image formation process work? 4) How does the general country image in the market contribute to the destination image? 5) How does the National Tourist Organisation implement publicity management in order to project destination image? 6) How have the planning and implementation stages of image building developed in the National Tourist Organisation during the past three decades? 7) How are destination image building and destination branding concepts related? The sub-questions 1, 3, 4 and 7 are theoretical research questions, while sub-questions 2, 5 and 6 are more empirically oriented research questions.

It has to be said that without the different phases and research papers of this dissertation, the conceptualisation of the destination branding would have been much more challenging. Every research paper describes a certain stage in empirical reality and addresses the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. Next, the theoretical research questions are answered following the answers for the empirical questions.

*Theoretical research questions.* *The first research question* was answered through the overview of the different theoretical approaches to the concept of destination. An overview was presented of the marketing and geographical perspectives of tourism destinations. The destination is *the* unit of analysis in tourism studies, also in this research. The identification of the destination as a concept has, however, remained unclear. Framke (2002) divided destination-related discussions to business perspective and socio-cultural perspective. He defined a destination as ‘a touristic identity of a place’. We analysed the concept at a ‘deeper level’, aiming at identifying theoretical, philosophical and epistemological assumptions behind the destination definitions. As a result, it is argued that conventional models of destination of 1) economic-geography-oriented, 2) marketing management-oriented and 3) customer-oriented approaches fail to uncover the dynamic processes and practices of the place, emphasising the demand-supply dichotomies of the market. As ‘the alternative view’, the socio-cultural construction of the destination is presented. This includes perspectives of cultural geography and cultural approach to marketing.

Postmodern marketing lenses are used to provide 4) ‘*the cultural approach to destinations*’. Three key characteristics are identified differentiating the alternative approach from the three more conventional ones. They are: 1) the role of a tourist as a producer, i.e. the blurring roles of marketers and consumers; 2) the transition from the provision of products towards the creation of potentials and processes that enable experiences in a multicultural, communal and globalised setting; and 3) the fragmentation instead of segmentation. *The destination is defined as a process, not a fixed and completed entity.*

In this dissertation, especially the blurring roles of marketers and customers, and understanding the destination as a process helps in conceptualising the building of a destina-



tion-wide brand. These views provide holistic understanding of the destination. Seeing the destination as a co-created process is further conceptualised in chapter 2.3, where the destination identity concept is described. From the branding literature perspective, understanding the destination identity as being constructed in continuing interaction between the different stakeholders echoes the cultural approach to destination. 'Oversimplifying image-work and one-sided managerial tricks' can thus be avoided. At the first glance, the third idea of transition from segmentation to fragmentation is challenging from the perspective of this dissertation, whose example market is strictly the British market. As the research paper argues, tourists may not be committed to certain brands *per se*, while in different situations their roles and needs are different. This provides opportunities for destination marketers, who can get ideas for new lifestyles and different values from their customers.

In the research paper I have argued that the recent debate in marketing literature concerning 'a paradigm shift' towards a new service-dominant logic by Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006) is coming close to alternative, cultural views of the destination. In fact, their understanding of the customer as a co-creator (of value) describes the blurring roles of the customer and producer from different perspective. Although Vargo and Lusch initially have not put too much emphasis on the production of meanings and the experiential value of the service process (Venkatesh and Peñaloza, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2008), their co-creation concept (see also Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) helps to further conceptualise destination branding.

*The second theoretical research question (question no 3)* was answered in the second research paper, and concerned the demand-side image formation process. The literature review was conducted on different image sources and image agents that affect tourists, in particular 'potential tourists'. In the introduction part of the dissertation (chapter 2.2), this framework was developed further. The image formation process as a concept was placed in the demand side as a distinction from the image building activity of the supply-side (destination).

*The third theoretical research question (question no 4)* is integrated to the third question while elaborating the relationship between the general country image and the destination image. The question was answered by conducting a study of the interconnections between the general country images revealed in the spontaneous image research and the country image portrayed by the press in one important target market, Great Britain. The results suggest that general country image held by the public in a target market can be seen as a component of the destination, and particularly of the destination image. It is also possible that having a general country image does not automatically contribute to having a *tourism* destination image. *Research questions 3 and 4 both relate to the self-analysis of the destination image phase of the destination branding process* (Figure 18).

*The fourth theoretical research question (question no 7)* was answered in the fifth research paper. The discussion related to this question was summarised in chapter 2.6. of this dissertation. In the fifth paper, an empirical study focusing on the image building activities of the Finnish Tourist Board was conducted. The overall answer for how the concepts of destination image building and destination branding are related is illustrated in Figure 18. In the illustrated process model, the destination branding process is presented from the perspective of the destination management organisation. The first two steps of the image building and branding processes are the same and in later phases differences occur with regard to structures, elements, and actions. The process model poses *identifying the value-based identity of the destination* and *involving stakeholders to the co-created branding process* as being the main actions differentiating destination branding from image building. In conclusion, I suggest that branding includes the image building.

I summarise the findings of this research with the help of a contextually grounded model of the image building and identity-based branding depicted in the following Figure 18. In the figure, two possible models of branding activity are illustrated. The processes are presented in the same picture in order to clearly depict the similarities and differences between them. Some common phases exist in both models. In conceptualising these context-bound concepts, it is important to clarify the structures, elements and activities behind them. In the previous literature, there are only a few process models that encompass the destination brand building process and only a couple that have incorporated image building as part of the process (see Cai, 2002; Niinenen *et al.*, 2007). To the best of my knowledge, none has encompassed the co-creation approach to the destination brand. Hankinson (2007), however, recognises the co-production and co-consumption of the place product. He suggests a theoretical framework of destination brand management, which is one of the few to draw from corporate branding literature. The process models are surprisingly few also in general corporate branding literature although the term ‘branding process’ is common among practitioners. For instance Urde (2003) proposed the core-value based corporate brand building model and Boyle (2007) presented a brand co-creation model that, however, concerns the product brands.

