Our and their identity

The concept of organisational identity among Swedish wine importers

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Summary

This explorative study address the concept of organisational identity described by Albert & Whetten and takes their concept from the individual level to the industry level. When doing so the lack of empirical research and theoretical knowledge within this area becomes clear. Although an unexplored area we argue that if Albert & Whetten interpreted, the members’ perception to an organisational level we believe that it is also possible to aggregate the perceptions of the members/managers to an inter-organisational/industry level. When taking the identity to the industry level questions like, who are we at an inter-organisational level or with other words is there an industry identity and how does the industry identity affect the actions within an industry?

In this thesis, we will try to fill this gap of knowledge and contribute to theoretical concepts of industry identities, by gathering empirical data to substantiate the concept of industry identity. We will try to fill the theoretical gap concerning identities within an industry; explaining the content of these identities and how they are defined, in line with the contribution by Albert & Whetten, the same way as individuals organisational identity arises. Whenever he or she asks the question, who are we and what kind of business are we in (Albert & Whetten 1985), it is the same way as for an organisation within an industry to ask questions like – which industry do I belong to and what kind of industry are we in. The processes stressed by Hatch & Schultz also raises questions like how does the industry identity affect the interactions/actions between identities within an industry or how does the actions by one identity affect another identity within an industry? One industry that can be assumed to have developed an inter-organisational identity over time, due to a long history and clear cultural anchoring the last 10-years has been faced with both radical change and crisis is the Swedish alcohol industry. The empirical data in this study is based on eight semi-structured telephone interviews with importers (managers or top team) in the Swedish alcohol industry.

Consequently, we approach this explorative study by stating the following question; Is there an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry, and if so, what is the content of this identity and how does this identity affect the actions taken within the industry? The main purpose is to answer the question stated in this thesis by; to describe the central and distinctive characteristics/aspects of the Swedish alcohol importers identity and to find commonalities and differences within these industry identities. To relate to these central and distinctive aspects of the industry identity in relation to the actions taken by the organisations within the industry.

The conclusion of this thesis is; yes, there is an industry identity based on two orientations; the product or market orientation and the content of these identities are based on how their importers believe that you as an importer should act in selling wine to the customers. Further conclusion is that; yes, industry identity (i.e. product or market) does affect action or rather some types of actions.

The possibilities to extend and further explore this industry seem endless. The changes in the industry and the settings of the environment that it exists in are continuously and a constant on-going process even though Sweden still has a monopoly. Our study has raised many questions that would be interesting to investigate in another study, for example if these two approaches can co-exist or if one of them would be dominant. Or if they actually need each other.
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Appendix I: Project description for respondents (Swedish)
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1. Introduction to the theoretical area of organisational identity and the Swedish alcohol industry

1.1 The Concept of Organisational Identity.

The concept of Organisational Identity has received considerable attention by researchers during the years and although it is a young research area it is perceived as an important factor for organisations to acknowledge. The groundbreaking research of organisational identity was made by Albert & Whetten (1985) and the authors stress that the identity of an organisation lies in the coherent perception of the members concerning evaluation of three concepts constructing the identity; the central character of the organisation, distinctive which means how the organisation differ from others in ways of for example management and thirdly the continuity character (enduring characteristics) like the ability to be flexible in the organisation. (Albert & Whetten 1985) Further researchers that has contributed to the research area of organisational identity is the research by Ashforth & Mael (1989). Ashforth & Mael argue that organisational identity is a social construction of the organisation and that it represents the members’ definitions and perceptions of themselves in relation to other organisations. (Ashforth & Mael 1989)

The main contribution, from the above-mentioned authors, to the theoretical development and the empirical research in the area of organisational identity are at the individual level/organisational level. How the individual relates, creates his or her organisational identity and how the identity affects the internal processes. Hatch & Schultz (2002) also base their research at the organisational level, but they argue that organisational identity not only being the identification phase by the members of the organisation. It is a dynamic process constructed by internal-and external actors and that an organisation is not a single entity, it is evolved by a never-ending interaction of processes. (Hatch & Schultz 2002)

When addressing the concept of organisational identity described by Albert & Whetten and taking their concept from the individual level to the industry level the lack of empirical research and theoretical knowledge within this area becomes clear. Organisational identity at an inter-organisational level/industry identity, how do organisations relates and creates its inter-organisational identity within an industry is almost an unexplored area of research. The inter-organisational identity of organisations are definitely an under researched area, but there are however authors that have acknowledged the inter-organisational identity of organisations. Peteraf & Shanley (1997) argue that it is possible and fruitful to study organisational identity on the inter-organisational level. The authors research is pure conceptual and deals with strategic groups within an industry, an inter-organisational identity at a lower level of aggregation than the industry level. Further Huemer et al (2004) contributes to the area of inter-organisational interaction with the concept of networks and deals with an inter-organisational grouping not aligned with an industry, rather with the value chain and their research is also pure conceptual.

Although an unexplored area we argue that if Albert & Whetten interpreted, the members perception to an organisational level we believe that it is also possible to aggregate the perceptions of the members/managers to an inter-organisational/industry level. When taking the identity to the industry level questions like, who are we at an inter-organisational level or
with other words is there an industry identity and how does the industry identity affect the actions within an industry? In this thesis, we will try to fill this gap of knowledge and contribute to theoretical concepts of industry identities, by gathering empirical data to substantiate the concept of industry identity. We will try to fill the theoretical gap concerning identities within an industry; explaining the content of these identities and how they are defined, in line with the contribution by Albert & Whetten, the same way as individuals organisational identity arises. Whenever he or she asks the question, who are we and what kind of business are we in (Albert & Whetten 1985), it is the same way as for an organisation within an industry to ask questions like – which industry do I belong to and what kind of industry are we in. The processes stressed by Hatch & Schultz also raises questions like how does the industry identity affect the interactions/actions between identities within an industry or how does the actions by one identity affect another identity within an industry?

1.2 The Swedish Alcohol Import Industry.

One industry that can be assumed to have developed an inter-organisational identity over time, due to a long history and clear cultural anchoring the last 10-years has been faced with both radical change and crisis is the Swedish alcohol industry. The first major challenge for the actors within the alcohol industry was in 1995 when Sweden joined the European Union and the deregulation of the alcohol industry was a fact. The stable set of boundaries and the rules of how to interact changed for the actors in the alcohol import industry. The importers increased rapidly and in January 1999, 320 firms held licenses as importers in the alcoholic industry in Sweden. (Baldwin & Bengtsson 2004) Today in 2005 the Folkhälsoinstitutet receive approximately 400 applications for licenses every year and the number of firms having a licence in 2005 is about 695. (Skatteverket Heiskanen; 2005-04-05) Corruption is the second immense and recent challenge for the Swedish alcohol industry and about three importers within the industry are prosecuted for bribery and the debate is in its most active face today and will be until the whole corruption scandal is over. (www.svd.se; 2004-04-27)

Baldwin & Bengtsson (2004) have studied the alcohol import industry in Sweden over its deregulation and in their study; they indicate the existence of an inter-organisational or industry identity. However their study focus on the emotional base and the competitive interaction of the core actors/importers in the industry and not what is the content of an industry identity in the alcohol import industry might be, in terms of what is central, distinctive and enduring characteristics of an industry identity. (Baldwin & Bengtsson 2004) The study by Baldwin & Bengtsson showed, although major change like the deregulation the patterns of competitive interaction did not change much. However the severe bribery and corruption scandal can be assumed to have affected the import industry more in ways of how the industry views and answers the questions, who are we and what kind of industry are we in? The Swedish alcohol import industry seems to be a relevant industry to study in order to provide empirical findings to the issue of inter-organisational identity.

Consequently, we approach this explorative study by stating the following question:
1.3 Research Question

Is there an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry, and if so, what is the content of this identity and how does this identity affect the actions taken within the industry?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose is to answer the question stated in this thesis by:

To describe the central and distinctive characteristics/aspects of the Swedish alcohol importers identity and to find commonalities and differences within these industry identities, this in order to look after an identity and see how it is formed.

1.5 Delimitations

The Albert & Whetten definition of organisational identity as what is central, distinctive and enduring about an organisation implies studying identities, and their creation and recreation over time. The enduring characteristics are interpreted as identity over time and the stability over time and this lies beyond the scope of this study, who’s prime purpose is to discover whether or not there is an inter-organisational identity at the level of the industry. This study therefore delimits its search of identity to the central and distinctive characteristics, and their effect on action at a relatively single point in time. When the enduring characteristics are not considered we try to get a wider perspective on industry identity by adding another dimension to the thesis, what actions the organisations take within the industry. By adding this dimension we stay focused within one single point in time, operationalizes the identity and it also gives us the possibility to get a further understanding in how these actions are affected by the industry identities.

1.6 Background of the Swedish alcohol industry of today

The five former legal monopolies covering the production, import, and distribution (monopoly held by Vin & Sprit AB) and sale of alcohol (monopoly right held by Systembolaget) was reconstructed since they were not consistent with the spirit of European law and the Swedish Parliament introduced a new alcohol law in December 1994. This law removed four of the five monopolies, only keeping the Systembolaget retail monopoly for health reasons. A new governmental authority was established, The National Alcohol Board, to administer and to supervise the system of licenses and the new organisations/importers on the market.

2. Theoretical method
The theoretical method describes what personal knowledge and preconception we as researchers take with us and will colour this thesis, and what theoretical approach we take within this study.

2.1 Choice of subject

Food, wine and the environment that surrounds it have been a great interest for both of the authors, and it has taken many different paths during the years. Our interest concerning the Swedish alcohol industry has gone from practical experience working at restaurants to theoretical studies at the Restaurant School at the University of Umeå, with a Bachelor Degree in Restaurant Management. To make a study within the alcohol industry was obvious for us and had been in our mind for a long time when planning for the Master Thesis.

The last year of studies at the Master Program in Entrepreneurship and Dynamic Business Settings and the major changes that the alcohol industry and the importers are facing, made us decide to stay within the Swedish alcohol industry but with a focus on the industry identity. The Swedish alcohol industry and the industry identity of importers is an interesting area of study because them, as organisations being a newcomers within the industry since 1995 and the recent bribery scandals. It is also an interesting area of study for us as researchers since we have an objective of one day working in this environment and by doing this study gain a wider perspective about the Swedish alcohol import industry.

2.2 Preconceptions and how we approach the research process

The starting point of this research will be from the preconceptions we have developed through the years from experiences and education and the prejudice developed through subjective perceptions of the area we are about to approach. It is important to know how our preconceptions and experiences will affect the study and from what base we are about to approach the study. (Holme & Solvang 2001)

The approach of this thesis is taken from the platform of knowledge that we stand on and the preconceptions that we have constructed throughout all our life. An old saying is that “No knowledge is knowledge until you have experienced it”, but the human being still structure gathered data into facts and knowledge, we do to, data and information become “the truth” no matter how critic you try to be. The Bachelor Degree in Restaurant Management from the University of Umeå has set a base for our theoretical understanding about the alcohol import industry. Both authors have a diploma in “Ansvarsfull Alkoholhantering” and this diploma means that we have the history behind the legal and the cultural aspects when buying and selling wine and spirits in Sweden and this will help us in understanding the industry. The studies by Baldwin & Bengtsson (2004) show that history has a major affect and sets the base for interaction within the industry.

The courses in wine and spirits at Umeå University have improved our skills and knowledge about alcohol and this will affect our study in ways of us, as researchers understanding and have very good knowledge about the products that the importers are selling. One of us researchers has the Advanced Certificate from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust in London and is right now as we are speaking studying to the higher Diploma Level within the same trust. This knowledge means that we can more easily get a picture about how their product
portfolio looks like, but it also means that we might draw conclusions about their product and portfolio and miss asking question that a novice would have asked.

Further preconception that we carry with us in this study is the actual experience of working within the industry. One of the authors is working at Systembolaget and has been doing that for the past three years and this has definitely increased the knowledge about importers and the product knowledge from different importers, in ways of what type of wine are they selling and from what producer the wine comes from. This affects the study in ways of we having preconceptions about their portfolio of wines and if they focus on fine wine or commodity wines, which in turn could be a hint of what industry identity they want to communicate. These preconceptions will also affect how we interpret the central and distinctive characteristics of an organisation within an industry but also how we perceive and interpret how their identity affects the actions they take. This because our experience and product knowledge make us analyse these characteristics on another level that a novice would do.

The prejudice we have about the Swedish alcohol industry is developed from the recent articles about corruption scandals in the alcohol industry that has been handled frequently in media over the last year and this will evidently shape our preconceptions how things work in the business. These preconceptions will definitely affect the way we analyse our empirical findings in this study and because of our knowledge about the importers and the industry with the corruption scandal affects us in ways of we having a negative attitude and some suspiciousness towards the industry.

For us to be able to overcome this negativism we have tried to concentrate on the findings and the facts presented in the empirical chapter. Furthermore, the manual with question has helped us to be more objective by asking more questions with describing characters and asking following questions on how they interpret things and how this affect their organisations. Like for example how they experience the industry and if there has been any change that has shaped their organisation and these questions naturally lead the importers into the topics they wanted to discuss. All the importers mentioned the bribery corruption scandal as a force affecting the industry.

2.3 The scientific research method

Our research process started with the preconceptions described above and during the research process these preconceptions gets a further understanding and is further developed and get a new meaning through a continuous process of perceptions throughout the research. We would argue that we throughout the research process belong to the hermeneutical research tradition because the central dimension for us is our preconceptions, interpretations and to gain an understanding about the alcohol industry (Johansson 2003).

Since our purpose is to describe the central and distinctive characteristics of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry and find commonalities, differences and how these characteristics affect the actions the importers take, it is important to involve the members of the organisation. These interaction and identification processes are a social construct based on relations (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) and this study within the alcohol industry is created by the actors and the environment that creates their future and reality. (Halvorsen 1992) This study focuses on the alcohol import industry and has as an aim to get a deeper understanding
through the perception and description from the actors within that industry. Therefore, to gain a further understanding the positivistic research method is not valid for us.

We do not want to and are not able to generalize, since the research area of organisational identity is young research area and there is lack of theories regarding inter-organisational identity within an industry, we are unable to go from theory and to find proof in the real world since we cannot verify if the knowledge collected if it is true or false. (Lundahl & Skärvad 1999) We are trying to create deeper understanding and to interpret the findings in order to find indications of industry identities within an industry.

2.4 Approach to theories

To visualize the researchers way of approaching theories and the research area two methods of approach are often mentioned, deductive and inductive. (Holme 2001) This study’s purpose leads us to, not being able to approach the area of study by forming a hypothesis and find affirmation in the empirical world for this hypothesis, the deductive method. It is impossible for us to form a hypothesis since there is lack of research in the alcohol import industry concerning the area of organisational identity and that the research area of organisational identity is a young area of research, but also since there is a lack of research in the area of inter-organisational identity within the Swedish alcohol industry. The inductive method belongs by tradition to the hermeneutic research tradition and is relevant for us since this is an explorative study.

Further, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the theoretical area of industry identity by approaching the empirical world (Halvorsen 1992) and then the theory is expressed through our understanding and observation from the area and is evolved into the theoretical framework. Further indications that the inductive method are in line with our study, is that we are doing research in a new industry or in a field that lack research (Halvorsen 1992) and that we approached the empirical world with no clear hypothesis, with a vague and uncertain problem in our study (Halvorsen 1992). In this study the inductive method gives us the opportunity to from the problem stated in the thesis, go out and study the alcohol import industry, answer the question if there is an industry identity, describe the possible content of this identity and finally describe how this possible identity affect the actions taken within this industry. By answering the stated question in the thesis, we want to contribute to the theoretical area of inter-organisational identity and inter-organisational interactions/actions.