*Using e.g. a term ‘company’, ‘public organisation’ or ‘service’ instead of ‘a destination’ and e.g. ‘management (team)’ instead of the NTO, this two-folded process model may be transferred to the other contexts as well. This, however, need to be empirically investigate, as well.*

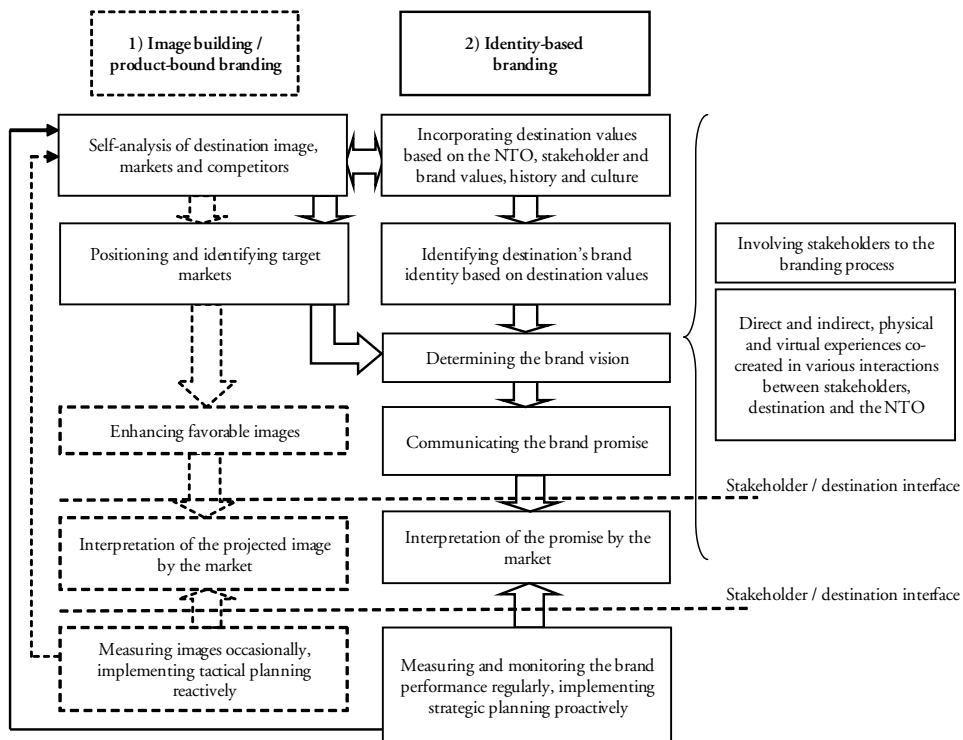


FIGURE 18. Contextually grounded model of the image building and identity based branding.



Furthermore, the research suggests a typology of different destination branding philosophies: product-bound branding (enhancing favourable images), corporate branding, co-created branding and identity-based branding. The term 'branding philosophy' differs from the brand structure (e.g. Laforet and Saunders, 1999) or the brand architectures (e.g. Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000) that on the one hand exploit the commonalities between the different brands in order to generate synergy, and on the other hand, to find and reduce the differences between brand identities in different contexts and roles so that they do not damage each other. Brand portfolios also reduce confusion and achieve clarity among different brands (Aaker 1996, 241-242). Rather than being just an implementation strategy for image promotion, branding philosophy relates to a way of understanding the branding process in the organisation. The branding philosophy is manifested for instance in how the destination is understood (e.g. as a product or as a process with blurring roles of producers and consumers), in the ownership of the destination brand and management of that brand. The branding philosophy may well change in the destination. It is therefore useful to conduct historical studies whenever possible in this research context. Urde (1999) proposed the concept of brand orientation which differs from market orientation by choosing the brand as the platform of the business. The branding philosophy relates to that concept in evaluating the way of understanding the brand in the destination. However, being brand oriented, accordingly, assumes that brand is the strategic resource for the firm. The branding philosophy of the destination may have other dimensions, as well.

*Empirical research questions.* The first empirical research question (question no 2) was answered in the second research paper, which examined the prevailing images of Finland in different target markets. In all, 2001 interviewees in seven countries answered two questions: "When you hear the word 'Finland', what comes to your mind?" and "How would you describe Finland as a tourist destination?" In addition, possible previous visits to Finland, intention of travelling to Finland, gender, age and level of education were recorded. In the light of the collected data that was qualitative and only categorised with the help of a statistical analysis tool, the general European image of Finland is nature-oriented with emphasis on winter conditions and northerly location. The most common association was 'cold'. Finland remains a fairly unknown country: 6 % of the respondents were at first unable to give any kind of association of Finland. Almost one fifth could not even imagine travelling to Finland.

It was especially hard for the respondents to describe Finland as a tourism destination. There were many 'nothing' responses and a lot of incomplete information (almost one fifth of the responses altogether). Different kinds of positive adjectives were often used, which may reflect the real image as well as an unspecified one. General country image in Britain was diverse including both nature-related and people-related associations, whereas image as a tourism destination was non-structured and vague. The free-elicitation method used in data collection was useful in revealing the rich data. *The results were meant to be used as a basis for the brand strategy in Finland and intended as a self-analysis level of the destination branding process.*

The second empirical research question (question no 5) was answered in the fourth research paper. Despite the media's importance as a *supply-side image source*, publicity management of destinations has been an overlooked topic in academic literature. Research paper four aimed to fill that gap by exploring the media work of the Finnish Tourist Board in the British market. *Publicity management is conceptualised as an image building activity, more specifically as a form of destination branding.* The itineraries of familiarity tours for British journalists are considered in the present study to express a *desirable image* that the

FTB wishes to communicate. By comparing these itineraries with representations in the press, it was found that although itineraries are influential, the final word remains with the journalist. The travel itineraries suggest that the destinations most actively promoted to the British market, usually in wintertime, are Lapland and Helsinki; this is reflected in the travel articles, with the emphasis on Christmas.

The results revealed that procedures exist within the FTB for a systematic follow-up of the media work, but the implementation of such procedures has been scaled down and overlooked over the years. The media representations were analysed using rhetorical analysis. Rather than seeing the news as producing an objective picture of Finland, it is more useful to see *the news as constructing a cultural reality of a foreign destination*. The images created through these articles are never pictures of 'the real world', but *constructions of meanings* originating from different sources. *The messages conveyed through the chosen representations can be divided into two sorts: 1) old-fashioned, stereotyping and 2) modern, more versatile.*

*The third empirical research question* (question no 6) was answered in the fifth research paper. The research paper focused on the perspective of the FTB as the manager of the destination brand (NTO-level analysis). In the paper, I analysed image building activities during the past three decades through 1) self-analysis of the destination, 2) enhancing favourable images, 3) structure of the NTO, 4) strategy and culture in the NTO, 5) co-operation with stakeholders, 6) communicating the brand promise, 7) interpretation of the promise by market, 8) measuring the brand performance and 9) determining the brand identity of the destination. The analysis was first carried out on the *destination* level within the framework based on the previous literature on destination and corporate branding. The empirical findings, however, encouraged me to consider the NTO more as an organisation (stages 3 and 4). I therefore carried out the final phase of the analysis on the *NTO level* based on freely emerging themes confirmed and outlined by corporate identity literature. The analysis aimed to analyse *the corporate, or more specifically, the organisational identity of the NTO*. The results suggest the important role of the NTO's internal characteristics and the NTO's identity as determinants for destination branding. This perspective is under-theorised in the destination branding literature (see however Hankinson, 2007 and 2009).

The other level of analysis used in this study was the destination level. In the process model (Figure 18), co-operation with stakeholders and determining the brand identity, in particular, relate to this level. The image building in the NTO has for a long time been at the level of *enhancing the favourable images with no focus on e.g. determination of brand identity or other long-term strategic focus*. This seems to confirm the interconnection between the identity and strategy, as theoretical discussion increasingly suggests (see He and Balmer, 2007). *In the initial phase of the country branding*, the studied NTO seems to adopt partners, or *stakeholders*, for the management of the country brand, remaining an important, but not the only owner of the country brand. The empirical results confirm that a destination brand owner may differ from the brand manager. In Figure 16, chapter 3.2, I describe the activities of the FTB during my research process in detail. The rough division is possible to make between image building and initial branding periods. The more detailed, empirical periods of "*Four Seasons Four Reasons*", "*Christmas tourism developing in Lapland*", "*RMS*" marketing plan", "*Summer of Finland unknown*", "*Image study*", "*Summer tourism strategy*" and "*Country branding campaign starts*" are described focusing on the perspective of the example market, Great Britain. However, the typical activities, and the names of the periods, as well, describe also the development of the destination image building of the Finnish Tourist Board during the research period.

## 5.2 CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTION

The main purpose of this study was to *develop concepts to describe and analyse the destination branding process in the country context*. Without well-developed conceptual definitions for the concepts, it is impossible to develop a coherent theory (Summers, 2001). According to Summers (2001), conceptual contributions may involve 1) improved conceptual definitions of constructs, 2) the identification and definition of new constructs, 3) the development of additional theoretical linkages, and 4) the development of improved theoretical rationale for existing linkage. Inconsistency with concepts has hindered the development of theorising in branding discussion in general and, as a consequence, in the contextually specific areas of the branding research. Brodie and de Chernatony (2009) note that the existing mainstream brand literature mainly falls into the consumer-centric, marketing management-based stream that sees brand as an entity and follows the narrow AMA definition for a brand: “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Also Burmann *et al.*, (2009) claim that research on brands largely focuses on a static definition of the brand. The brand research has traditionally concentrated on one element of the brand (e.g. image) at the expense of the others (see Burmann *et al.*, 2009). However, as Brodie and de Chernatony (2009) describe a significant number of emerging issues as containing ‘service-centric logic’ (Vargo and Lusch, 2004); B2B brands and interactive media are also researched from the perspective of socially constructed meanings in the last decade.

This dissertation relied strongly on values-based approach to corporate brand development (e.g. van Riel, 1995; Urde, 2003; de Chernatony *et al.*, 2004). In addition, corporate identity literature (e.g. Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) provided tools for understanding the destination branding phenomenon more profoundly. Towards the end of the research process, suggestions of emerging identity-based branding approach (e.g. Burmann *et al.*, 2009) have underpinned the empirical findings of this dissertation.

The main conceptual contribution of this study relates to these conceptualisations in the destination branding context. In this study, branding is acknowledged as context-bound concept whose connotations may increasingly differ depending on the context. The ‘brand’ is defined in four hierarchically connected ways. Firstly, *destination brand conveys core values, commitment and a promise uniquely associated with the place, based on dynamic identities of the destination and its stakeholders*. Thus, it is a subjective impression of the destination. In comparison with the most widely cited definition destination brand by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998): “A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the place; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce of pleasurable memories of the place experience,” the definition of this focal study acknowledges the dynamism of the concept, emphasising the salience of identity and stakeholders. Secondly, it is *a holistic and co-created identity, based on a destination’s core values, interpreted by both supply and demand side stakeholders*.

Thirdly, *the destination identity is defined as being originated in the interaction of all the components, characteristics and stakeholders of a place, such as a country*. It is therefore not a static, but dynamic, evolving entity, when comparing, for instance, to Balmer’s (2008) corporate identity. The destination identity evolves in interaction of identities on four levels: *brand, corporate (DMO/NTO), stakeholders and destination*. In comparison with Urde’s (2003) three-level identities for a company (brand, organisational, customer identities), this definition takes into consideration the identities of both the customers and

other stakeholders. Moreover, the destination's identity and that of the NTO are seen as distinct, and the emphasis is on the NTO's identity (e.g. structure, strategy, culture and communication). Identity discussion of personal identity (e.g. Erikson, 1956; Marcia, 1993), in branding (e.g. Burmann *et al.*, 2009; Cornelissen and Harris, 2001; Urde, 2003); and in tourism studies (Pritchard and Morgan, 2001) has been multidisciplinary. Within tourism studies, holistic views are also expressed (e.g. Williams, Reilly *et al.*, 2006). They have, however failed to take into account multiple identities (cf. Cornelissen and Harris, 2001) in the destination more specifically.

Fourthly, *the destination is defined as a process, not a fixed and completed entity*. From the branding perspective, this is consistent with the new conceptualisation of a brand as a process (see e.g. Stern, 2006). More specifically, *a destination is a set of institutions and actors located in a physical or a virtual space where marketing-related transactions and activities take place, challenging the traditional production-consumption dichotomy*. This brings forth especially the co-creation of value perspective (e.g. Vargo and Lusch; 2004; Grönroos, 2008). Thus, if we refer to a destination as a brand, destination is seen as co-created with different stakeholders and, in addition, as a process, whilst being socially constructed and evolving.

Furthermore, *destination branding is defined as identity management that is holistic, dynamic, co-created and committed, and is based on core values of the destination and its stakeholders both in demand and supply side, in order to build a promise uniquely associated with the place*. In previous literature, the specific definitions for destination branding, or place branding, are extremely rare. Morgan *et al.*, (2002) mentions that destination branding should be a long-term commitment to identity creation. Thus, identity is acknowledged, but co-creation of the branding process with stakeholders is not. Anholt (2007) introduced a new concept of competitive identity for replacing for instance country branding. Although aimed at avoiding 'the bad sections of a brand' and leveraging the place marketing towards synthesising of public and private sector activities, his concept seems to emphasise the place identity at the expense of the dynamics, being, however, useful in practice.

Fifthly, *identity-based co-creation of branding* differs from the idea of brand co-creation by e.g. Boyle (2007), by involving all stakeholders in the process, and by incorporating the different level values in determining the destination identity. Gregory (2007) refers to this 'stakeholder perspective' using the concept of 'negotiated brand'. As in this dissertation, the negotiated brand process is evolving, dynamic and continuous. The perspective that engages stakeholders as partners in branding process, not just targets is fairly new in branding literature. Corporate branding literature (e.g. Balmer, 2001), however, propose that corporate brand is *a covenant* between stakeholders. Kay (2006) discussed the different branding logics, and identity-based co-creation is in line with his notion of brand communities and service-dominant logic as new perspectives for branding. (See also Payne *et al.*, 2009).