We have not formed a hypothesis based on theories but we argue that through our preconceptions, earlier experiences and empirical knowledge about the industry we can interpret the language of the importers into the area of industry identity. How the organisations describe in what industry they are in and what kind of organisation they are, through the central and distinctive characteristics will help us is answering the stated question of the thesis. Further we will operationalize these characteristics by describing how they affect the actions these identities take in forms of if they are member of an interest organisation and how they view their identity within the alcohol import industry and how they prepare for the future and the future industry identity.
2.5 “The golden middle road”

As researchers it is not viable for us at this stage to go out and study an industry with no indication of in what theoretical areas the study should focus on, and to mainly perform an inductive study we would not know what theoretical area to focus on. We formed a hypothetic pattern or a suggestion for a theoretical approach when approaching the empirical world and then the theoretical framework was developed from the concepts of industry identity. The advantages of this approach, the golden middle road, abduction, is that the researchers are not tied to being strict inductive and deductive and keep the researchers on track but is not tied to a theoretical framework. The disadvantages are that the researchers can loose the wide perspective, get stuck in previous experiences and loose some important perceptions. (Patel 2003)

The hypothetic pattern introduced us to the area of organisational identity; different perspectives on organisational identity, recent and previous research in the area of organisational identity, organisational identity as a social process and inter-organisational interactions of strategic groups. Our approach to theories has been a process from the research area of organisational identity into empirical research in the alcohol industry in Sweden, back to form a theoretical framework and apply the theories into practice and to contribute with empirical findings within the research area. The study is definitely affected by our approach to theories since we have been able to construct the theoretical framework after our empirical findings and it has also affected us in ways of us not being tied to a set framework. When entering the empirical world the concept of organisational identity has definitely helped us to stay focused within the area of organisational identity. As mentioned before, both the authors has experience from the Swedish alcohol industry and we believe that using the abductive way has broadened our perspective instead of shrinking it. We have had the possibility to investigate a “new” theoretical area and create a deeper understanding for how concepts are formed and later see if these concepts can be applied on the industry that we have knowledge about.

2.6 Choice and gathering of theories

To be able to answer if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol industry, what the content of this identity is and how this identity affects the actions taken within the industry, we started by gathering sources and articles in the area of organisational identity. The gathering of theories continued by identifying information about previous studies within the area of organisational identity and the Swedish alcohol industry. The studies that we identified has focused their research in the area of competition and the emotional base of the actors within the industry (Baldwin & Bengtsson 2004), but also in a Master Thesis from the University of Stockholm focused on the Swedish alcohol industry but in the area of marketing (2004). This research focus on organisational identity but not at an industry level, but these articles has deepened our understanding about the Swedish alcohol industry and the article by Baldwin & Bengtsson in 2004 definitely acknowledge the importers and how they define other actors within the Swedish alcohol industry. Baldwin and Bengtsson give us indications that organisational identity can be studied at an inter-organisational level within the alcohol industry. This has helped to focus our study at the inter-organisational level and organisational identity.
We started to search on the Business Source Premier and at the Emerald Full Text Database at the Library at the University of Umeå and search for articles in the area of organisational identity we also did a search at known Publications like Strategic Management journal. Words like inter-organisational interaction, organisational identities, social identity theory and strategic groups was used as search words. We decided only to use scientific articles for our theoretical framework to be able to be as upfront in the area of study and we have also tried to use the seminal source for our theoretical framework. However, it seems that the most authors in the area of organisational identity refer to known researchers like Albert & Whetten and they base their studies from previous research in the area. All the authors do cross-references and that has made it hard for us to separate and to always use the premier source. We used this cross reference system as a way of searching for more articles and to get further knowledge about what researchers have been active in the area of organisational identity and where they got their inspiration from.

2.7 Critique toward theories

It is important to be critical to the theoretical concepts that are the base for the theoretical framework and our base when entering the empirical world and in this study it is the scientific articles in the area of organisational identity. The theoretical concepts and their sources must be analysed and questioned by their truth, relevance and trustworthiness and this ‘truth’ is decided by their independence, logical content and closeness. (Lundahl & Skärvad1999)

The hypothetic pattern of our Master Thesis is built on relevant articles because of their scientific research contribution to the area of organisational identity. The theoretical framework is based on seminal articles within the area of organisational identity, which gives this study a higher level of credibility because we have aimed for the original source. Although we want to raise some criticism towards these sources like for example that the majority of all of the articles in the theoretical framework are based on research from American authors and their way of analysis organisational identity are affected by the American industrial and environmental settings. The American researches focus on social processes within the firm and since the majority of the sources are from American researchers there is a chance that our focus we take is in the line of their research. Although the research on inter-organisational interactions in an intra-industry setting will give a wider picture in the area of organisational identity and give balance for the study by adding external factors as the base for industry identity.

However, using Hatch and Schultz has given us a wider perspective since Schultz is situated at the University in Copenhagen, Denmark and she has hopefully brought a Scandinavian perspective into the work. Even if Schultz is Danish, the Scandinavian countries are closely related and therefore we believe that the article by Hatch and Schultz has broadened the perspective. Further criticism are that the scientific articles and the sources being used in the theoretical framework is based on research done between the 1980’s and 1990’s and some from 2004. There is a chance that these sources are outdated and that we have missed some evolutions and development that has been written about in other scientific articles but since the material in the field is somewhat scares, we deem that these sources are in the front line. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, many of the recent researchers refers back to Albert and Whetten, it is our believe that by using the preliminary source we will come close to the
origin of the researchers intent with his work and that the source still is actual since many recent researchers still refers to him.
3. Theoretical Framework

Since the purpose for this study is to describe what the central and distinctive aspects of the Swedish alcohol importers identity and to find commonalities and differences within the industry identities. Further purpose is to address these central and distinctive aspects of the industry identity in relation to the actions taken by the organisations within the industry, it is important for us as researchers to introduce the reader to the area of organisational identity, as a cornerstone of this thesis into the industry level. In this chapter we construct a framework that can be applied when trying to find industry identities, how they arises and how these identities affect the actions taken by the organisations within the industry. This model/framework we take with us when analysing the empirical findings about the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry. The first part will explain organisational identity at an individual level since the concept of central and distinctive characteristics from Albert & Whetten is a cornerstone in identifying industry identities. The identity formation will also be acknowledged at an individual level and finally we will take the central and distinctive characteristics to the industry level and explain the actions these identities might take within an industry in relation to their identities.

3.1 What is organisational identity?

The area of organisational identity is a young research area and has historically been treated as a “loosely coupled set of ideas “(Albert & Whetten 1985) and to be able to understand what the organisational identity is, different researchers has contributed with concepts on how organisational identity is defined and formed. The research done on organisational identity has normally taken a focus within organisations, on the organisational level, and this is also a fact for the groundbreaking research from Albert & Whetten.

In 1985 when Albert & Whetten published their findings they offered a tool/concept for researchers to use when analysing and defining the identity of the organisation. Albert & Whetten stress that the organisational identity consist of those things that are essential and important for the members of the organisation; central, the uniqueness of the organisation; distinctive, and how the organisation persist over time; enduring. The question, what kind of organisation is this? Is answered by the central, distinctive and enduring characteristics and they will reveal the identity of the organisation. The central character criterion is individual for each organisation and different organisation will define their central characteristics depending on what type of questions they are answering, who answers the questions and what environment they are acting within. Examples of the central criterions are the product mix, financial status and strategic goals. (Albert & Whetten 1985)

The distinctive character is related to identification, because the members identify themselves in comparison to other organisations. The central and distinctive character is somewhat overlapping because an important element of an organisation can be something that distinguishes it from other organisations, for examples the core activities of the firm. The distinctive identity might be culture, management, and entrepreneurial activities and is very heterogeneous and diverse from each organisation. Distinctive characteristics of an organisation are communicated through signs and symbols like, logos, product packaging, the location and appearance of the corporate headquarter. (Albert & Whetten 1985)
The research by Albert & Whetten is important for our study since it provides us with a framework to enter the empirical world and it makes the industry identity of organisations more visible for us as researchers, by describing the central and distinctive characteristics of the importers. Since our study is within one single point and the enduring characteristics are interpreted as identity over time it is not relevant for our study.

3.2 How is organisational identity formed and identified?

We take with us the framework of the central and distinctive characteristics from Albert & Whetten when proceeding into the area of organisational identity. However this framework does not give the whole picture of what organisational identity is and we need more information on how the organisation communicate and interact with others in forming their identity since this is also acknowledged by researchers as part of the identity formation or how organisational identities arises.

3.2.1 Identity Formation and Identification

The formation of organisational identity is according to Ashforth & Mael done by a specific form of social identification and that Social Identification Theory, SIT, developed by a social-psychological perspective can be applied to the area of organisational identity. According to the SIT organisations tend to form their identity by classifying other organisations into them and others, into social categories like organisational membership or groups and these groups tend to differentiate the organisation from other groups. The organisational identity derives from a set of shared understanding, values, and attitudes of the members within the organisation; the prestige of a group/membership will increase the identification process of an organisation, and that the awareness of out-group or other organisations intensifies the awareness and the identification of one self. Membership of a group/group formation is highly associated with similarity, common history, proximity, shared goals or threats, interpersonal interaction and superiority over the low-status groups. (Ashforth & Mael 1989) The interaction between organisations are a strong impetus for organisational identity formation and Albert & Whetten also acknowledge that the identity of organisations is constructed through interactions with other organisations when organisations classify or distinguish themselves into schemes/ groups and identify themselves within that group. (Albert & Whetten 1985)

The research by Ashforth & Mael gives us further indications that the identification process is definitely a part of the identity formation of organisations and that the organisational identity is formed in interaction with other organisations. From the framework provided by Albert & Whetten we add to our findings that the interaction and internal identification process by the members is important when describing the identity of the importers and that organisations identify other organisations by distinguish them into others, groups and memberships. However the identification is still only a statement from the previous research and for us as researchers to get a more colourful picture of the importers we argue that the interaction between organisations must be acknowledged and that how these interactions occur within an industry.

Hatch & Schultz stress that the interaction between organisations is a process and that organisational identity is created, maintained, changed by the interaction with others and that
it is not only a statement, “the identity mirrors the image of others”. Hatch & Shultz continues to point out that organisational identity; “needs to be theorised in relation to both culture and image in order to understand how internal and external definitions of organisational identity interact” (Hatch & Schultz 2002; 991). (Hatch & Schultz 2002)

Hatch & Schultz acknowledge that many organisational researchers make references to Mead’s theory of social identity, symbolic interactions and they find analogies to Mead’s I and Me and explain which processes that brings them together to create, sustain and change organisational identity. Mead’s theory is important for our study because it explains exactly how the organisations identify themselves as I and Me in interaction with others. The I am when the members’ of the organisation explains their identity by comparing the characteristics of other organisations. “We sell products with quality, but they the others sell what ever comes in their way”. Organisational identity is according to Mead’s the combination of I, (the internal and cultural processes and is interpreted as we), and the Me, (the external and image processes and is interpreted as the others) by Hatch & Schultz. (Hatch & Schultz 2002)

When proceeding and taking with us the framework we have created, using the central and distinctive characteristics and the interaction with others as a part of describing the identity of the importers it is important to acknowledge that the research by Albert & Whetten and Ashforth & Mael have the focus at the inside of the organisation and that is not our focus for our study. Hatch &Schultz take the analysis from the internal perspective and also acknowledge that the external processes are a part of the identity formation. For this study we acknowledge the image process and the external processes that Hatch &Schultz acknowledge as an important part in the organisational identity formation of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry and since the culture involves the internal processes of the members they are not relevant for our study since the focus is on the inter-organisational level. For our study we lack the information about what happens in the interaction, how the interactions occur and how they affect the identity of the organisation since our study aims at describing the identity of organisations within an industry. We take with us Mael’s theory about the definition of we and the others but for us to take the analysis to an inter-organisational level, we stress the importance of gaining more information about the internal-and external processes that are a part of the identity formation.

3.2.2 The internal and external processes in identity formation

We agree with Hatch & Schultz when the authors argue that organisational identity not only being the identification phase by the members of the organisation, it is a dynamic process constructed by internal-and external actors and that an organisation is not a single entity, it is evolved by a never-ending interaction of processes. (Hatch & Schultz 2002) We know by now that the members’ perception, internal processes, are one part of the identity formation but we need more information and create a further understanding about the external processes between organisations that Hatch & Schultz acknowledge as part of the identity formation. For our study, it is important to understand that an organisation is not a single entity and since our focus in this thesis is what the identity of the importers are within an industry. We need more information about the external processes and we need to know whom the others/organisations are and how inter-organisational interactions are a part of the identity formations of organisations to be able to describe the industry identity of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry.
The research by Baldwin & Bengtsson gives us indications that inter-organisational interaction are part in the formation of the organisational identity, that it is possible to analyse the identity formation on an inter-organisational level and get further knowledge about how the interactions affect the organisational identity and the possibility of identifying other identities within an industry. (Baldwin & Bengtsson 2004) Ashforth & Mael also acknowledged that by the identification process it is also possible to identify inter-group relations and group formations and that gives us further indications that the organisational identity of organisations can be formed at an inter-organisational level. (Ashforth & Mael 1989)

We add to our framework that the identity formation is a process of interaction, that the identification process can occur at an inter-organisational level and that other organisations can be identified as we, them and the others. There is definitely evidence that organisational identity can be studied at an inter-organisational level, but we need more information on how we can transfer the framework from Albert & Whetten regarding the central and distinctive characteristics within an industry/inter-organisational level.

3.3 The research of organisational identity at an industry level

There is lack of research in the area of organisational identity and how the identity is formed at an industry level, but inter-organisational interactions and the boundaries of the organisation are gaining more and more attention from researchers and according to Håkansson and Snehota, “No business is an island” (Håkansson & Snehota 1990). Further, Gadde & Håkansson contributes with research on the identity of an organisation, providing a picture of what the company is and it is important to know your identity within an industry or a network because the identity will give indications about your position within that industry. Consequently, other actors within the industry define the industry identity of an organisation from their perceptions of your characteristics. (Gadde & Håkansson 2001)

There is research done in the area of organisational identity at a group level within an industry and this is the research by Peteraf & Shanley, which provides us with an understanding that it is possible to identify organisational identities within an industry and it is possible to analyse how the identities of organisations are formed within an industry. Peteraf & Shanley stress that it is even possible to identify groups with similar identities or indications of similar identities and they are called strategic groups. Peteraf & Shanley only contribute with concepts about organisational identity, but they do not contribute with empirical support for their theories that gives us indications that further empirical research needs to be done. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) The research in the area of organisational identity, how organisational identity can be formed at an industry level and the importance of knowing your identities shows that it is a somewhat unexplored area of research and this gives us further indications that it interesting and fruitful area that needs further research.

3.3.1 Organisational identity at an inter-organisational level

Peteraf & Shanley identifies sub structures/strategic groups within an industry and according the authors “A strategic group identity is a set of mutual understandings, among members of a
cognitive intra-industry group, regarding the central, enduring and distinctive characteristics of the group” (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

The characteristics provided by Albert & Whetten, determining the identity of an organisation is transformed from the shared understandings into a set of mutual understandings among members of the organisations, because the word mutual means that all members can predict the others actions and behaviour and this is not relevant in a cognitive strategic group. We interpret the identification process of we, them and the others at the inter-organisational level as being the identification of an organisation or the identification of groups with similar/dissimilar characteristics and therefore theory regarding group identities is relevant for our study. Further the level of analysis that Peteraf & Shanley have is the same focus that we have; at an industry level, and therefore we can analyse the concepts that they bring forward to our study.