In addition to stakeholder perspective (including both external and internal stakeholders), *the identity concept*, forms a theoretical linkage for this dissertation and promotes increasingly the conceptualisation of destination branding. Cai (2002) has already called for the missing link, brand identity, between image building and branding. This research has filled this gap in the context of country branding, by emphasising the multiple identities of the actors involved, and by also studying the identity of the NTO in detail.

In her dissertation, Rindell (2008) called for a new understanding and conceptual models depicting the relational, dynamic and temporal aspects of the image-identity-image interplay as a process, as the relational aspect indicates that the image and identity are

constructed over time. My dissertation also answered to that call when taking a historical perspective of image building and branding activities of the NTO during the past three decades.

In marketing and branding literature, identity-based marketing (Alsem and Kosteljik, 2008) and identity-based branding (Burmam *et al.*, 2009) concepts have recently emerged. In corporate branding literature, in particular, identity-based views are being discussed in more detail (e.g. He and Balmer, 2007; He, 2008). Given the historical roots of corporate identity (CI) in marketing, it has been claimed (e.g. He and Balmer, 2007) that employing CI as a central construct for marketing theories would be beneficial regarding the market behaviour of a company and in terms of the consumers' buying behaviour. The utility of identity presents itself within the marketing literature rarely (see He and Balmer, 2007), and even more rarely in its tourism related applications. This dissertation is contextually grounded in this emerging study area.

Burmam *et al.*, (2009) proposed the concept of identity-based branding, or the 'inside-out perspective' to branding, emphasising the brand owner/manager's role in the process. The identity-based branding, however, may be broadened with the ideas of (value) co-creation (Boyle, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004) to involve both supply (internal) and demand (external) side aspects, that is a stakeholder perspective, to the destination branding. Thus, the branding approach is more dynamic involving both sides to the evolving branding process.

*As a concluding conceptual contribution* in Figure 19, I present a *typology of different destination branding philosophies*. The typology answers to the motivating questions for this dissertation posed in the research problem identification. The names of types connote to the existing branding approaches, or brand architectures in the literature. This is purposeful while the following philosophies, respectively, closely refer to the initial approaches their names refer to. However, corporate branding here is a different level construct than brand hierarchies (e.g. Olins, 1989) or identity structures (e.g. Stuart, 1999), and not just a one brand strategy among e.g. umbrella brands and alliance brands. The philosophy of branding relates to way of understanding a role of stakeholders, a nature of the destination, and ownership and management of the brand in the branding process.

1) *Product-bound branding* is consistent with 'traditional image building activities' like promoting the favourable images via advertising, and relates to the senders' end, emphasising the message to be sent. This approach understands the destination as a product when questions arise concerning the brand and its ownership. The brand is perceived from actual and potential tourists' perspective (c.f. Burmam *et al.*, 2009 on outside-in perspective).

2) *Corporate branding* in a destination context emphasises the identity perspective in branding process. Involving (multiple) identities of the destination to the process refers thus to inside-out-branding (c.f. Burmam *et al.*, 2009). This perspective acknowledges that a destination is a producer, as well as a product. However, questions arise concerning the management of the brand: legitimacy for defining objectives of the brand strategy, for instance.

3) *Co-created branding* involves the customers and/or other stakeholders and their values to the branding process. Thus, the question of ownership of the brand is not an issue. The destination is both the producer (corporate/organisation) and the product. Furthermore, the different values of the destination, multiple identities, are easier to keep in line in the branding process. This is important especially in tourism destinations that aim to attract people from different cultures.

4) *Identity-based branding* is a philosophy containing holistic understanding of the place. It incorporates both identity-aspect and co-creation that is the stakeholder involvement aspect into the branding process. As a conclusion, the questions of management and ownership are not the issue. The identity is co-created together with the stakeholders. However, this branding philosophy differs from e.g. co-branding term (see e.g. Motion, Leitch and Brodie, 2003) in that it involves all stakeholders not just partner companies but also customers into the brand identity creation process. Branding philosophy may well change in the destination, but the process of change is usually long. It is therefore useful to conduct historical studies whenever possible in this context.

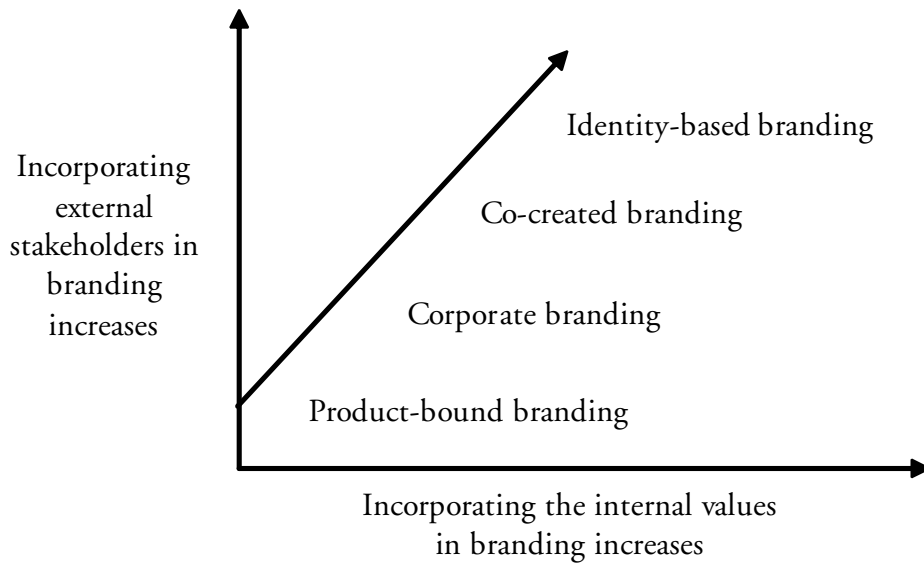


FIGURE 19. Typology of different branding philosophies.

### 5.3 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study presented the empirically grounded framework for destination branding. From the managerial point of view, the study addressed several tools for implementing a holistic brand strategy for a country as a tourism destination, incorporating different stakeholders in the co-creation process. The following Figure 20 concludes the main phases for destination branding process as guidance for practitioners. The more profound model has been illustrated in Chapter 5.1. The transfer from product-bound branding towards other branding philosophies requires, firstly, the values of destination to have been identified and secondly, the identity of the destination to be based on those values. For example, if destination managers adopt co-creation strategies in the branding process, brand values are more likely in line with stakeholder values and DMOs may act in a more strategic and proactive manner.



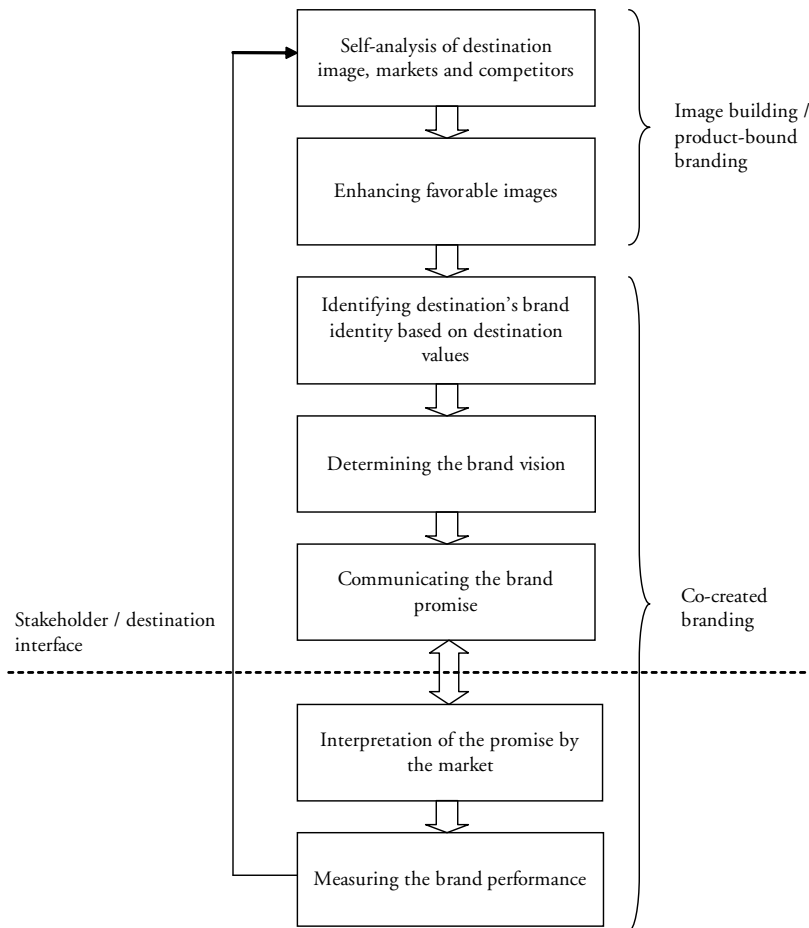


FIGURE 20. Phases of co-created destination branding process.

*This study suggests that without systematic and strategic, pro-active branding activities the image emerges in the market as less manageable and not always desirable. In addition, it is useful to coordinate different image building activities under the same branding strategy. All the image building activities should have follow-up systems, as well. Management of the organisation, e.g. destination marketing organisation, should pay attention to brand knowledge of the employees and their commitment to a brand (c.f Hankinson, 2009). In the country branding context, the commitment of the whole country to the brand is challenging. At the initial phase of the branding process, informing and speaking about brand and having publicity for the process seems to be important. However, the publicity creates expectations and therefore the progress and the results of the branding process should be informed to the different stakeholders. This publicity is useful tool for involving citizens to the branding process and achieving commitment to the brand.*

Identity-based branding, or the 'inside-out perspective' to branding, emphasises the brand owner/manager's role in the process. When clear ownership or management of the brand do not exist as often in tourism destinations is, it would be useful to involve stakeholder perspective into the branding process. Thus, perspectives of both sides may be engaged to the process and blurring roles of producers and customers and dynamics

of the brand become useful. For example, acknowledging the importance of media as an image source, this would mean using the new media and social media, such as blogs, to empower the stakeholders, among them potential tourists and residents. Furthermore, this perspective would limit the possibility of anti-branding (c.f. Kay, 2006) of the destination because the process is ultimately co-created.

Who, then, is the brand manager in the country level context? According to this research, in the initial level of the branding process, management is in the hands of the Finnish Tourist Board and a few stakeholders. The NTO has leveraged brand managing for its primary stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the same time dispelling its own role but still being an important actor. At the country level, there may be many owners of the brand (in fact, we all are), but its management is usually in the hands of a few.

The results emphasised the significance of multiple identities and, in particular, the identity of the NTO in the destination branding process (particularly strategy, structure, culture, communication and stakeholder relationships). This would encourage the practitioners first to look inside and, if necessary, to brand, or re-brand the destination marketing organisation in order to implement successful destination branding (cf. Hanlan and Kelly, 2005). The branding itself also needs to be branded (cf. Anholt, 2007). This may be easier when understanding the *branding as a philosophy* in the destination brand manager's organisation, rather than taking it just as a collection of advertising campaigns or just a brand strategy choice. In this regard the branding philosophy is close to brand orientation concept of the organisation (Urde, 2003).

For managers, it is worth saying that the presented typology of different destination branding philosophies (Figure 19) has in no way been categorised or measured to show 'the best alternative'. Instead, it may be used as a tool for analysing a manager's own practices. For some destinations, or countries, product-bound branding is an adequate approach that works very well. Product-bound branding emphasises images of customers (demand-side) and identity-based branding aims to involve both demand and supply side values to the branding process. The typology suggests that differentiating the image building and the branding is not necessary, as such. The way of implementing branding and moreover the way of understanding the object of branding is more decisive.

Is the country brand unmanageable (cf. Blichfeldt, 2005)? This study gives hints that among several components of the destination identity, *some parts are manageable* (see 2.3). Moreover, it seems that the identity perspective to destination branding allows the possibility of multiple identities in country level branding. Thus, *the inconsistent brand identity in the country branding context is not necessarily an inhibitor*, but rather an advantage for branding. The presence of multiple identities is a fact that should not be reconciled in any case, but it should be utilised while the markets are evolving and fragmented. Understanding multiple identities allows flexibility in providing brand experiences.

In order to ensure successful branding, we need to understand the destination and its numerous components. This promotes the impression that branding is not just commercial advertising campaigns, which is important on the country level where for instance national identity is considered. The most important thing is a new understanding of the branding activities, not the new terminology that is created in an emerging research area. This may help to achieve good publicity and public approval for the branding.

The conclusion to this chapter presents the most useful perspectives from different branding discussions (chapter 2.4) for destination practitioners (Table 9).