Peteraf & Shanley combine the topic of strategic groups which are an active area in strategic management, often analysed through theories in strategic management like similar operational actions and tactics of organisations and concepts in the area of organisational identity by stressing the importance of micro- and macro level factors affecting the development of groups and their identities. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) Literature and articles based on research in the area of strategic management often refer to Porter definition of strategic groups, “a group within an industry with similar strategies along the strategic dimensions” (Porter 1985 in Peteraf & Shanley 1997). Porter’s definition is important in structural analysis such as the emergence of substructures, and in a study by Feka et al (1997). They map or cluster strategic groups in the Greek dairy industry by using Porters five forces of competition as a skeleton for the analysis. The groups were mapped based on similarities/dissimilarities regarding their strategies and the resources of your organisation; portfolio, position within the industry, relations to suppliers and how you react to threats. (Feka et al 1997)

We agree with the research by Peteraf and Shanley that organisational identity is a strong impetus for the mapping of groups with similar identities, but also for the formation of organisational identities within an industry. The central and the distinctive characteristics can act as a skeleton of analysis and the interaction; inter-organisational interactions (internal and external processes), is where the identity of an organisations is conceptualised. It is important to interpret the organisations perception of itself and others and how they identify other organisations as we, them and the others, as one part of identifying process and defining the boundaries of your organisation.

Peteraf & Shanley research is valuable for our study since their research is within an industry and they take Albert & Whetten’s concept of defining the identity of an organisation and show that it is possible to define what the identity of an organisation is within an industry. We can apply the central characteristics of an organisation as Peteraf & Shanley interprets as the central characteristics of a group, as the central or core relationships or activities and the central traits are features like the size of the firm and product quality. Core relationships and activities are overlapping social networks and common institutional histories.

What is central for an organisation is context-specific and is an outgrowth from the experience in the specific industry. The distinctive characteristics allow members within a group or as we interpret it, an organisation to distinguish between core members and members within the group/industry out in the peripherals. The distinctive characteristics also give
indications on how groups’ characteristics differ from other groups and are supported by mobility barriers that hinder entry by newcomers/outsiders. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

We interpret Peteraf & Shanley strategic group theory also applicable to organisations within an industry (industry identities) and the possibility that by defining a membership of a specific group is the same way that organisations are identified within an industry and since our purpose is to describe the industry identity within an industry we do not have the purpose of defining patters of strategic groups with similar/dissimilar patterns.

3.3.2 Level of analysis/Managers or top team

The level of analysis in this thesis is on an inter-organisational level and therefore it is not relevant to study the members within an organisation and we agree with Peteraf & Shanley when the authors acknowledge that when analysing organisations it is important to understand that organisations does not possess cognitive abilities, but managers do and often the managers or the top management teams cognitive processes are the same as the organisation and is a relevant level of analysis. The top management team or the manager represents the organisation and the more homogeneous the top team is; the more it will form a representative agent of the organisation. If the top team members have been in the same organisation for a long time and have the same mutual understanding and experiences, they will form an even more homogeneous pattern. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) We interpret the managers or top team as a relevant level of analysis for our thesis and our way to find out what the organisational identity of the importers are. With other words, we will interpret the managers or the top team’s perceptions of what are the central and distinctive characteristics of the organisation in trying to identify an industry identity.

3.3.3 Identification processes as a part of the industry identity and how the identity affects the actions taken by the organisations.

The identification processes as a part of the development of an industry identity is brought forward by Peteraf & Shanley, but is described in terms of the development of strategic groups. Since or purpose is to find if there is an industry identity of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry we need to analyse the identity as Peteraf & Shanley identifies but stay within the interaction between organisations and not apply their concept about strategic groups. We believe that their analyses can be applied on our study since it involves the identification process between organisations. The identification processes by the organisation of what is central and distinctive will help us in finding an industry identity but these processes also set the base for competition, interaction and action. Further, these perceptions will affect the organisations and their boundaries in interaction with others at an inter-organisational level. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

The organisations scan the environment and through bounded rationality simplifies their competitors by identify/sort them into groups/organisations and how they differentiate themselves from others. The identification process is however, not only a construct or rationality it is also how the organisations acknowledge the specific activities, behaviours and characteristics, central and distinctive, of other that sets the base for the identity development of in combination with social identification theory. Social learning processes help the organisations to identify what competitors are reliable interaction partners and through these
inter-organisational interactions the organisation make judgement from a “shared pool of knowledge within an industry” (C.F. Huff: 1982 in Peteraf & Shanley 1997). These identification processes also affect in the way they define identifies themselves with other like for example the membership of an organisation but also how they do their daily activities and plan for the future, in other words what actions/operations they take in relation to their identity. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

3.4 Summary of theoretical framework

From the theoretical framework presented in this chapter, we want to emphasize the framework by Albert and Whetten and the authors concept on how organisational identity is defined and formed, answered by the central and distinctive characteristics, when answering if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol industry. Further we want to emphasize the identification process and how organisations communicate their organisation and by that being part in the identity process. The identity process of oneself can be through same history or interpersonal interactions. (Albert & Whetten 1985) It is also important to address how this interaction occur and how do the organisations categorize or which characteristics to the organisations acknowledge, compared to oneself, as part in the identification process. (Ashforth & Mael 1989)

Given that this study is at the inter-organisational level the identification process that are of importance for us are the external processes and what images (characteristics) the organisations acknowledges in others. (Hatch & Schultz 2002) It is also important what the organisations acknowledges as similar to their organisation and what is dissimilar since this affects how they view themselves and how they distinguish themselves from others, and this is a part of defining the boundaries of your organisation. What do the organisations/importers describe as what are central and distinctive characteristics and what activities/actions do they acknowledge within other organisations within the industry is important in defining the organisational identity at an inter-organisational level. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

This summary provide us with a skeleton that we will take with us when analysing the empirical research material gathered within the Swedish alcohol import industry, and it will help us in describing if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry is. The model (fig. 1) is a summary of the concept that can be applied on our study and outlines as a base of our interpretation of an industry identity, the content of this identity and how this identity affect the actions taken within the industry. Our definition of organisational identity at an inter-organisational level is:

- That it is formed by an identification process/image process when defining the central and distinctive characteristics in comparison with other organisations within the industry.
- The central characteristics are interpreted as product mix, membership, core activities, management, location and size of the organisation
- The distinctive characteristics are identified when comparing the central characteristics to other organisation.
- The industry identity affects the actions/operations within an industry for example in ways of being member of an interest group, how they view the future and what activities these identities take for the future.
Figure 1. Model over organisational identity, own construction
4. Practical method

This study is an explorative study and this chapter aim is to introduce the reader to how we have approached the empirical world, by arguing for our methodological approach. Questions like; why the qualitative method is relevant for our study, why we decided to do interviews, why the interviews were done by telephone and why we decided to interview certain respondents will be answered. (Lundahl & Skärvad 1999)

4.1 Methodological approach

With this study we intend to find out if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry is and for us to answer this question stated in the study and to be able to achieve the purpose, the qualitative method is most suitable for us as researcher to approach the reality. The qualitative –and the quantitative approach is used to solve problems and to bring forward new knowledge, but the quantitative method is not relevant for us since this method focus on control and formality that is controlled by the researcher. The qualitative method give us as researchers the opportunity to get a deeper understanding about the research area and it gives us the possibility to get closer to the source that we are about to do research. (Holme & Solvang 1998) Qualitative research are often used in areas where researchers want to get an deeper understanding and are moving towards a more action oriented view which means that it is harder to construct an unambiguous way to define the quality of the work performed. Our approach to knowledge is in line with the hermeneutic view and this is also an incitement for approaching the reality by the qualitative method. (Jensen 1991)

The qualitative method is the approach to the empirical world for us researchers because we want to describe the actors within the alcohol industry, how these actors perform and what actions they take. Numbers and statistic will not give the whole picture of the alcohol industry. Further a quantitative method will not give us the all the information we need to be able to see patterns and indications of organisational identity, A quantitative approach will affect this study in a negative way in ways of us, as researcher will miss the experience and the activities that are unique within the industry, and we will not be able to achieve the purpose and answer the objective of the study. (Holme & Solvang 1998)

4.1.1 Choice of qualitative method

There are different approaches to the empirical world when doing a qualitative study; observations, analysis of documents and interviews. Observation is when the researcher stands outside the empirical world and observes actions and interactions within a setting and is a method used when analysing the behaviour of people. The analysis of documents for example empirical findings about a certain event or something that has happened and the researchers analyse documents like correspondents between actors within a setting. Both these methods are not relevant for us and will not help us approaching the empirical world and describe the identity of the importers because they will not, as the third method, interviews give us the opportunity to find out what the individual importers in the alcohol industry
believes is central and distinctive for their identity within the industry. (Holme & Solvang 1998)

The purpose of doing interviews is for us to collect information and for us to control the direction of what information we want to reach. (Lantz 1993) The respondents use their own language in the interviews and this will give us an understanding of what the manager perceive as central and distinctive characteristics and how the identities affect the actions they take within the industry. If we would use observation and analysis of document as the qualitative method, we would not get the true picture of their industry identity since the identity is formed by interactions with others. (Holme & Solvang 1998)

There are two types of interviews that a researcher can use in a qualitative study; the personal meeting and the telephone interview. The personal meeting has the advantage of we as researchers being able to see body language, the environment of where the respondents acts, eye contact and the possibility to form a relation to the respondent in order to build trust. These characteristics are lost when doing a telephone interview but distance and shortness of time are two important aspects of performing telephone interviews instead of personal meetings. The geographic location was the main reason for committing telephone interviews instead of personal meetings. We as students are located in Umeå and the respondents are mainly located in the south part of Sweden that made it impossible for us to perform the interviews on location, the cost would be too high. Although doing telephone interviews loses the personal interaction with the respondent and we cannot describe how the respondents reacted in body language to our questions. We can still interpret their voices/language how they react on our questions and from the interviews we argue that we are able to interpret this into what are central and distinctive characteristics of their organisation. Further, this study is at the inter-organisational level and we argue that the telephone interviews made by the manager/a top team member will give us sufficient information for us to describe and analyse the industry identity of the importers.

It is important when doing research that the interviews are professional, which means that the method is reliable, the results must be valid and that the method and the result are open for others to analyse and criticise. (Lantz 1993) We have increased the validity and professionalism of this thesis by calling the respondents, presenting the purpose with our thesis, sent them our project description (Appendix 1), and then reconnected with them by phone on a date that we set at the first contact. Further, we have increased the professionalism by letting the respondents take their time to read through the project description and by them self set a date and time when they could be available. This in order to perform the interview when the respondents had time and could feel more relaxed. Some of the respondents answered by mail and this process of contacting the respondents and doing interviews took about six weeks. After performing the interviews we transcribed the material and sent it to the respondent for approval.

4.1.2 Interview manual

When having an explorative approach to the empirical world we as researchers need a tool for us to ask relevant questions to be able to answer what the identity of the importers are and not to loose focus from the area of organisational identity. (Holme & Solvang 1998) We designed a manual around five areas of interest:
1. The activities of the organisation.
2. How they view the industry.
3. What actions they take within the industry and how their actions differ from others in the industry.
4. How they view competition and how their competitors differ and work in similar way as themselves.
5. How the activities in the industry and how competition has changed over time, for us to describe what the identity of the importers are.

The study aim is to find industry identities by the framework provided by Albert & Whetten, the central and distinctive characteristics and by asking questions within the five areas of interest we argue that we have received sufficient information to identify industry identities within the Swedish alcohol industry. Since the approach of this study is explorative we believe that the five areas of interest in the manual have given us more flexibility.

Since we do not have an already set theoretical framework when entering the empirical world we have been able to talk about the area of organisational identity with the respondents and then found the relevant concepts of organisational identity within the alcohol industry and without the flexibility the process would not have been explorative. It is hard to describe an industry identity since it is not tangible but we believe that by analysing and interpreting the language/descriptions of the respondents we can describe and see indications of an industry identity, the content of this identity and how this identity affect the actions taken within the industry.

4.2 Choice of respondent

The choice of respondents is a crucial step in the research process in order to receive the valid information that you need. That is to get hold of the “right” respondents and be able to ask the “right” questions in order to generate a deeper ground of the phenomena that we study. The choice of respondents is made systematically from criteria that are both theoretically and strategic defined and the respondents are chosen from our preconceptions and the theoretical concepts we have studied before in the research process preparing to approach the practice. The interviews with actors that are active in the industry are called interviews with respondents. Interviews can also be made with a person that has good knowledge about the phenomena we study, but are not active in the industry of this moment, informant interview. (Holme & Solvang 1998)

4.2.1 Informant interview

After designing the manual for the interview we felt that we wanted more information about the Swedish alcohol industry and the importers within this industry. We wanted a perspective of the industry from someone that has been active within the industry before the deregulation and could give us more information of changes within the industry. For us to gain this knowledge about the alcohol industry and the importers we did an interview with an informant who has previous experience working within the industry both at Systembolaget at the purchase department and has also been employed by an importer in Sweden. The informant gave us his perception of the industry and gave us helpful information of how the industry looked like before and after 1995.
According to our informant products like wine, beer and spirits differ a lot in how the importers work with the products. Beer and spirits are divided into different brands and the importers work with improving the image of the brand. According to our informant selling wine and buying wine differs a lot from the other two segments in ways of working closer with the producer and that wine today is becoming more and more branded but it is much more heterogeneous. Further, our informant gave us indications that almost all the importers work in the same way with beer and spirits, but differ a lot in how they work with their wine.

The indication of importers working differently made us decide to choose respondents that had wine in their portfolio. The informant also described importers being different in terms of being a serious and an unserious importer. The serious importers have good knowledge about the industry which means that they have good product knowledge and are serious when they sell their wine to Systembolaget. The unserious were described as not viewing wine as a quality product and these importers did not understand how the alcohol industry works, what code, and do not know how the procedures in selling wine to Systembolaget.

The bribery scandal was something that everybody within the industry was aware of, but the informant had never realised that it was that extensive within the industry. The information gathered from the informant has affected our study and in the way we have analysed the empirical material in ways of looking for serious and unserious importers. Although this material is not described within the empirical findings it has affected us when finding definitions of what are the central characteristics in this thesis. For example if the importer is serious, unserious, market oriented, product oriented as their central characteristics. The informant have coloured the way we analyse the empirical material because we believe that we have been affected by the way the informant described the importers. However we have tried to analyse the empirical material as objective as possible and describe the identity of the importers from their own perceptions, but we have had the terms serious and unserious in our mind when asking the questions.

### 4.2.2 Choice of importers

To be able to describe the identity of the importers we started by collecting material and information about the number of importers that had licence today for us to get a wider perspective on how large the industry is. There are about 700 firms that have import licence today (Särskilda Skattekontoret) and for us to achieve the purpose of our study we had the objective of getting access to importers that are active in the industry today, otherwise our study would not show the true picture. We could have selected importers from the list from Särskilda Skattekontoret, but according to them a lot of the firms having an import licence were not active today. We decided to contact Systembolaget and get information about importers that distributed alcohol to them. Systembolaget and their department of statistics contributed with information about the 100 largest distributors (in Litre) to Systembolaget in the year of 2004, in beer, spirit, and wine. Today there are about 255 active wine importers that distribute wine to Systembolaget. (www.systembolaget.se) To narrow down our choice of respondents we decided to focus and to select one segment and because our informant gave us indications that working with wine differ more between importers we decided to choose distributors in the wine segment, also because we have more knowledge about wine and it is in our interest too.
Baldwin & Bengtsson conducted a study in 1998-1999 that was presented in 2004, regarding the Swedish alcohol industry and they did interviews with the core actors within the industry, with no regard to if the respondents’ core activities were in wine, beer or spirits. We wanted to get a deeper understanding in the wine segment and what the identity of these importers are and therefore we decided to divide this segment into three groups with the intention of getting different views from importers that had different positions within the industry; core and peripheral, and different geographical location and size. The three size segments and the two geographical locations was chosen because we aim to represent a broader picture of the wine importers and find out what the industry identity of the importers are within these segments by analysing the central and distinctive characteristics within these groups.

From these three groups we wanted to find twelve wine importers, six from the area around Stockholm (the core) and six from the geographical area outside Stockholm (the peripheral). The groups were divided from the list provided by the statistic department of Systembolaget that represented the 100 largest distributors of wine to Systembolaget. The first group had 29 importers (place 1-29) and sales in litre from 33 million down to 757 000 litres 2004. The second group had 15 importers (place 30-44) and sales in litres from 598 000 down to 119 000 litres in sales in 2004. The third group had 56 importers (place 45-100) with sales in litres from 80 000 litres to 2200 litres at last place. (Systembolaget, Anna-Ihrfors-Wikström, statistic)

We choose this selection because when investigating the statistics we found quite clear differences in volume between these places and therefore we believe that it can be a difference in how they act and perceive the market depending on sales to Systembolaget since Systembolaget is the largest wine customer in Sweden. We did not select importers whose names had occurred in the bribery corruption scandal in the newspapers although all of them can be found in the list we received from Systembolaget. We are not sure that all of the importers active in 2004 are as active today and it is hard for us to find out information on how active they are, therefore we decided strategically not to encounter them as our choice of respondents.

The informant gave us information that the majority of the importers are family owned businesses and that the managers have responsibility over the daily activities but also often are responsible for the changes that take part in the company, and the actions taken by the manager are often transferred down in the company. This gives us further impetus of interviewing the managers/the top team. Furthermore, this thesis focuses on the inter-organisational level why we believe that it is the manager or the top team member that has the most contacts with other actors in the industry and also has the deepest knowledge on what his/hers organisation want to communicate. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) The history and previous experiences affect how the manager describe the identity of the organisation and his/hers perception of the identity might differ from how others view the organisation and this can affect our study because the manager might not give the true picture of the organisation.

4.2.3 The interviews

The performances of interviews differ from each other depending on how structured they are, from open interviews to the extreme of the researcher asking prewritten questions in a predestined way. (Lantz 1993) The eight interviews with the importers in the Swedish alcohol industry was semi-structured because we asked questions from our area of interest, central,
distinctive characteristics and what actions they take within the industry, and the respondents could answer freely and explain with their own words how they perceive the five areas of interest that were presented by us through discussions. However, if there was an area that the respondent were more eager to discuss than other, we felt that it was alright, since that would also contribute to our study in that way that it would clarify what the respondent thought was important and that is, as mentioned before, a central aim for us.

We have not had more than two interviews per day to be able for us to be alert and to keep focus on the specific interview. The eight interviews took about 30-40 minutes each and were recorded with a dictator through a high speaker function on the telephone and both researchers were involved asking questions. All interviews took place from an office and only the two researchers were present in the room. The questions were structured from the five areas of interest involving the central and distinctive characteristics with the actions following, (Appendix 2) and the interviews started by the respondents describing themselves, the organisation and the main focus of the organisation. The following questions were not asked in a specific order instead the interviews were more of discussions and we as researchers controlling the direction and areas of discussion. The interviews were transcribed and sent to the respondents for approval. This in order to make the information flow naturally from the respondent, to see what mattered for the specific respondent and to be able to interpret without intervene with the respondent. We also confirmed the set date and time for the interview either by calling them or by e-mail and we believe that we by doing this have increased our credibility and seriousness and have increased the access to our respondents.

The tape recorder started to work inefficiently midway in the first interview and did not work at all in the second interview which we discovered after the second interview had been finished. The first interview was transcribed as long as the tape was ok and the rest we transcribed from our notes and from our memory. The second interview we had to transcribe totally from our notes and from our memory into a summary. In our research process this has definitely affected our empirical findings and we have to stand critical to this since our interpretations can be wrong and information can have been lost. We although believe that we have done our best in trying to transcribe the most essential for our research and that the information gathered is relevant for the research.

Furthermore, by having sent the summaries too the affected respondents and by given them an extra chance to correct possible errors we have reached an acceptable level of credibility. One of these respondents did not want to participate in this study and since time was scares for this respondent we were not given a chance to re-do the interview. However, we were given the opportunity to interview another respondent in that segment why we reached our aim with two respondents in that segments and were able to look away from the interview that failed. We have been very active in trying not to interpret and think of that interview in order not to be coloured when performing other interviews, however, it is probably very hard not to have been affected by the material since it is our role to interpret but the material has not been looked at when working with the other interviews and since that interview was the first that we conducted we believe that it has been forgotten by us.
4.2.4 Coding of the interviews

After gathering the empirical material we as researchers have to find methods to code and make the material visible/understandable for the reader, but this is also an important part of the research process for the researchers because it is here the process of analysing the empirical material takes place. When coding we as researchers take the material from the interviews and first of all; try to find themes, key factors, grouping and second; try to cross code or in other words try to find connections, interactions, processes, strategies within the empirical material; thirdly try to find and identity common themes. The aim of this study is to add knowledge to the area of inter-organisational identity theory and therefore the coding and the translation of the interviews will be affected by existing organisational identity theory. The coding process is important since we as researchers will control the process and we will decide through existing theory what is central, distinctive and what actions we find important. Our object is to go from the empirical data to the theoretical framework, cross-code, and finally we can present the result and find an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry.

We started the coding in trying to find themes and key factors within the material by colouring lines and sentences that were central and distinctive for the importers and what actions they take within their organisation. This was done to simplify the process and to find what the central and distinctive characteristics we could find in the interviews and what actions they take within the industry. After this process we found key factors that were central, distinctive and actions within the industry and then we wrote down the central key words that would act as a skeleton in our empirical chapter. Key words for the central and distinctive characteristics; like market oriented, product oriented, serious, professional, member, non-member, small portfolio-large portfolio, seniors, newcomers, small-large size (from group 1-3 based on sales to Systembolaget). Actions were personal or non-personal activities and persistence- and non-persistence over time.

We started to cross code and try to find similarities and dissimilarities between the eight different importers and what they believed was central and distinctive characteristics and what actions/interactions that are taken within the industry. Finally we took the identification process to a higher level and we found visible themes through, the central and distinctive characteristics and what actions the importers take, that will control the last part of our research process in ways of we finding indications of an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry.

4.3 Access to primary sources

The problem of access to the data/information cannot be separated from the research process. The researchers will have greater access to the respondents if the study will be useful for the respondents. Access to the respondents is also affected by so called gatekeepers, which will either give access to the respondents or preventing the researchers’ way into practice. (Johansson-Lindfors 1993) The majority of these importers have secretaries or front desk people answering the telephones and/or e-mail and we found them very helpful and we tried to create a good relationship with these people. We believe that because we introduced our
selves and the purpose of the call we had a bigger chance to get through to the managing
directors (MD) who were our target group.

Of course, if the initial gatekeeper was not interested we maybe did not get any further and
were not given a chance to talk to the MD but we did not experienced that to a larger extent.
The main problems that we faced in trying to reach the managers were that they were very
busy, in meetings, on the phone or on business travels were the most common reply.
However, we found that our project description worked as a gatekeeper or a gate opener,
having a document in a more empirical way showed our intentions and questions at an
early stage. This document was a simplified overview of how the business looked like today,
what we wanted to contribute with and the asked respondents’ possible or required
contribution.

Our main objective was to do interviews with 12 importers, having two representatives from
each segment and geographical location to find similarities and dissimilarities in industry
identities within the Swedish alcohol industry, but we only succeeded in doing eight
interviews. In the first segment we had no problem of accessing the respondents and although
they were hard to get in touch with we succeeded in getting four respondents. In the second
segment we got access to three importers and we definitely found it even harder to find
respondents willing to be a part in our study. Then when trying to get access to the third
segment it was even harder and we only succeeded in getting one interview within that
segment. The importers in the third segment have had excuses of not wanting to be a part of
this study because of them being too busy, too small, they felt that they had nothing to
contribute with and too little time because they are often running the whole business.

This means that we do not have balance in our segment and there is a chance of the first
segment getting a fairer picture because we have more respondents in that segment. The
second segment is still credible but in the B location we only have one respondent and this
could also affect our study and not show the whole picture. The third segment had only one
respondent from one geographical location and this can of course be questioned, but we still
believe that we will through our study show if there is an industry identity within the industry
and similarities/dissimilarities between these identities. This because we do not want to
generalize and therefore do not want to see patterns of interactions and groupings, we want to
find out if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol industry and to see
similarities and dissimilarities within these identities.

4.4 Criticism of primary sources

There is definitely a chance that the respondents have been affected by the recent corruption
scandal and have not answered the questions from their open mind. There is a chance that we
will not get the whole picture because the whole corruption affair is not over yet and not all
involved are prosecuted. Information can also have been lost because of the managers not
want to talk about their strategies for the future, share information and how they work with
wine to achieve competitive advantage.

There is also a chance that we have not been able to reach all types of wine importers that are
active in the Swedish market. The third group from place 45-100 in sales of wine to
Systembolaget have more members and even the double amount of members compared with
group one and two. The most optimal research is of course to do interviews with all the 253
distributors of wine to Systembolaget, but time is a time limit for us and by doing interviews with two representatives in each group and in different locations in Sweden although we believe that we can through these sources see patterns and indications of industry identities. We tried to get a list over all the distributors of wine to Systembolaget, but they could not offer us this information and since this thesis is supposed to be done over ten weeks we did not have the time to phone all the 500 registered distributors to Systembolaget.

This is something that we have to criticise since the perceptions of all the actors within the industry supply wine to Systembolaget and especially those that have supplied and do not supply wine today will not be brought forward. On the other hand it is not our aim to present a complete and full-bodied picture but to get indications and see patterns why it is not necessary to perform a full-scale empirical research. On the other hand, there could be a positive side effect, since there has been turbulence in the industry and, as our belief is that when turbulence or big change takes place in an industry organisation has a tendency to question their identity. This means that we might have been given upright, straightforward answers since no one has to lie about not knowing anything about bribery corruptions or the after shock of that scandal.

The method to reach the primary sources, by telephone interviews, can be criticised. The telephone interviews only give us the opportunity to interpret what is said by the telephone and we have no chance to see how the respondents react on the questions. Further, we have no possibility to see if other people have been in the room at the same time and they might have affected how the respondent would give the answer. Body language and expressions are important aspects when performing an interview and doing telephone interviews loses that.

The choice of wine importers, the number of wine importers and their geographical location can be criticised. Sweden is a large country but it is a fact that most of the importers are located in the Stockholm area, and to be an importer in the Malmö region and in the area of Göteborg could differ; the respondents interviewed in each segment might not have the same perceptions of competitors and how the act in the industry depending on their previous experience. However, we chose to divide Sweden in two parts in order to see if geography mattered when competing and made the choice based upon that the majority of companies are based in Stockholm and that the study would have been more scattered if we made the dividing in smaller groups and the segment in Stockholm would have been given to much space.

During our work of finding respondents we pretty soon came across the notion that the respondents only would take part in our study under the condition that they could be promised anonymity. As pointed out before probably a lot of this prerequisite has to do with the bribery corruption and since we were interested in showing patterns and indications in the business as a whole, not pointing out specific companies this could requirement by the respondents could be met. Of course, this method could face problems when describing these companies in the empirical findings and in the analysis, there is a balance act when presenting material without revealing the identity of the company. Especially since the industry is quite small and a lot of the importers has previously worked with each other or are close competitors.

However, we believe that we have been able to avoid falling down on any of the sides, this by presenting the companies in general terms and de-coded for example the names that they mentioned. Nevertheless there are advantages for our research to use anonymous sources
because we do not want to acknowledge the individual organisation instead we want to see the interaction and get a broader picture of an industry identity. To use the real identity of the organisations spokesperson we fear that it would draw the attention away from seeing the whole picture. Of course, not to forget, that we believe that the respondents have been more openhearted when they know that no names would be published.

4.5 Criterion of truth

There is an on going and as it seems, never ending, discussion whether a researcher can apply the criterions of truth on a qualitative study. However, Bryman stress that the qualitative researcher can use the traditional criterion, but with a slight modification. (Bryman 2002) The Criterions that can be used are; trustworthiness and authenticity and they correspond to validity, reliability and transferability used in quantitative research. (Bryman 2002)

4.5.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness are described as the correspond to internal validity and to us as researches this mean the level of trust a reader can put on the study. Throughout the study we as researchers has had a discussion how to interpret the interviews, understand theories and so on. We have done this because we are aware that our pre-conceptions could affect the study and thereby affect the material presented. However, to have an on-going discussion about how and why we interpret and understand material we believe that we have reached a high level of trustworthiness or internal validity. By discussing the material and our own ideas on how to interpret and use the material, we have reached a high level of inter-subjectivity (Johansson-Lindfors 1993) also by sending the transcribed material to the respondents and by given them the possibility to correct possible faults.

Furthermore, we have “attacked” the problem stated by triangulation, which in short means that we as a researcher use more than one method or data source to look at the problem. (Bryman 2002) We have done this by interviewing several importers around the same subject and therefore reached a higher level of trustworthiness.

However, in the term of trustworthiness the level of transferability is also discussed and since we are conducting a study, which admittedly looks at a whole industry the transferability, is consequently low. This because we are studying companies who are situated in a very special and delicate business environment; they have a large counterpart who has a monopoly in sale to the end customer (Systembolaget) and the rules and legislation that surrounds this environment is strict. Even so, because we have investigated an industry there is a good possibility that we have reached an understanding for the business that the importers within the industry can use, which will be further discussed under authenticity.

4.5.2 Authenticity

The second criterion that Bryman suggests is the authenticity in a qualitative study, and the author puts several, more generalising questions into the term (Bryman 2002). We believe that it is the “fair picture” that is most valid for us; the question is whether we as researchers has given a fair picture to the reader of the material that we have collected. We believe that we have been fair to the material in the sense that we have presented our findings in a similar way
and the respondents have had the possibility to go through transcribed material and comment if they not have been satisfied. Further, we believe that the anonymous has increased our authenticity since the respondents not will be judged from their company name, rather than their actual opinion.

We also believe that the level of authenticity are high due to our hops that the study will contribute with a higher awareness inside the industry of Swedish alcohol importers, to acknowledge that their is differences and similarities but also that changes affects people differently. Therefore this study could contribute to some practical applicability (Johansson-Lindfors 1993); creating awareness is a good tool to use when changes has affected the industry and the companies within the industry has new rules to live after, to see the coherence of beliefs in the industry.

4.5.3 Practical applicability

It is questionable whether the material presented could be applied elsewhere than in Sweden, this due to the unique and specific conditions that the industry works under (the monopoly). Both Norway and Finland has a similar form of monopoly why this material could be used to some extent, however, the monopolies that are held in these two countries are somewhat different compared to Sweden and our knowledge does not include the full and whole picture of the conditions in Norway and Finland why we feel that this study are limited to the Swedish alcohol import industry and the special preconditions that are prevailing in Sweden.

Another limitation with the material is of course that we have investigated an industry that work under a monopoly, which gives us a framework that is rather cemented. This means that the material not easily could be applied on a free market that obey under different laws, regulation and preconditions compared to a monopoly. Furthermore, our material has been developed in order to create a further understanding for a certain phenomena (an industry that has gone through major changes and works under certain preconditions) and the need to create a practical applicability for other industries is therefore less required.
5. Empirical Findings

The knowledge and the theoretical framework that we have presented earlier along with the methodological approaches that lies as a foundation for the empirical chapter. The practical method introduced the reader to what kind of approach we have chosen for the interviews, but before the reader will take part of the result a detailed introduction will increase the understanding.

5.1 Introduction to how we approach the empirical data

The data collected through the eight interviews will be presented in this chapter in descending group size (1, 2 and 3) and from the two geographical areas (A, B) (fig. 5). We will start by presenting group one and our interpretations in how they perceive their central and distinctive characteristics and further present the two other groups in the same way. Some concluding remarks will be done after each importer and finally a scheme/table will be presented in the end of this section to be able to get a bigger picture of the importers. The characteristics will be described through the perception of the managers or from someone from the top team in the organisation.