**TABLE 9.** Appropriate brand-related concepts for destination branding.

Concept	Example of an author
Image	Boulding (1956)
Brand meaning	Duncan and Moriarty (1997)
Brand value	Murphy (1989)
Brand equity	Aaker (1991), Keller (1993)
Brand experience	Fournier (1998)
Brand as a promise	Kapferer (1994)
Brand relationship	Lindberg-Repo (2001)
Positioning	Ries and Trout (1982)
Wider scope of branding	Balmer and Gray (2003)
Core values	Urde (1999)
Value system	Urde (2003)
Corporate identity	Olins (1989)
Multiple stakeholders	Balmer (2001)
Organisation-wide support	King (1991)
Strategic importance	Shoker <i>et al.</i> (1994)
Wider temporal dimension	Hatch & Schultz (2003)
Challenging consistency of the brand and communications	de Chernatory and Segal-Horn (2003)
Brand as a holistic experience	de Chernatory and Cottam (2005)
Loose or tight style of brand management	de Chernatory (2001)
Brand as an ethos of the organisation	de Chernatory and Cottam (2005)
Core values as embedded in the culture	Edvardsson, Enquist & Hay (2006)

## 5.4 EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

In the following chapter I evaluate first the conceptual contribution of the study and second, the research process involved. According to Myers (2009), by conducting single case studies, we are able to learn about the phenomenon in a wider sense. The key is having an interesting, convincing case to study. The lack of empirical data of country branding processes is evident due to the often limited access and novel nature of the study area. Accordingly, this case of Finland and the Finnish Tourist Board is interesting and valuable in its own right (cf. Stake, 1995). As Bengtsson and Ostberg (2006) stated, much of the existing research on brand management has focused on the strategies and tactics through which successful brands were built. They claim that “*a lion’s share of this work is of the ‘best practice’ type where descriptions of successful brand building activities are presented and turned into normative accounts of how brand building should take place.*” Thus, the literature on brand management consists of normative frameworks for practitioners (Bengtsson and Ostberg, 2006). It is not an easy task to avoid normative statements when the approach

of theorising in branding research typically focuses on the interface between theory and practice, whilst ensuring managerial relevance (see Brodie and de Chernatony, 2009). In this study, I have tried to approach the data from the perspective that does not produce 'should be' models *per se*, but allows for the possibility of different alternative ways of destination branding. For instance, destination branding is conceptualised to include different *activities*, such as image building, image management, projecting destination image and publicity management. *Furthermore, I suggest that the presented destination branding philosophies may all be possible variations of the branding activity in the different phases of the branding process.*

Brodie and de Chernatony (2009) note that the experience of other management disciplines and, in particular, of organisational theory provide useful tools when theorising about brands. Moreover, they suggest that it would be useful to approach theorising from the perspective of middle-range theories, presented by Merton (1948). With his exposition of the middle-range theory (MRT) concept, Merton proposes that it is possible to utilise different general theories (or paradigms) and 'blend' them into a more applicable and testable mid-range theory. MRTs are based on underlying 'grand' theories and therefore already contain certain assumptions, epistemological 'boundaries' and methodological consequences. According to Saren and Pels (2008) many theories in the marketing discipline are concerned with middle-range issues and concepts. Middle-range theory develops and contributes by combining findings and theories from various disciplines to produce a theory that is inherently interdisciplinary in nature (Saren and Pels, 2008). Arguably, this is a situation with theorising in branding and, especially, in this dissertation.

This study has incorporated several perspectives in branding research, but utilised mostly the interdisciplinary discussion of identities, identity management, and 'traditional' destination image research. It is a wide range of different theories ranging from economic psychology, geography, organisational studies, and marketing. Someone would claim that the approach is eclectic, and not only in a positive sense. As mentioned earlier, the methodological paradigms of this research are also in a way blurred, although the abductive scientific approach of this study is clearly subjectivistic and phenomenological. According to Saren and Pels (2008), at the middle-range level, even multi-paradigmatic research has implications more generally for marketing theory, which is *concerned with specific behaviours and contexts*, as opposed to a 'grand theory' which deals with more generalised abstractions.

This study suggests that context-bound concepts, such as (destination) brand, benefit of interdisciplinary lenses which traditionally are utilised in tourism related studies. The conceptualisations produced through this research would not have been possible without a multidisciplinary approach or blurring the borders of ontological and epistemological assumptions. The concepts of co-created and identity-based branding are evidence of that.

In the following, I evaluate the research process. First, this research report is a result of the abductive logic as a scientific approach. This is not a common way of conducting essay-based, qualitative dissertation within marketing discipline in Finland. Dissertation processes utilising mixed methods, or abductive logic in essay-based thesis, however, have increased in recent years (e.g. Leppäniemi, 2008; Pihlström, 2008). The challenge of an abductively constructed framework in the essay-based dissertation is that the reasoning changes during the qualitative research process due to the constant interaction of the theory and the empirical data. Thus, the essays written in the beginning of the process may have different analytical underpinnings than the essays written towards the end of the process have. This may result in problems in the conceptualisations. Thus, it is important to describe the analytical framework and the chain of evidence profoundly. In this

dissertation, the chosen reporting style has been a useful choice because the research process is now easily recognised from the individual papers. The development of my reasoning during the process is identifiable in them. However, this way of structuring particularly qualitative research report is still innovative and needs to be developed further.

In the case of constructive qualitative research, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) suggest the assessment criterion of 'trustworthiness' with respect to the study, as introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

*Credibility.* Credibility is an assessment criterion that aims to give an answer to the reader's question: why should I trust this study and its results. Credible research involves at least the following: careful planning of the research focus, establishment of suitable concepts for the analysis, ensuring correct data, undertaking a sufficient amount of data processing and analysis, and interpretation of the data (Gummesson, 2000; Sayre, 2001). The concepts analysed were the result of careful interpretation of the existing literature and the data. In my opinion, the typology of the destination branding philosophies and the model of co-created destination branding are functional.

I used data triangulation (Denzin, 1984) in my research in order to cover different aspects of the wide phenomenon studied. In the case study design, it is particularly important to have convincing data. In this study, the main interviewees were managers at different levels, who may have used professional 'brand talk' (see Bengtsson and Ostberg, 2006) but were, nevertheless, the key people with knowledge of the studied activities. Among interviewees were also individuals who have been in different positions within the NTO and therefore possessed different perspectives of the subject. The abundant data obtained during the interviews revealed differences between the interviewees and, thus, may be seen as significant. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data, I read through a large volume of archives and newspaper articles. Several complementary interviews were conducted in Finland and abroad at different phases of the research process. The credibility of this study has been enhanced by the presentation of the preliminary results at various scientific conferences as well at meetings, which were attended by key interviewees or other employees of the NTO. At these occasions, the results and ideas were discussed comprehensively. In addition, I used researcher triangulation (Denzin, 1984): Some of the interviews were conducted together with other researchers and the results were discussed together. Furthermore, almost all the stories written after the interviews were sent to the informants for checking.

The data of this study was gathered over a six-year period (2002-2008), which is a relatively long time for a research process. Since the data gathering ended, I have continued observing what has happened in branding Finland case. In this study, it was useful to gather multiple, rich, data which shed light on several different aspects of the phenomenon. The long research process was intentional for this historical case study.

In the analysing phase, my interpretations are undoubtedly subjective. Different methods like the rhetorical analysis of newspaper data required time as I had to learn the appropriate working method. I know that the representations of newspapers are never accurate mirrors of the 'reality'. In addition, I had to concentrate on keeping the destination level data separate from the DMO level data. This was sometimes challenging with these two being so deeply intertwined. However, this is useful in order to theorise from the case.