Their central characteristics are defined as a membership in an interest-organisation, the products, core activities, location, management and the size of the organisation. The distinctive characteristics are interpreted as how the organisation identifies them by comparing their central characteristics with other importers. The identification process are for example when they define importers that work with similar/dissimilar objectives/values regarding their product portfolio, quality, activities and the actions taken in collecting knowledge about their products within the alcohol industry.

The actions taken within the industry affected by these two characteristics will be interpreted as what actions the importers take like being member within an organisation and how they view and prepare for the future. Their ability to survive in the context and identity related roles, in other words; how they perceive the ethics and moral questions of the industry, how affected the importers have been by the bribery scandal and how affected their daily activities have been by the scandal.

Below is a more detailed description over the central, distinctive characteristics (fig.2 & 3) and actions (fig 3) that we have found in the empirical material and this will help us in describing what the industry identity of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry. The mapping of different characteristics will be summarized under each characteristics (Central and Distinctive) and respondent (A1-2), (B1-3) in the empirical text.

The mapping has been categorized from the description of the importers and from their description the authors have found these common characteristics. From these characteristics we will find patterns of similarities and dissimilarities and therefore these charts or figures are not based on if a premium product is better than for example to focus on commodity products. These characteristics will help us is describing the organisational identity of the importers in the Swedish alcohol industry. The final part of the empirical findings will focus on the actions that are affected by the central and distinctive characteristics.
5.1.1 The Central and Distinctive Characteristics of the importers

Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premium Products</th>
<th>Commodity Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Portfolio (1-25)</td>
<td>Medium Portfolio (26-300)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Portfolio</td>
<td>Scattered Portfolio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Premium products is wine over 100 Swedish kronor and Commodity products is below that price.
- A small portfolio considers 1-25 products, a medium portfolio 26-300 products and a large portfolio from 300-600 products.
- A focused portfolio is when the importer has decided to focus on a specific product like wine, beer or spirits and a scattered portfolio is when the importer has the same focus on all the products in the portfolio.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious</th>
<th>Professional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small Size (3)</td>
<td>Medium Size (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Located (A)</td>
<td>Peripheral Located (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of VSL</td>
<td>Non Member of VSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Newcomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Oriented</td>
<td>Market Oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A serious importer is according to the industry someone that has long experience in the industry, have knowledge about wine and treat wine as a special product and wine can not be marketed in the same way as beer and spirits. Being professional is an importer that actively does business in wine and have all the skills for selling wine professionally, not someone that only do this because it is fun and as a special interest.
- Small, medium and large is divided from the list of how much wine they supply to Systembolaget. Core located is in Stockholm and peripheral is outside of Stockholm.
- A member is if you are a member or not of the VSL.
- A senior in the industry is someone that has actual experience from the industry before 1995 and newcomers have entered the market after 1995.
- A product oriented importer focus on the products and that the will deliver a specific value to the customer with their products. They are very devoted in choosing what products they want in their portfolio and have a close relationship with the producer.
Market oriented is an importer that looks what the customer wants and find the best price products for the market and the producer does not matter so much.

### 5.1.2 The Actions of the importers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Activities</th>
<th>Non Personal Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persistence Over Time</td>
<td>Not Persistence Over Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. The enduring characteristics, own construction

The actions are the importers ability to survive in the industry and identity related roles like membership, in other words; how they perceive the ethics and moral questions of the industry, how affected the importers have been by the bribery scandal and how affected their daily activities have been by the scandal. The membership of VSL or non-membership of VSL will be presented both under the central and distinctive characteristics and under the actions of the importers, but will be analysed as actions taken by the importers in the analysis part of this thesis.

- Personal activities is when the importer focus on personal relationships in selling their wine as for example close relationship with Systembolaget and the producers. The engage themselves personally in the sales of their products and focus more on relationships than being market oriented. Non-personal activities is when the importer is market oriented and sell wine that the market demand.

- Persistence over time is when the importer engage their organisation in activities that will prepare them for the future and non persistence over time is when the importer do not look ahead and believe that they already have the strength in the company to survive in the future. Being persistence over time is when your organisation is ready for major structural changes within the Swedish alcohol import industry as for example the abolishing of the monopoly. Being non-persistence over time is when you as an importer depend on the monopoly structure and will not have the capability to survive a major change like this or do not prepare for a change like this.

### 5.1.3 Overview of the respondents

Following figure will give the reader an overview on where the respondents are located and the size of the company.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Malbec Tannat</td>
<td>Semillon Marsanne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Tempranillo Grenache</td>
<td>Fendant</td>
<td>Viognier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. The respondents divided into size (1-3) and geographical areas (A & B), own construction.

5.2 Group A 1

5.2.1 The central and distinctive characteristics of Malbec

Central

The manager describes the story of Malbec and the company’s central and distinctive characteristics, as well as their actions. Malbec was registered as an importer in 1995 and got their licence to import, store and deliver alcohol in the Swedish market but has a history of being an agent to V&S. The manager has long experience from the alcohol industry both working at the monopoly and as an agent for V&S before 1995. Malbec has gone through structural changes from private small company to being a part of a larger beverage group in Europe. Today the manager is in charge of about 16 employees and a product portfolio of about 600 products in total and 95% of the portfolio is wine. More than 80% of their sales are to Systembolaget and they focus on attaching products to their portfolio that Systembolaget invoices.

According to the manager, the central characteristics and the strengths of Malbec is their knowledge and experience about products, they are professional and have worked with this for many years and have all the knowledge that they need and that goes for all of the members within the organisation.

“It is our job, all the people that works here, we does not do anything else, we are professional product oriented people, I have never done anything else and that goes for most of the people here.”

Going on fairs and working with marketing is more of a social aspect of the daily activities within the organisation. Before 1995 the manager worked as an agent/middle hand between the producers and the V&S and the manager believes that their organisation still have the same close connection with the wine producers. Today there are higher risks and more focus on transports and administration routines as their role as a represents for the producers and their products. Malbec wants to be the premium importer in Sweden, meaning; being professional, with high product knowledge and offer a combination of prestige and volume worldwide. The manager says that their objective is trying to work close to our customer and producers and trying to deliver value through our products. Malbec is a member of the spirits
and wine interest organisation (VSL) in Sweden and the membership does not affect the organisation at all.

“We have discussions in the VSL and try to answer more political questions, but it does not affect us in running our business”.

The manager concludes describing the central characteristics by playfully point out:

“It is not our right to have fun while working; it is our obligation to have fun when we do this work, we are the only company in Sweden that has the right to fire boring personnel.”

The central characteristics for Malbec are in summary; serious, product oriented and has a long tradition within the industry. The company represents a mix of premium and commodity wines in its large focused portfolio. They are a member of VSL because of the possibility to discuss issues that concerns the whole business, represent the seniors in the business and are located in the core.

**Distinctive**

The manager of Malbec does not acknowledge any specific competitors or importers that work in the similar way as them, because that is not an interest of the manager.

“I am busy running this business and don’t have the time to look too much at competitors”.

However, the manager can identify some distinctive characters of Malbec’s competitors in the industry: There are mainly two types of importers, the ones that work with a wide and large product portfolio with many types of products over a similar market like Malbec do. There are also importers that focus on a fewer number of products but with large volumes. The manager identifies a category of importers as “specialists”, those who focus on for example fine wine or wines from a geographical location like wines from Portugal. The Swedish market is also dominated by 25-30 importers that supply about 80% of total sales to Systembolaget so there are definitely importers that have a higher market share, the competition is therefore very tough. Importers that work in similar way as we do are importers that are identified in A1 group. The managers believe that it is hard to be active on the Swedish market not being located in Stockholm since all the fairs and Systembolaget are located in Stockholm. It is more complicated being an importer outside of Stockholm.

“The monopoly is located here, this is were the large part of the sales to restaurants takes place, all the important producers comes to Stockholm, so working from another geographic location is hard and not something I would do myself.”

The distinctive characteristics for Malbec are identified through the competitors’ central characteristics. The manager identifies central characteristics such as if the competitors are located within the same geographic area and with approximately the same size (A1). with Systembolaget Malbec has been forced to change its working routines.
5.2.2 The central and distinctive characteristics of Tannat

Central

Tannat’s central and distinctive characteristics combined with their actions are described from the manager’s point of view. The history of the company goes back to 1992 when the manager decided to change course from a career as an economist to the alcohol industry mainly because of the interest in wine. The manager has previous experiences working as an agent to V&S and in 1995 they started to import their own products. Tannat has today 13 employees and a product portfolio of about 400-500 product and they focus solely on wine. Tannat’s central characteristics when collecting knowledge and working very active in trying to gain knowledge about products, trends and producers, which means that they visit a lot of fairs but the major part of the knowledge that they gather comes from international magazines concerning the beverage industry.

“We read a lot and we focus on wine, visit important fairs and take part in the discussion about wine today, but in the end it is a lot of reading.”

Tannat choose products that will suit their customer segments that they are operating in, but also from a wider and longer perspective with a producer that can contribute in the future.

They are active on the Swedish market but they have some activities in another Nordic country. The values of Tannat are quality to every expense, that no matter in what price segment the customers choose from they should be able to find quality.

“A good importer is when you can offer secure transports, service, product security and that you are able to deliver continuously to our customers and that is what I am”.

Tannat is a member of VSL because the manager believes that by being a member they have the possibility to discuss questions concerning the alcohol industry in Sweden. The membership also gives them the opportunity to act as collective group in areas of their concern as for example the relationship with Systembolaget, advertising, laws and taxes.

In summary, Tannat describes their central characteristics as an importer that stands for seriousness and service. Tannat is a senior, large company with a mix of premium and commodity wines, has a large focused portfolio and are a member of VSL, the company is located in the core and define themselves as product oriented.

Distinctive

Tannat’s manager does not value importers whether they have a product portfolio of 25 or 500 products in their portfolio but remark that:

“Everyone does not work as hard with quality as we do”.

The distinctive characteristics for Tannat are described by the manager who believes that; importers that work with quality, which means product knowledge, good producers and quality product, work like Tannat does. The manager only identifies competitors as those
importers that work with the same objective as they do. These companies range in size and number of products but have the same objective towards quality and they focus on the product instead of selling as much as it is possible.

The manager also identifies competitors as them that have to a large extent fever products but are larger in sales and are seen as a competitor because of that. The manager identifies importers within the A1 & the A2 group. The manager finds it hard for the importers that are located outside of Stockholm and they do not compete with the importers outside of Stockholm.

To summarise the distinctive characteristics, the manager of Tannat identifies competitors that are product oriented, serious and are located in the core.

5.3 Group B 1

5.3.1 The central and distinctive characteristics of Grenache

Central

The central and distinctive characteristics as well as the company’s actions for Grenache are presented by a top team member in the organisation that started working in the organisation in 2001. Grenache as an organisation was founded in the mid 1990’s, the company worked as an agent to V&S before 1995 and is today located in Sweden although they were acquisitioned by a European company wanting to enter the Swedish market. Grenache has long experience in the Swedish alcohol industry and today they sell wine and spirits to the Scandinavian market. The top member has previous experience within logistics in the food industry and was recruited to Grenache in order to be responsible for the logistics. The organisation in Sweden has about 13 employees in the town were they are located and a smaller sales office in Stockholm. The top team member gave a full description on how their organisation work on a daily basis and what each employee did, like marketing, distribution and product development. The team member expresses that their well-built out logistics chain and that everyone has a clear view of their responsibilities is central for the organisation.

The top team member acknowledges that, to be able to compete and to have a good dialogue with the large customers, it is necessary to be located in Stockholm. The company’s sales person in Stockholm is the one that has the closest dialogue with the producers and the major customers.

“... more and more of our budget goes to marketing, it is important to reach out to the customer”.

Grenache want to deliver value through their products and quality is to have a dialogue with the producers concerning sales statistics, laws and regulation about wines and spirits and also to be able to offer products that are suitable for the Swedish market. Today they work with new labels and bottles but the producers knows their products and production best, and they know what quality is. The product portfolio of Grenache consists of 80 products in all the price ranges but with a focus on wines around 50-60 SEK. 90% of the total sales are of wine
and the annual sales to Systembolaget are 90% of the total sale. 10% of the annual sales are sold to wholesalers that will have a major impact for them if the monopoly will be abolished. Grenache is a member of the VSL but it does not affect them in any specific way. Grenache is located outside of Stockholm and by being a member of VSL they can get information and updates by mail and newspapers. Grenache believe that VSL is important because they have taken their responsibility in communicating and setting up an arena for discussing the topics like moral and ethics.

To sum up the central characteristics; Grenache are a large, senior company that has a market oriented approach and are professional in the industry. It is central for them to be “were the people are”, therefore they have placed a sales person in Stockholm but the headquarter is located outside Stockholm (peripheral). Grenache has a focused medium sized portfolio and focuses mostly on commodity wines. Grenache is a member of the VSL.

**Distinctive**

Grenache recognizes competitors according to the criterion of sales statistics, sales of volume product and the amount of wine/spirits in the product portfolio. Grenache identifies several companies in the A and B 1 segment as their competitors and when identifying an importer that works in a similar way as Grenache they describe an importer that is located in the same geographic region. This importer is acknowledged because they work in a similar way with wholesalers as Grenache do. However, the representative for Grenache notices that there are different kinds of competition with those importers that focus a lot on spirits; they have a different approach to brand marketing and how to approach restaurants.

There a different types of importers in the way the act, some are specialised in working with wine based on geography or fine wines. Grenache do not believe that it is primarily the values that distinct one importer from another, rather than that an importer found a space in a segment that was possible to fill. Grenache sees them as being around one of the top ten importers in Sweden.

*“Many of the older importers have started their business out of their own interest in wine, and of course that goes for us as well, however our approach is that that we see wine as any merchandise on the market”.*

In summary: The top team member of Grenache describes the distinctive characteristics of the organisation as how the activities logistics and wholesalers are performed. The member characterises competitors as the ones that have approximately the same activities in for example annual sales and where the contacts with wholesalers. Grenache mainly competes in size according to the top team member.

### 5.3.2 The central and distinctive characteristics of Tempranillo

**Central**

The central and distinctive characteristics as well as the actions of Tempranillo are presented by the manager of the company. Tempranillo is according to the manager an organisation with experiences in the alcohol industry since the 1960’s. However, the manager has experience from other fields as well. The central characteristics for Tempranillo is described as that the manager worked as an agent before 1995 and started to import their own wines in 1995 and
today the business consists of 10 employees. The company has approximately 200 products with a focus on commodity wines on the Swedish market and around 50 in another Nordic country. 95% of the sales are to Systembolaget and 5% to restaurants. Tempranillo works active with knowledge, visiting producers and taking part on fairs, the products that the management approves of are brought back to Sweden and tested further. The manager’s vision is that there should be:

“Good wines for every wallet, good value for money and a good social contact with customers and producers is central to us.”

Tempranillo are a member of VSL since the company is located outside the “cluster” of Stockholm but the membership is quite passive; Tempranillo does not visit meetings but hope that they get value for money by receiving the information that is sent out from Stockholm. The manager believes it is central for him/her, being a manager for so long, that he/she has the ability to delegate to his/her employees and self behold into the future of what will happen if the monopoly deregulates and what kind of products that that could be of interest in the future.

“I believe that today we are forced out on the market in another way than before, both on good and bad terms, we are given the possibility to reach the end customer in a more diverse way, not Systembolaget, we are not really aloud to go in there...”

In summary, the central characteristics for Tempranillo are described as a large company with a medium sized focused product portfolio with commodity wines. They are a serious importer, seniors on the market, located outside Stockholm (peripheral) and member of the interest organisation and product oriented.

Distinctive

When describing the distinct characteristics of Tempranillo, the manager identifies six types of segments in the import industry. The first level consists of 10 “elephants” were 7-8 of them are labelled as “old males”, then there are 10-15 importers in the second division, further, level or “division” 3, 4 and 5 hardly exists but last it is the rest, the league that can play on their own backyard. Companies that import food like for example spaghetti and now want to have some wines too, in order to broaden their product portfolio and these companies have succeeded in placing one or two products at Systembolaget. The manager also identifies importers that focus on products from a specific country and other that just focus on wine.

“We try to have wine from all countries and offer wines with good quality”.

The manager says that Tempranillo is in division two and identifies two competitors according to the same total annual sales as we do and they are located in the same geographical area. The manager identifies the competitors that are in the B 1 segment. The “big males” work differently and they have more spirits in their portfolio and are therefore more tied to the branding of the spirits.

“We work with wine that is a farming product and not tied to a specific brand as others are”.
However we as importer work individually and we mind our own business. The manager recognizes colleagues and competitors and that there is a difference between them in the “duck pond”.

“The ‘duck pond’ has definitely increased in size but now it is many more little ducks that are swimming in the pond”.

“Most of them are colleagues and these follow what I believe is a holy rule in the business; you do not mess with someone else’s territory”.

“There are of course producers that want to change importer or representative for their wines, but you do not actively try to steal a producer from someone else in the business”.

The importers that break these rules are the competitors for the Tempranillo organisation. The importers that are involved in the corruption scandal are also identified as competitors because of unfair competition and lost of market share for Tempranillo.

In summary, the manager of Tempranillo distinct the company from others by describing companies who are focused in activities as spirits or are of a different size. The manager is also clear that the industry consists of colleagues or competitors, competitors are the companies that are stealing producers from other companies or companies that has been involved in the bribery corruption scandal. Otherwise the colleagues are the importers that work fair and that the manager has good knowledge about.

5.4 Group A 2

5.4.1 The central and distinctive characteristics of Semillon

Central

The central and distinctive characteristics of Semillon as well as the actions within the company are described from the manager’s point of view. The manager of Semillon has a diverse background, working both abroad and in Sweden in the restaurant industry, with a hotel and restaurant degree from a European country and studies at a School of Business and Economics in Sweden. The interest in wine came early and since 1994 the manager has experiences from starting up and working within several importers business and in the end of the 1990’s the manager started up his own business, Semillon. Today the company has about eight employees and the product portfolio consists of approximately 150 products from about 35 active producers, with a focus on wine. The price range is from 90 SEK and rising. However, today they have a few products that cost less. According to the manager the company’s strengths is to work with producers that has a clear objective and goal with their products and wants to deliver a distinct message to the customer. The higher prices of the products are not a requirement but the manager feels that the producers that focus on this kind of quality often have higher prices on their products.

“Our business idea is not exclusive wines but wines with personality and high quality, the aim is to find producers with some kind of “objective of origin” and in the lower price categories that is really hard.”
About 75% of the total sale is to Systembolaget and 25% is to restaurants. Semillon wants to communicate a message to the customers that are built on seriousness and the selection of good producers. The company works with quality, responsibility for the producers and wishes to be a good representative for the producers and products on the Swedish market. Many newcomers treat wine like any type of commodity product, but not Semillon does not. The work with quality is as mentioned very central for Semillon and they do not work only to be seen in the shelves at Systembolaget which the manager think that some importers do. Semillon is not a member of VSL since the manager believes that the company is too small and they do not have the power to influence the decisions taken by the VSL. Semillon would only contribute with seriousness and knowledge and would not be given anything in return; the membership in VSL would only be a show for the crowd.

In summary, the central characteristics of Semillon are the seriousness that is very central for the manager. The company is a medium sized company, product oriented, and medium focused portfolio on premium wines over a somewhat scattered market since they have a larger quantity that is delivered to restaurants. The company is a senior in the business, a non-member of the interest organisation and located in the core.

Distinctive

Semillon acknowledges that the market is very diverse with high competition and with different categorization of importers. The distinctive characteristics of Semillon is that there are importers that work in similar way like they do, like agents, value quality of the products, they are serious and they value the fact of being a serious importer “importmanship”. We take responsibility for the producers’ products and we do not only focus on delivering products to Systembolaget, and importers that work in similar way as we do are found in the A1 segment. There are also importers that work in similar ways like Semillon do but not with the same market share and are smaller companies. Then there are others that have knowledge about wine and spirits but do not work in the same way as we do. They have larger organisations, with a focus on marketing and we can not compete with them because of us being a small organisation. There are also companies that the manager describes as; the others that has a larger product portfolio and are more market orientated.

“There are few that work like we do, we have the benefit to work with something we like and can choose from there. We have the possibility not to choose a product that might be a profitable product but does not match our requests, that is few who can do that and we are proud of that.”

Semillon also acknowledge the benefit of competing being located in the area of Stockholm because of the closeness of the customers, visiting customers and that the largest newspapers are located in Stockholm. It is definitely a disadvantage being located outside of Stockholm. The Swedish market is according to the manager product oriented and that is the way it should be. You have to focus on the product; to sell wine is not the same as selling toothpaste, although you need experiences and knowledge in how to sell your products too, any some importers lacks this knowledge.

“Absolutely, there should be unwritten laws or ethics that says that you should follow the rules of the game that exist in the business. You might not like them but they are there, we
know that some companies have not followed these rules and some have but I don't know if that has changed.”

To sum it up; the distinctive characteristics for Semillon are described as not only being in the business for money as some importers are. The manager means that there are different types of importers; the market oriented who treat wine as toothpaste, the middle that has both product and market orientation and the importers who focuses on the product and not take the economics serious enough. The company is central located and identifies competitors in the larger central segment (A1)

5.4.2 The central and distinctive characteristics of Marsanne

Central

Marsanne’s central and distinctive as well as their actions will be described from the view of a member of the top team which has been working in the company for about seven years and has a background in the food industry and the tobacco industry. Marsanne is owned by an international wine and spirit federation and is active on an international market that took its present form in the year of 2000. In Sweden Marsanne works with spirits and wine producers and distributes large spirits brands to both Systembolaget, wholesalers and to restaurants. Their product portfolio consist of 75% spirits and 25 % wine and 85% of the total sales are to Systembolaget and the manager does not know the percentage of sales that are wine. The focus is on spirits and the manager focus on that when talking about their product portfolio. Marsanne is and wants to be a distributor of brands and their operational activities focus on building strong brands and delivering brand equity to the customer.

“We work a lot with brands, without our brands and our portfolio we would not be so much.”

Their launch tactics are adapted to the invoices from Systembolaget and they try to find products that Systembolaget are looking for. Marsanne is a member of VSL because they believe that VSL is handling a lot of the central issues in the industry but also it gives them the opportunity to establish and maintain a relationship or at least a discussion with Systembolaget, a powerful actor within the industry.

In summary; Marsanne is a large size senior with a market oriented view and with a spirit-focused portfolio. The wine portfolio is medium scattered of both commodity and premium wines. The top team member of Marsanne identifies the central characteristics as working with brands, being professional and making them visible since they function as a distribution company and not has any interest in being visible themselves. Marsanne is a senior company, member of the VSL and located in the core.

Distinctive

When describing the distinctive characteristics, Marsanne acknowledge competitors that have a wide product portfolio of spirits and build strong brands. Marsanne is identified as a large international actor on the spirit market and is described as a division by themselves with three other competitors. There are also importer that are family owned businesses, those importers that focus on wines and finally the smaller “cellar” companies that survives because they have
been fortunate in selling wine to Systembolaget. It is possible to establish and uphold a business fairly good, being an importer in Sweden today if you succeed in entering the shelves at Systembolaget.

“... because of Systembolaget you can have a pretty good business in Sweden, as long as you have products at Systembolaget you survive good but if these products are taken away, you disappear as well.”

The team member says that Marsanne have the fortune to be able to work with both wine and spirits and therefore they do so. The Swedish market is very focused on the Stockholm area, and there are importers that start business outside this area but it must be hard for them. “I would not start a business outside Stockholm since it is here were the action takes place”.

The summary of the distinctive characteristics of Marsanne definition of the competitors, mainly identified in the core and large segment (A1), they define competitors as brand oriented companies that can focus on both Systembolaget and restaurants

5.5 Group B 2

5.5.1 The central and distinctive characteristics of Fendant

Central

A member of the top team will describe the history of Fendant and the central and distinctive characteristics, together with the actions of the company. The member has been a part of the organisation for about four years, has a background from industries like the cosmetic industry, the food industry, and the travel industry and furthermore has long experience from consulting in management. Fendant started as an agent for a few brands in the early 1990’s and in 1995 they became a licensed importer and today they have about 13 employees. Of the total annual sales 85 % is sold to Systembolaget and their product portfolio consists of 15% wine and with a total of 60 products. Besides Systembolaget they work with customers like wholesalers, restaurants and bars within specific regions in Sweden. The sales to Systembolaget are mainly beer and spirits because Fendant finds it harder to get a wine listed at Systembolaget and therefore their wine portfolio is mainly sold to restaurants. The Central characteristics for Fendant is that they wants to be a professional company that provides knowledge about their products and they work with manuals to keep the knowledge and the professionalism within the company. The company are also to been as serious because of their sommeliers that are working with quality within the company and the capital of structure that always exist in the company because of the manuals, the professionalism is central for Fendant in their everyday work.

“We believe that we are a serious organisation because we are trustworthy, and we have also hired a controller to get even more routines and better control over our growing product portfolio”. “We are always acting serious.”

Fendant work actively in scanning the market for new products and evaluate their existing products and try to find new products/producers that can strengthen their portfolio. The
product knowledge is transferred through the manuals and when they decided to focus on wine the hired sommeliers to be able to have more competitive advantage on the wine market.

“We have been a member of VSL but decided to exit the organisation because we are disappointed with their actions in the recent corruption scandal”.

“Some importers that have been involved in different investigations can still be a board member of the VSL” the team member continues. Fendant decided early when the rumours of corruption started to circulate in the industry to not be involved and took action within the company to prevent this to happen.

In summary; Fendant are described being professional in the way they act in the industry and are working with manuals and controllers. The medium sized company has a focused medium sized portfolio of wine combining commodity and premium products. The largest part of their portfolio is however beer and spirits. The company is market oriented, senior in the business, located in the peripheral and are a non-member of the interest organisation.

**Distinctive**

“We are professional and we are not tied to emotions like personal relationships and sentimental ties like the ‘wine-connoisseurs’ are”.

The quotation describes the distinctive characteristics of and the team member says that Fendant are not affected by the close relationship that some importers have with each other or with Systembolaget and if Fendant want a product or a brand they do everything in their way to attract them to their portfolio. For one beer brand in their portfolio they worked for about three years to get that brand from another Swedish importer, and this is beneficial for them because this product is already listed at Systembolaget.

“We can offer the best solution for the producer”.

Fendant identify competitors according to their market share and the geographical location does not matter when competing to enter Systembolaget. However when competing in the restaurant sector the geographical location matter, because it is hard for Fendant to work with restaurant that are located far away from the south part of Sweden where Fendant is located because of this involving more personal relationship.

“We do not want to identify us with them that are not playing this fair and we have tried to bring these problems up to the surface many years but no actions have been taken. We have been writing to Systembolaget but they just refer to the investigation about bribery that is on the table now.”

What distinct Fendant from other companies is according to the team member is among several things the size, some larger companies has the benefit to be able to work with on manager for beer, one for wine etc, while Fendant has to work accordingly to their smaller size and work more general with all types of products. But the manuals is a good tool to be able to work continuously and efficient with the products at hand.

To summarise the distinct characteristics of Fendant, the team member represents the “new” importer; Fendant has a marketing orientation and work professional with manuals to compete
with since they are rather small compared to the larger importers that they acknowledge as their competitors, mostly in the A1 segment.

5.6 Group B 3

5.6.1 The central and distinctive characteristics of Viognier

Central

The central and distinctive and enduring characteristics, together with the actions of Viognier will be presented by the manager of the company. The manager has a long tradition in the wine industry in Sweden; the company was founded in the 1960’s and is still today a family owned business. The manager has worked within the company for many years but has a professional background from another area. The manager has a genuine background and an education as a sommelier, the manager took over the company in the mid 1990’s and in 1995 the company became a licensed importer. The company has approximately 5 employees, 150 products, the price range from 200 SEK up to 2000 SEK in wine and from 500 SEK to several thousands SEK in spirits. About 70 % of the company’s sales go to Systembolaget where 80 % is wine. The manager wants to communicate the values of tradition, inherited knowledge, higher quality and unique products to the customer as central for Viognier. The company is not “fighting” with volume products but instead aim for reaching the customer with high knowledge and excellent quality.

“... we are not on the market and fighting with volume products, we are profiling our selves with higher quality, unique products and as a company that stands for higher quality and greater knowledge.”

Viognier work traditionally with new products and has some focus on the traditional part of the European market with France as one target market, the manager travels a lot in these target countries, visiting fairs, taking part in tasting and visiting producers in order to establish contacts with potential producers. Viognier is a member of VSL but the membership does only mean that the manager believes that if there is a branch organisation you should be a member instead of standing on the outside and complain. The membership can also mean that you as an importer are met with some acknowledgment from international colleagues but the manager means that VSL has lost its national reputation. This mainly because that several of the members of VSL has been objective for investigations concerning the bribery and the manager find it hard to understand why companies who are involved in the bribery accusations still can be a member of the board in VSL.

The summary of the central characteristics for Viognier are described as serious, product focused, medium sized, wine focused portfolio consisting of premium products combined with great knowledge. The company is seniors in the business and a member of VSL, they are located in the peripheral.

Distinctive

The manager identifies three types of importers in the business that are distinctive; the first where Viognier place themselves is the older established importers who has great knowledge
in what they do and does not only see the trade with wine as trade with anything rather than a cultural mission. This group also has a more old-fashioned but also very serious way of doing marketing. The second group is the companies that work with very aggressive marketing tactics, that want to establish contact with a younger target group with a lot of new and “hot stuff”. The third and final group is the more extreme and hard business companies, who, according to the manager, have succeeded in making as much money as possible with a sometimes-ruthless business tactics. Viognier sees its own competitors as the one in the first described segment

“These companies does not give a second thought of what they are selling, just that it is selling as much as possible, they look upon if the product is profitable and how to market it in the most efficient way”.

Further, the manager explain the “friendship corruption” that the manager believes is one of the larger threats in the business today, that a group of larger importers socialises with the staff at headquarter at Systembolaget and also with personnel at the purchasing department at Systembolaget, even off duty. The manager doubts that it could be a coincidence that the companies that have a VIP-card to the dinners at the “embassy” are making most success in the industry. Again, the manager exemplifies with VSL; that even tough the bribery corruptions have damaged the industry, there is no change in the attitude inside VSL.

“They sit at their lunches and almost laughs that they have been so bold and ‘good’, in any market it is normal to pay a little extra in order to be able to enter the market and no one seems to think that it is un-normal to do that even in this business”.

“However, I think it is, we have a monopoly which is surrounded by so strict legislations and it is very appalling that some companies have been given the opportunity to buy a piece of the market share in Sweden”.

The manager does not see that geographic competition is what decide success, but if a company is located in Stockholm it is much easier to walk by headquarter, buy them lunch and discuss the market.

“We do not take part in the top team’s private cocktail parties or give white horses to the head of purchasing department which a small group of importers do so there is a downside not to be a member of the ‘mingle squad’ and be located in Stockholm”.