*Confirmability.* Confirmability of research assesses to what extent the readers can follow the research process and come to their own conclusions (Gummesson, 2000). I have tried to keep the theoretical framework, the case description, and the case analysis and conclusions separate in order to reveal the chain of evidence to the reader. It is arguably

challenging not to mention the nature of abductive logic, but also the structure of the research report which includes several different research papers and the introduction. I have used illustrative citations or examples of the data particularly in the research papers, and figures presenting my research process in the introduction part to prove my interpretations.

*Transferability.* By assessing the transferability, the researcher shows the degree of similarity between the focal study and the previous research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). This concerns, in particular, the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry are applicable to other contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Furthermore, transferability can be understood in terms of how successful a study is in producing new insights into the phenomenon studied (Tsoukas, 1989). My research is context-bound, not only due to it being a single-case study, but because of the context-bound nature of the branding concept itself. In this study, several contextual contributions are made in destination, on the country branding level. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that transferability of research results is grounded in the case description. The case description is provided in different research papers and specifically in a chapter 3.2. Most of the results and conceptualisations in this study are still very contextual. Particularly interesting from the perspective of transferability is the *typology of (destination) branding philosophies*. It may also contribute to other contexts, particularly in companies where stakeholder perspective is important. Gregory (2007) posed that stakeholder involvement in developing a corporate brand will depend on the nature of the organisation. In a destination, one important characteristic is the question of the ownership of the brand. Same kind of situation may occur within the service brands or in the public sector organisations where the 'object of the brand' is commonly created or owned. In addition, the suggested process model of image building and identity-based branding may be applicable at least also to other contexts that have complex brands, unclear ownership and management relationships, and multiple stakeholders involved. For instance, among public, non-profit organisations would be these kinds of brands.

Throughout the dissertation, I have used the terms DMO and NTO interchangeably. The literature (e.g. Hanlan and Kelly, 2004) suggests that country level branding may differ from branding of smaller destinations. However, the country is often an example of the destination branding (e.g. Hankinson, 2009) which refers to the transferability between these contexts. According to this study, the destination identities and stakeholders are multiple in the country context. Furthermore, in the country level, the ownership and management of the brand are more complex issues than in a smaller destination. The branding processes may still involve same phases in both contexts.

Furthermore, the understanding of the identity as constructing from dynamic components (Figure 13, chapter 2.3) may be transferred to other contexts. According to this study, stakeholders, a reputation and an environment are part of the dynamic destination identity not just management tools (c.f. Balmer, 2008).

*Dependability.* Dependability evaluates the level of neutrality of the researcher and to what extent the study could be replicated and similar results obtained (Sayre, 2001; 45-47). I have aimed to ensure a transparent research process by keeping my data collection and analysis as detailed and descriptive as possible within the restricted space afforded by research papers. In chapter 3, I have described those parts of the research process in which the space in the research papers is limited. The interviews were made in an unconstructed manner and thus, the interviewees had the possibility to express themselves in their own way. In particular, the interviews with key informants were conducted as narrative, conversational, open interviews without a specific structure.

At this point it is important to discuss my changing role as a researcher during the research process. The research process on my part started as a commission received from the local NTO. This has to be noted, although it concerns only the period of the research paper two, and self-analysis stage in the studied process. Later, my role has been more that of an observer, rather than an active participant in the branding process. As a researcher, I have made subjective interpretations along the process, but that is the nature of the chosen scientific approach. During the last couple of years, the 'brand Finland' process has received vast media exposure in Finland. Several celebrities and 'ordinary people' around Finland have commented on the process and especially the established 'brand team'. For me, it has been an interesting situation and a chance to evaluate the results of my reasoning. This only confirms my understanding of country branding as being a sensitive process that involves multiple identities. Whether these identities are involved in the process purposefully or not, they however effect in the backgrounds of the process, possibly as unmanageable. I hope that my reporting style has allowed the reader to follow the research process and my reasoning during this interesting journey in order to evaluate the trustworthiness of this study.

## 5.5 FUTURE RESEARCH

Place branding research has increased significantly during the past few years. The place as a research topic and a context has started to gain interest among marketing and business researchers. This is in stark contrast to as recently as five years ago, when researchers mainly from economical, geographical and sociological backgrounds studied place image issues from their own narrow perspectives. Why have business scholars only adopted this phenomenon to their agendas so recently? One obvious answer, in addition to the increased managerial interest of the past decade, is that corporate branding discussion, in particular, has only gained strong research interest during the current decade (see Ahonen, 2008). It is also interesting to consider places as theory-generating contexts, for instance in marketing discussions. New perspectives especially in services marketing and branding literature, for instance service-dominant logic (e.g. Vargo and Lusch, 2004), brand relationships and brand as an experience literature (e.g. Payne *et al.*, 2009) would benefit of a multi-stakeholder context of the destination. The tourism destination itself involves the experience element.

This study attempts to use a destination for the theory-generation in the emerging *identity-based corporate branding discussion*. The studied research area is indeed multidisciplinary. This opens up several new insights for further study. Among most interesting areas yet to be studied in this context are brand equity and brand architecture (see e.g. Dinnie, 2008). The brand architecture perspective, in particular, relates strongly to the discussions in this dissertation, more specifically to the structure component of the destination identity, but is not yet fully conceptualised here. Another interesting area beyond place branding discussion is the idea of loose and tight brand management of service branding (de Chernatony, 2001). In place branding, these ideas would be particularly highly applicable. As previous literature suggested (e.g. Hankinson, 2004; Hankinson, 2007), management of different stakeholder groups and relationships within them also occurred as an important action of the DMO in this study. This prompted the question of the appropriateness of the 'normative assumption' of a single identity of a destination and the inconsistency in brand identity as a positive phenomenon of place brand-

ing. This view is emerging as a discussion topic in non-profit organisations (Waeraas, 2008). Finally, the increasing amount of often theoretical literature exists within corporate branding, destination branding and corporate communications research. This study has presented a single case study for increasing empirical and theoretical understanding of the branding and, in particular, the destination branding. There are still several topics to study empirically, among them how the proposed branding typology would work in other contexts, such as the service or corporate context. Creating a quantitative measure for branding philosophies would help in determining and further conceptualising the brand equity or brand orientation (cf. Urde, 2003). It would also help us to know how to utilise the inconsistency of the brand identity in different markets, and how to utilise all stakeholders in the creation of the brand profoundly. Finally, it would also be interesting to test the proposed image building/identity-based branding model in other contexts. It is important to recognise that although the identities may vary across different stakeholders, brand management continues to be needed. The philosophy for that activity defines the way of implementing it.