There are several clear characteristics that are distinct for Viognier, they clearly distinct themselves from companies that are involved in the corruption investigation and sees them and the traditional companies with similar activities as themselves as their main competitors. The manager compares the organisation with other organisations that work in similar ways as Viognier do; with product orientation and being professional.
5.7 Actions of the respondents A1

5.7.1 Actions of Malbec

According to Malbec their organisation have been able to change their activities due to the structural changes in 1995 when the import monopoly was released and that they were all somewhat beginners to a new Swedish alcohol import industry. Since then the manager believe that they have developed tremendously in how they act within the industry today and the importers including themselves are much more complex, more administrative and more delicate. The demands from Systembolaget have also changed over the years with more specific and detailed demands, which the manager believes is inevitable because of the growing market. The relationship with Systembolaget is divided into parts, the manager of Malbec believes that the question whether to have a monopoly or not is a political question but the relationship with Systembolaget is fairly good.

“It is our largest customer; therefore we must have a good relationship with them”

The manager concludes about how they have had to change their personal activities within the organisation by addressing problems with the corruption scandal. The corruption scandal has affected the way Malbec work today and it has had a sad effect on the relationships in the industry. “Today it is not even possible to visit the individual stores at Systembolaget and we do not have the option to choose were our products are placed in the stores”.

The actions of Malbec today and for the future are depending whether the monopoly held by Systembolaget will stay or not, and how the market will look like in the future but also what the market will demand from them. However, being part of an international group might help Malbec to survive in a changing market although their activities within the industry has been based on personal relationships. Malbec is a member of the VSL, but their membership does not affect their daily activities since being a member is more a political question and to be a part of what is happening within the industry.

5.7.2 Actions of Tannat

The actions of Tannat is described by the manager that the company has a good relationship with Systembolaget and nothing much have changed since the corruption scandal, however, the manager believes that the monopoly will be gone in about five years. There will definitely be higher and increased competition but Tannat will continue to work pretty much the same way as they do today, the manager compares with other markets that are somewhat similar with the Swedish where the monopoly does not exist, like for example England. However, there are changes and crisis that has affected the industry, both in the past and more recent and the bribery corruption is sad story. The manager says that the change that has taken place is mainly the changes in how their product portfolio looks like, since a couple of years the company has involved itself in more price segments and package sizes in order to meet customer demand.

“We are proud of that even though we have such a wide assortment we always offer quality”.
The actions are summarised as a belief that Tannat will survive when the monopoly no longer exists although they work with personal activities in trying to sell their products. The manager believes that the corruption scandal has affected the industry but there have been other changes and challenges, like in 1995, as well and they have not affected Tannat, since they work in similar ways as before. Tannat is a member of the VSL because being a member they are a part of what is happening within the alcohol industry in Sweden.

5.8 Actions of B1

5.8.1 Actions of Grenache

Grenache find the future promising and work with finding new wines and better ways of working with their customers. “We are preparing for the future”.

“We are prepared for changes like if Systembolaget as a monopoly would be abolished our contacts with wholesalers and developed distribution channels we are in the forefront for the future.”

Although the team member believes that Grenache has to tie more knowledge about working with the industry of convenience goods even tough the competence of working with wholesalers already exist in the company in some form. The corruption scandal has affected the whole industry, but the threat or challenge for Grenache in the industry is the across border trade with alcohol mainly from Germany and Denmark. A few years ago Grenache lost an important client to a larger international beverage distributor and that has affected them quite hard since it was a well established product at Systembolaget, and the company has not yet fully recovered from that lost. After this change they reorganised within the company toward an organisation that is more adapted to processes and process thinking. When the team member looks into the future of what will happen and be enduring for the next couple of years, the member thinks that Systembolaget will disappear as a monopoly but will stay on the market as a specialist and that Grenache will remain customer to them. The member does not believe that the trade will be let loose entirely but licensed shops will be the solution.

Grenache believe that they will be persistence over time in the market as an actor because of their skills in dealing with wholesalers and their well built-out distribution chain and not mainly with their personal activities. The company has a good relation with Systembolaget and thinks that they will remain a customer even when the monopoly is abolished. Grenache is a member of the VSL because they are located outside of Stockholm and through the VSL they get information about what is happening within the Swedish alcohol industry, but their membership does not affect their daily activities.

5.8.2 Actions of Tempranillo

Tempranillo believe that the Systembolaget as a monopoly will disappear but Systembolaget as a private company will definitely continue being a strong actor within the Swedish alcohol industry. The recent corruption scandal has unquestionably affected Tempranillo in ways of
not being able to have a close interaction with the purchase department at Systembolaget. “Today we can not introduce our wines and have tasting with the staff and the lunch appointments we had before is not allowed anymore”. This scandal has affected the industry because today there is more suspicion and the atmosphere is strained. The manager does not know if this atmosphere will stay within the industry, both between importers and between Systembolaget and the importers, but the monopoly will definitely disappear in five years or so.

“Today we are glad that we did not work together with those importers that bribed the managers at Systembolaget, and their actions have definitely affected the competition.”

The corruption scandal is however not over since we in the industry feel that some actors accused of bribery should not bare the whole burden since there is others that have done the same but is not accused today. Even so, the manager believes that the top team at Systembolaget has taken their responsibility.

“To express myself carefully, it seems to be that the size of your organisation has affected how deeply you have been affected by the scandal. Maybe this round of accusations has been easier on some of the larger organisations”.

The manager believes that when the monopoly of sales will be abolished the large merchandise chains (ICA, COOP etc) will enter the market and aim for both beer and wine, but not at spirits. The manager sees some problems in selling wine and that the quality and the price of the wine that these chains will sell will be lowered. The manager also sees problems in handling the spirits and what kind of store that could take on the responsibility for handling the spirits carefully.

“Everyone will certainly not survive if the monopoly is abolished, there is no need for ICA to start buying from an importer when they already have built up distribution chains on the continent and it is not a coincidence that Lidl have established them in Sweden today.”

The manager of Tempranillo acknowledges that Systembolaget will disappear as a monopoly but remain in some form and a number of larger chains will take over the market. Tempranillo will remain as customer to both Systembolaget and become a supplier to the chains. The manager expresses as many others that everyone in the industry will not survive when the monopoly disappears but says less about Tempranillo’s future mainly because of uncertainties, however, the activities taken by Tempranillo is mainly of the non personal, since they rely on logistics and related activities. Tempranillo is a member of VSL since they are located outside of Stockholm, but their membership is passive pure for information.

5.9 The actions of group A2

5.9.1 Actions of Semillon

Semillon acknowledges that the Swedish alcohol industry is going through a shift in attitudes and the way you work as an importer, the atmosphere is changing. The manager continuous by saying that:
“Today people are employed into the business for their skills in marketing and sales.”

This is not only a bad thing but it has also affected the industry and the organisations within in ways of importers being more market oriented and they sell wine as a commodity product. The future for Semillon looks promising if Systembolaget is still active as a strong actor on the Swedish market and further the manager believes that them as an actor will have competitive advantage if Systembolaget as a monopoly will be abolished.

“The interest in wine will not disappear just because Systembolaget will.”

Their knowledge will give them competitive advantage and the recent Internet sale of wine are approached with some scepticism from the manager, but still there are benefits from selling over the Internet. “There is a big wine interest in Sweden and on the internet you can see what you are buying and if people know where to find what they want will change the picture in selling wine”. The corruption scandal has affected Semillon although they are not competing in the price range below 80 SEK where there is the most intense competition. The manager feels that the importers are being treated as a collective group that is less serious, even Semillon is not part of this group. Semillon has a good relationship with the Systembolaget, even though the manager favours a free market. Systembolaget is our largest customer and the only thing that differs is that it is a monopoly and an organisation with a lot of people with good knowledge about wine. Some importers feel that they should be treated differently because of them being in a closed retail market and that Systembolaget have more obligations to them than others being in a difficult situation.

In summary; the manager sees that some of the personal activities will be replaced with more non-personal relations in marketing for example. The manager believes that Semillon will be persistence over time with different type of activities that might not be used today. The corruption scandal will hopefully fade away but the manager says that the importers sometimes are treated as a less serious gang, when not every company has been involved in the bribery corruptions. Semillon is not a member of the VSL since the manager believe that they are too small to influence the decisions taken at the VSL, and if they would be a member they as an organisation would stand for good ethics and the members of today do not have same mutual understanding about how you do business within the Swedish alcohol import industry.

5.9.2 Actions of Marsanne

The team member of Marsanne says that the new activities in the market is: “Today you have to be able to tailor your products to the Swedish market and work more intense with product development and to find products suitable for the Swedish market.” The role of Marsanne on the Swedish market has changed because the product life cycles has shortened both for liqueurs and wine and now the customers are demanding more flavours and Marsanne are more affected by trends. Today you have to develop new flavour every other month to be able to compete on the market.

“We try to explain to our producers that on the Swedish market you can not work with old products, you have to adapt to the constantly changing market.”
The monopoly gives Marsanne advantages such as they do not need a big sales force like when you are selling products to restaurants. The disadvantages are that the company are totally affected by the Systembolaget launch plan and the new system introduced this year gives some advantages because it gives you longer time to find a suitable product and if you succeed to get a product launched at Systembolaget the product have longer shelf time today. But on the other hand it has become more difficult to enter Systembolaget since there is more competition of the shelf space.

Marsanne believe that Systembolaget will be a strong actor for a couple of years more, but they as an organisation have not made any serious plans for the market when the monopoly disappears. They have already an international sales force that has experience in selling on a free market and they believe that strong brands will be a competitive advantage and enduring for the future. The whole industry is affected by the corruption scandal and the effect has been that all type of monopolies is questioned today. The big question for the future is the taxes in Sweden and that is a crucial question that has to be considered and discussed in Sweden.

“The crucial question for the future is the taxes.”

Today the major threats are the trade over the borders by the private customers, the market share of spirits are decreasing at Systembolaget and more people are crossing the European borders to buy cheaper spirits. The changes in activities for Marsanne, is the changes in the product system at Systembolaget; how they introduce new products at the Swedish market, the alcohol taxes and the trade across borders. The top team member believes that Marsanne will be persistence over time due to its strong brand portfolio and the company will focus more on non-personal activities. Marsanne is a member of the VSL since they believe that through their membership they can establish good relationships within the industry and to maintain a good relationship with Systembolaget.

5.10 Actions of group B2

5.10.1 Actions of Fendant

Fendant acknowledges that there are several changes taking place within the industry today. Among several, the corruption scandal, cross-border trade and the taxes are hot topics today. The beer producers in Sweden are facing major problems because of the high taxes and the cross-border trade might be the end for the Swedish beer producers. The corruption scandal has hopefully ended some personal relationships that were quite common before and now all the importers optimistically can compete on the same terms. In the future Fendant might be forced to cooperate with other actors like wholesalers in order to survive and stay in the business if the monopoly ends.

“We might have to cooperate, we have no possibility to fight against ICA and the others, but as a niche actor we have good pre-requisites to survive on this market”.

The top team member believes that the de-regulation will be a fact in four to five years and they are preparing for this moment. Fendant believe that their professional approach and good knowledge will help them to be persistent over time. The top team member hopes that now
when the corruption scandal has been taken to the surface some of the personal relationship has ended and that there will be a fair market with equal competition and they can focus on the more non personal activities. Fendant is not a member of the VSL because they do not share the same mutual understanding of the moral and ethics within the industry. Fendant are a former member but decided to exit the organisation because of VSL: s actions in the recent corruption scandal.

5.11 Actions of group B3

5.11.1 Actions of viognier

Viognier believes that the monopoly will be gone within ten years time. Further, the manager predicts that Viognier would then be surrounded by a number of larger wine and spirits importers with a large capital that works as a distributor to the restaurant business. The market would be shaped as an oligopoly with ICA, COOP and possibly Axfood as the large actors and there is a chance that a lesser number of smaller importers will have the possibility to continue to work as they have done before. The manager describes changes in the industry for example that the market is controlled by fewer actors than before. Another change that not has had much affect on Viognier so far is the trade across borders; the manager means that this trade affects the companies that have large volume products with perhaps less qualitative direction than Viognier. A change that has affected Viognier is the new system at Systembolaget with modules that makes it difficult to reach all customers with the products when introducing new products at the Swedish market. The manager describes this as with the new system, it is impossible to know what will sell and that the customer will get less to choose from.

"Although the corruption scandal has risen to the surface, the smaller importers like us still are affected; the ‘friendship corruption’ still is the base for achieving competitive advantage in the industry”.

The manager says that the top team at Systembolaget along the way has put the blame on the importers but the manager believes that it is Systembolaget who are responsible for the monopoly and has made it possible to use bribes and “friendship corruption“ in order to gain market share. The actions of Viognier are tightly connected with the corruption scandal and the manager believes that there have not been any big changes; the “friendship corruption” is still there. The manager is not sure whether the company can stay persistence on a free market since the big merchandise chains probably will rule the market. Viognier is a member of the VSL because they believe that you have to be a part of what is happening within the industry although after the corruption VSL has lost its national reputation.

5.12 Overview of the central and distinctive characteristics and the actions of the importers.

This table of keywords and themes (fig 6) presented on the next page will act as a skeleton for approaching the analysis and will give the reader an overview of the eight importers and their characteristics and actions. This table will help us in trying to find industry identities within
the Swedish alcohol import industry, what this identity consist of and how does this identity affect the actions within the industry.

The purpose is to answer the questions stated in this thesis by describing the central and distinctive characteristics and to find similarities and dissimilarities among these characteristics within the industry. Further to relate to these characteristics within the industry in relation to the actions of these identities and by presenting this scheme we believe that we provide empirical substance to the issue of inter-organisational identity.

This table have divided the eight importers in both geographical location and sales in volume (1-3), this to give the reader some structure and to more easily see patterns/themes or similarities/dissimilarities among the eight importers in relation to their geographical location, sales in volume but also if they are a newcomer or a senior in the business.

Questions like is it possible to find similarities among the seniors in the business and the newcomers and does size and location matter in what actions they take within the industry comes to our mind? Further, why are some of the importers a member of the VSL and what is the reason for their membership or non-membership can be questioned and a part of their identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry. How come some of the importers focus their future activities on being market oriented and some stay with personal relationships?
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6. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis proceeds from the stated problem and purpose in this thesis: Is there an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry, and if so, what is the content of this identity and how does this (industry) identity affect the actions taken within the industry? The structure is divided into three parts that will be explained below.

In analysis I the framework by Albert & Whetten’s will be analysed in relation to the central and distinctive characteristics of the importers, at the organisational level, in our way to find if there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol industry.

Analysis II will reveal if these central and distinctive characteristics have things in common, finding importers of similar characteristics, which indicates that there is an industry identity. The differences among the importers will reveal if there are importers that share some characteristics but have dissimilar characteristics that indicate that there might be possible to see groups of similar/dissimilar characteristics, but are not to a full extent an industry identity. This will take the analysis to an inter-organisational level and to reveal if there is an industry identity, if there are aspects that can be placed at a higher level than just the organisation-i.e. central/distinctive aspects at an industry level. Further the similarities and dissimilarities will be analysed in relation to the size and location of the importers, in other words the analysis will focus if the importers are located in Group A or B and in Group1, 2 or 3, this to see if location and size affects the importers in defining their identity.

Through analysis III we relate to the central and distinctive aspects at an industry level and how the industry identity affect the actions taken within the industry in ways of how persistence over time they are, the membership of an industry association and what type of relationship the importers have with their customers, personal or non-personal operations.

6.1 Analysis I

6.1.1 The Central and Distinctive Characteristics

The central and distinctive characteristics of each of the eight importers are important since it is one part of revealing if there is an industry identity, since it describes who we are and what we do, the identification process compared to other organisations. As Albert & Whetten stress the central characteristics is what is essential of the organisation and they are individual for each organisation depending who answers the questions and what industry they are active in. The Swedish alcohol import industry and the managers/top team of these organisations answered questions about their central characteristics and there are indications of similar central characteristics as Albert & Whetten stress like product mix. (Albert & Whetten 1985) and like Peteraf & Shanley argue that the size of the firm, activities and product quality are also important central characteristics. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

The distinctive characteristics allows the manager/top team of the importers to distinguish their organisation from other organisations out in the peripherals and the core members within the industry, and the importers identify other importers within the industry and describe those organisations that work in similar ways like they do and how others differ from themselves.
(Peteraf & Shanley 1997) The identification process is a part of defining if there is an industry identity but not how the importers identify we and the others i.e. the interaction process with other organisations within an industry is a strong impetus for identity formation but not how this process takes place. However by defining your membership you differentiate your organisation from others. (Ashforth & Mael 1989) “The identity mirrors the image of others”. (Hatch & Schultz 2002) The central and distinctive characteristics are analysed through strategic/market dimensions like product mix, portfolio size, volume sales, location and are to be evaluated through dimensions like serious/product or professional/market orientation.