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# APPENDIX 1

## Interviews made

	Interviewee	Interviewee's position	Type of contact	Date	Duration	Interviewers
1.	Alakulppi	Former manager at Finavia, Rovaniemi	interview	2006	2,5 h	Author +two researchers
2. (two)	Sirens	Tour operator in Lapland	interview, e-mails	2006	3 h	Author +two researchers
3. (two)	Taimitarha & Laukala	Former managers in FTB	interview	2006	2 h	Author +two researchers
4. (two)	Melamies & Boxberg	Former managers in Lapland tourism marketing organisation	interview	2005	2 h	Another researcher
5. (two)	Balza & Lind	Manager and product manager in FTB London office	interview, e-mails	2006	2,5 h	Author +other researcher
6.	S. Thaker	Tour Operator in Britain	interview, e-mails	2006	4,5 h	Author +other researcher
7.	S. Mitchell	Tour Operator in Britain	interview, e-mails	2006	2 h	Author +other researcher
8.	T. Feinberg	Former employee at British tour operator, currently at Finnish tour operator	interview	2005	2 h	Another researcher
9.	C. Mitchell	Tour Operator in Britain	interview, e-mails	2005	2 h	Another researcher
10.	P. Perheentupa	Marketing manager in FTB	interview	2005	1,5 h	Another researcher
11.	T. Hänninen	Project manager, media relations at FTB	interview, e-mails	2006-2007	1,5 h	Author +other researcher
12.	P-R Vatanen	Former head manager at FTB	interview	2007	3 h	Author +other researcher
13.	J. Lehtonen	Head manager at FTB	Interview, e-mails	2007	1,5 h	Author
14.	M. Finne	Marketing assistant at FTB, London	e-mails	2006	-	Author
15.	R. Muller	Marketing manager, media relations, FTB	e-mails	2006	-	Author
16.	A. Kanerva	Tour operator, Lapland	Phone-interview	2007	0,5 h	Another researcher
17.	J. Tulppo	Tour operator, Lapland	interview	2007	2 h	Another researcher

18.	J. Niva	Tour operator, Lapland	interview	2007	2 h	Another researcher
			<b>Together</b>		<b>34,5 h</b>	

## APPENDIX 2

### List of secondary data used in empirical study

#### Brochures and documents:

British press articles about Finland, Finnish press articles, documents from FTB:  
marketing plans, tentative branding plan, itineraries for press and tour operators,  
brochures,

#### British press articles about Finland:

Year: 1984: 3 articles (summer)

Year 1985: 18 (winter), 16 (summer)

Year 1986: 3 (winter)

Year 2001: 155 articles (analyzed in details in research paper 3 and 4)

#### Finnish press articles:

Lapin Kansa, regional newspaper, years 1982-1993: 53

#### Marketing plans and material from Finnish Tourist Board:

- Marketing plans (Finnish Tourism Board): years 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 (after this year, no marketing plans available)
- Marketing strategy (Finnish Tourist Board): year 1985
- Finnish Tourism Board's Action Strategy 2001-2003 (updated 12.9.2001 and 13.12.2002)
- Finnish Tourism Board's Action Strategy 2004-2007 (updated 15.9.2003)
- Finnish Tourism Board's Summer Tourism Strategy 2004-2006
- Finnish Tourism Board's Marketing Communications Strategy (Finland's Summer 2004-2006 (Summer in Finland. Refreshing Journey)
- Finnish Tourism Board's Winter Communication Positioning 2006 (Power point-presentation): Refreshing Umbrella.
- FTB's Web-sites during the whole research process: visual identity and "Jaakon palsta –columns"

#### Branding material from Finnish Tourist Board:

- Tentative branding plan for Finland (2007)
- Action plan for Branding Finland (Moilanen & Rainisto 2007)
- Finland's national tourism strategy year 2006 (Ministry of Trade and Industry)

#### Meetings, seminars: observation and material

- Meeting: Spring 2007: FTB; Saraniemi, Lehtonen, Vesterinen.
- Meeting: Spring 2007, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Public relations department; Saraniemi, Parikka
- Launching Brand Finland seminar August 2007, Helsinki, Wanha Satama

## APPENDIX 3

### Interviewing themes

The interviews were conversational, the specific questions here were not asked just like they are here.

**British tour-operators:** (the themes with Finnish tour operators and former manager at Finavia were the same, although not as specific questions as here were posed).

1. Story of Christmas in Lapland product?
  - Products of the firm concerning Finland/Other products
  - Target markets
  - What kind of marketing tools are used to promote the Finland products in Britain?
2. Branding destination Finland?
  - Your image of Finland? What do you think it is in Britain in general?
  - How familiar people are to Finland in Britain?
  - What does branding (destination) means to you?
  - What are the unique associations referring Finland?
  - Differentiating Finland? (comparing e.g. Nordic Countries)
  - What is the brand promise of your Finland products?
  - What do you sell to your customers?
  - Do you sell Finland, Lapland or Christmas?
  - Future of marketing Finland in Britain?

### Finnish tourist board, London office:

1. Christmas product
  - Would you tell your own story concerning Christmas tourism?
  - Your role in product development?
  - What do you remember about the roles of different actors?
  - What was the meaning of Concorde for development of tourism in Lapland?
  - What have been the marketing activities of the London office?
2. Finland image and branding
  - Typical marketing activities of the London office?
  - How has marketing changed during the years?
  - How planned the marketing activities have been?
  - How much the office could impact their marketing activities?
  - How do you follow markets and competitors?
  - How the Finland image has developed in the British market, why?
  - What do you think branding is?
  - Do you know what is the brand promise of Finland at the moment in Europe?
  - How Finland differ e.g. from other Scandinavian countries?
  - How familiar Finland is in Great Britain?
  - What kind of co-operation do you do with stakeholders: tourism firms, authorities, tourism organisations, other industries in Finland?

- What kind of marketing mix do you use? PR, media visits and relationships, advertising, personal selling, fairs, what else
- What is most important part in marketing mix?
- What is your perception of significance of controlled / uncontrolled communication?
- What about emotional / personification of marketing?
- Who are your target markets? What kind of people they are?
- How you see the future of Finland in the British market? What should be done?

### **Managers in Finnish Tourist Board:**

- Would you tell freely your background and your working period in FTB?
- How would you describe FTB as an organisation and as a working community during that period?
- How the marketing of Finland is/was organised in that time?
- What kind of planning of tourism marketing was and what kind of objectives there were?
- What were the marketing activities and what were the focus areas in that time?
- What kind of brochures FTB had that time, what were the objectives of them?
- How and where the desirable Finnish image was defined?
- When at first time brand was mentioned?
- How would you understand the term brand?
- What issues you find important impacting on Finland image?
- Have there been changes in this image during your time on FTB, and what might have caused these changes?