6.2 Central Characteristics

All importers define what is central for their organisation by describing their mix of wines, size of portfolio, serious VS professional, serious VS market oriented, serious and being member of an industry association.

6.2.1 Mix of wines and size of portfolio

There is definitely possible to see that the two importers in the A1 group have a large sized focused and a mix of premium and commodity wines portfolio that indicates that this can be a common characteristic within this segment. The two importers within the B1 segment have a medium size focused and commodity portfolio that indicates that these central characteristics are the same within this segment, being located outside of Stockholm. Within group 2 (A+B) all have a medium sized portfolio, but only Semillon have a focused portfolio and this can be because of them having a premium wines portfolio and the other two having a scattered portfolio and although they sell a lot of wines to Systembolaget their main focus is on spirits or on beer. The only importer being a representative in group 3 (B) can only be analysed in relation to the other four importers within the B group and is the only one that focus on premium wines.

6.2.2 Serious vs. professional

The activities are interpreted as how the importers view themselves as being serious/professional and what orientation their organisation has, if they are product oriented/market oriented. A serious importer is according to the importers, someone that has long experience in the industry, have knowledge about wine and treat wine as a special product and believe that wine cannot be marketed in the same way as beer and spirits. A professional importer focus on marketing strategies and treat wine as beer and spirits i.e. a product that are sold because of the customers demand and have all the skills for selling wine professionally, not someone that only do this because it is fun and as a special interest.

Within the A group there are indications of the importers being serious and product oriented. In group B there are indications of the importers being professional and divided being market or product oriented. The serious importers believe that they are professional in that sense of selling wine with close personal relationships and premium knowledge about wine to be able to succeed in the industry; all the others are unserious. The professional importers believe that wine is a product and you do not achieve any benefits having a personal relationship with either the producer of the wine and Systembolaget. They do not have the possibility to affect
what wine that will enter the retail market in Sweden; they are totally depending on what type of products that Systembolaget will release on the market. However all importers are serious and professional when it means being in this industry to do business not for fun and a personal interest, as some of the importers mention that there are within this industry.

6.2.3 Product vs. market orientation

There are definitely also possible to see two groups; product oriented and market oriented among the importers comparing their central characteristics. A product oriented importer will deliver value to the customer through their products in ways of having a close relationship with the producer of their wines and being active in the process of producing a specific wine that they will introduce at Systembolaget. A market-oriented importer relies on the demand from the customer and to find the best wine through more objective methods; best price and products for the market and the producer does not matter so much. It seems that three out of four importers in group 1 are product oriented and Grenache being the only one being market oriented, and this can be indication of these organisation being in group one and being the largest actors on the Swedish retail market in wine, and having the money and possibility to actively work close with their products.

In group 2, two out of three are market oriented and these two have a scattered portfolio and one being product oriented and this importer also focus on wine solely. There are definitely indications of those importers that have a focused portfolio are product oriented and those that have a scattered portfolio are market oriented, except from one importer, Grenache, in group B1. What is interesting is that this importer was acquisitioned by a European company in 1995 when the import monopoly was released and has adapted marketing skills from this company.

6.2.4 Seniors and Membership

The common institutional history is defined as all the importers have been active before 1995 and therefore are seniors within the Swedish alcohol industry. Although the managers and the top team members do not all have the same institutional and common history, but as a top member of the organisation they express what is central for the organisation and have a mutual understanding of the organisation. Being a senior means that they might identify others that have a previous experience and have worked together before within the industry more easily. The relationship/interaction with others in the industry is defined as being member of the VSL. Either you are a member and are a part of the interaction between organisation within the Swedish alcohol industry or not. Six out of eight importers are member and two are not member and the reason for this differs.

Model over central characteristics (fig 7), own construction
6.3 Distinctive Characteristics

All of the eight importers all defined what is unique for their organisation in relation to other organisations within the industry, but they expressed themselves more heterogeneous than the central characteristics. They believe that they are acknowledged for them being at a specific location, same size of the organisation, a serious organisation both in management and knowledge about the industry, product oriented, market orientation and a professional organisation. It seems that the size of your organisation and were you are located were used most frequently among the eight importers.

Although there are indications of the importers within the A group define or identify their location as something that is more important than other distinctive characteristics. Group A is located in the Stockholm area and the reason for addressing location as something distinctive differed. Within group 1 location was something that was important since it is hard to be active on the Swedish market and being located outside is more complicated. Further other importers that work in similar way, or have the same approach to quality (product oriented), and are serious as themselves, and that they do not even compete with importers located outside of Stockholm and have a marketing approach. Although Marsanne has a marketing approach and a scattered portfolio they are located in group A and believe that they compete in this segment, the others within this group do not appreciate importers that do not have a product orientation approach like Marsanne.

In group B the size of your organisation are of more importance, but also what orientation your organisation have, market or product orientation, but also that you as an importer are professional.

The manager/top team member identified organisations that work in similar way as they do and other organisations that work in a dissimilar way, but what distinctive characteristics they acknowledged as being unique differed from all importers. Some mentioned the same distinctive characteristics but no one had totally the same answers. None of the importers identified the membership of the VSL instead they emphasized their location, product orientation, market orientation, the size of their organisation and being professional. This indicates that even though all eight importers define what is central very similar they want to distinguish themselves in a more heterogeneous way or what is not important for some are more important for others.

The eight importers clearly defined other organisations that work in similar way both with products, which were located in the same geographical location and were serious in their approach to wine. Some importers were very specific in which organisations they did not want to be identified with and mentioned personal relationships and briberies. This indicates that they want to be identified with some importers and some not and this indicates the outcome of different groups/interactions depending on your location in Sweden and how you as an importer take care of your daily activities.

The distinctive characteristics can be summarized as groups (A Group) identify location and group B size as distinctive characteristics for them as an importer within the Swedish alcohol industry.
6.4 Analysis II

6.4.1 Commonalities and dissimilarities of the Central and Distinctive Characteristics

Through the image processes and the external processes stressed by Hatch & Schultz it is also possible to identify similarities/dissimilarities between the characteristics of the importers and what they define as being central and distinctive, as a part of the identification formation of an organisation. (Hatch & Schultz 2002) Further the image process, the picture of yourself that you project on others or how the others picture you, is also a part of conceptualising the industry identity and Peteraf & Shanley argue that it is possible through these images processes to identify organisations with similar or dissimilar identities and through them define the boundaries of your organisation (Peteraf & Shanley 1997). It is also your identity that will give indication about your position within the industry and it is the other actors/identities that define your identity from their perceptions of similar and dissimilar characteristics. (Gadde & Håkansson 2001) The eight importers identified both similar and dissimilar characteristics of other importers within the industry through image processes, which gives us further indications of an industry identity or within the Swedish alcohol import
industry and the content of this identity. In those cases, the importers share the same characteristics we are able to see indications of an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry. When the importers do not share all similar characteristics, but one or more, there are indications of the formation of groups within these identities within the industry these groups are defined as sub identities within the industry that share some characteristics but cannot be defined as an industry identity.

6.4.2 Which central and distinctive characteristics are in common for the importers within the Swedish alcohol import industry?

The importers identify similar characteristics as the other importers in this study, as a part of this is we and this is what we do, which is a part of the industry identity development. These similar central characteristics that the importers describe as being central for their organisation gives us indications that there is possible to see if there is an industry identity but also the content of this identity. It is possible not only to identify similar central characteristics but also to identify two groups with similar central characteristics among the importers. The importers are either product oriented and serious or market oriented or professional, three out of four importers within the A group are product oriented and three out of four within group one are product oriented. Further, in group 2 two out of three importers are market oriented and in the B group two out of four are market oriented. The only respondent in group three/B are product oriented and being the only respondent within this segment that might not give the whole picture within this group.

The importers also identify similar distinctive characteristics, as location, size, product orientation, market orientation, being serious as which is similar to what Gadde & Håkansson (2001) stress as knowing your position or defining your boundary within an industry. However, the distinctive characteristics that the importer identifies cannot be grouped since none of the importers identifies the same distinctive characteristics. These characteristics are more diversified and can be interpreted as sub identities within the industry or groups that share some similar characteristics but cannot be defined as an industry identity. The distinctive characteristics are defined by the importers at more structural dimensions like your position within the industry and what size of your company in sales and portfolio as being distinctive. As one importer say that those importers that are not located in Stockholm are not competing on the same market as they are and an importer located outside of Stockholm believe that they cannot compete with large importers because of their small size. The identification process by the importers can be positioned at a higher level than just the organisation-i.e. central/distinctive aspects at an industry level because of the analysis taking a structural path, which is common at an inter-organisational level and can therefore be analysed at an industry level.

6.4.3 The formation of sub-identities within the Swedish alcohol industry

There are definitely differences among the importers in ways of what they argue being distinctive for their organisation but also how they classify or distinguish themselves from others within the industry or what they believe is common for them and other importers, like Albert & Whetten argue. (Albert & Whetten 1985) There are also indications of the structural dimensions like location and volume size being the base for these sub identities at an industry level. Three out of four importers within the group one, the largest in volume size, identifies
size as being something distinctive and in group two in volume size two out of three importers identifies location as something distinctive. In group 1 and 2 they share some similar distinctive characteristics and can therefore be defined as sub identities within the Swedish alcohol industry but have more dissimilar characteristics than similar to be an industry identity.

When analysing the similar and dissimilar characteristics of the importers we can see that the organisational identity affect what actions the importers take. Although the question we ask ourselves is how these industry identities and group sub identities affect the actions of the importers and is it possible to see patterns of similar actions in relation to the identity of the importers.

6.5 Analysis III: Relate to the central and distinctive aspects at industry level to actions

There are similar central and distinctive characteristics among the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry and we know that their organisational identity affect the actions they take. If you are serious you are product oriented and if you are professional you are market oriented. However we do not know how the industry identity affects the actions of the importers within the Swedish alcohol industry or how identity plays a role for the actions within the industry.

The external processes/interaction processes between organisations within an industry are acknowledged by Baldwin and Bengtsson (Baldwin & Bengtsson 2004), and these interactions are also addressed by Peteraf & Shanley since they set the base for competition, interaction and action within an industry. Within the Swedish alcohol import industry the managers/top teams perceptions/image processes define the boundaries of the organisation but also what operations/action each importer take within the industry. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997) The organisations within an industry work “From a shared pool of knowledge” (C.F 1982 in Peteraf & Shanley1998.) The actions of the importers are defined as how they prepare for the future, their persistence over time, if they are member of an industry association or what type of relationship they have with their customers, and there are indications of identity affect these actions. These identification processes is when the manager/top team acknowledge specific activities, behaviours and characteristics and set the base for identity development, but they also affect in the way organisations define some identities within an industry as acting the same way they do and like the others. This is similar to what Peteraf and Shanley stress, that the actions one importer take in relation to its identity is how the organisation persist over time, if you are member of industry association and what type of relationship you have with your customers, personal or non-personal relationship. The top team/manager identifies if competitors are reliable interaction partners and identifies similar or dissimilar central and distinctive characteristics of other importers within the industry, and through these interactions it is possible to take the analysis to an industry level and find actions that affected by the existing identities within the industry. (Peteraf and Shanley 1997)

6.5.1 Persistence over time

It seems that seven out of eight importers believe that they will persist over time, but what actions they take to be able to achieve this differ. All of the four importers in group 1 believe
that they will have a future in the industry, however, the importers differ in how they see this persistence, Grenache and Tempranillo see the future more market orientation with non personal activities like logistics, transportation and scanning the market what the customer wants and gaining more experience in marketing. Malbec and Tannat believe that their persistence over time will rely on their product knowledge and through personal activities like close relationships with the customer will be the key of their success. All the importers in group 2, Semillon, Marsanne and Fendant believe in the future and on non-personal activities. Viognier, in group 3 has doubts in the future, but believe that to be able to survive non-personal activities is the right way to go.

As a summary, we can see two groups working in different directions for the future within the Swedish alcohol import industry. Either you are product oriented and serious, which means working after the old code in the industry, or being market oriented and professional, working after marketing ethics in the world means equal competition. There is a relation to product orientation and serious as being more active in personal activities, further the relation between being market oriented and professional and more active in non-personal activities are visible and being presented in the next section.

6.5.2 Type of relationship to customer

Since this study has focused on the relationship between the importers and to Systembolaget we will not analyse the possible relationship with the restaurants in the future. Although we would like to show a possibility of how the scenario could look when we are discussing the actions taken by the companies when doing business with others. All of these eight importers see Systembolaget as their major customer and therefore they depend very much on the existence of the monopoly. The Swedish alcohol import industry has definitely been affected by challenges like the bribery scandal among the importers and also the new organisations/importers within the Swedish alcohol industry since 1995. New in the meaning the structure of the organisations as importers, but the actors have previous experience in the industry as agents, often employed by the monopoly so they share some common history.

The bribery scandal seems to not have affected the importers seriously; however some acknowledge that the personal activities, like having the possibility to chose what shelves at the stores at Systembolaget their wines should be placed at, were no longer allowed. The close personal relationships with the purchase department at Systembolaget were no longer the same but no major damage was done. However, Viognier, was pleased with that the bribery scandal had come up to the surface, however the scandal was much bigger than what is up today and a lot of the importers that have been involved has not been accused. Although some of the importers feel misunderstood and do not want to identify with those organisations that use unfair methods in their daily activities to sell wine, all of the companies have the same institutional history, being a former agent. This indicates that some of the importers have turned away from the bribery, some feel that personal relationships are something that they will not end with just because of this and some see working with wine as any commodity product there is on the market: You sell want the market demand.

Although some importers are product oriented and others are market oriented they all believe that maintaining a good relations ledge and good relationship with Systembolaget and their suppliers of wine. Some will stay on the market since they have joined together with other large organisations on the Swedish market and some have a pure marketing approach in
selling wine and do not have any personal relationships with Systembolaget or their suppliers in ways of visits and close interrelationships like friendship

We see a relation between those importers that believe in close personal relationships with their customers and wine producers having a product orientation and being serious. Further, there is also a relation between those importers that do not believe in close personal relationship having a more marketing approach in selling wine and being professional. As a summary there are indications of industry identities affecting what actions the importers take within the industry, although the close relationship with Systembolaget is not allowed those that believe in close personal relationship stay with their belief and will continue selling wine in that way. Action, close interaction between others, Systembolaget is not allowed any more after the bribery scandal and was not allowed before the bribery scandal and one wonders how those importers that stay with close personal relationship will survive in the future.

6.5.3 Membership of industry association

In group A Malbec and Tannat are serious, members of the VSL and product oriented. Semillon shares the same central characteristic but is not a member of the VSL. The manager of Semillon manager feels that they are too small and do not want to be identified with the members of the VSL, because of the bribery scandal. Semillon also does not prefer personal relationships but this is because of the recent bribery stories and they do not want to be identified with those who actively were involved in this kind of actions. The fourth respondent in group A, Tannat, take different action in relation to its identity, them being professional, being market oriented and do not emphasizes personal relationships, but still are a member of the VSL.

In group B three out of four respondents are member of the VSL, Grenache believe that it does not affect them at all, but through the membership they can get information and updates about the industry by mail and newspapers. Tempranillo is a member since their organisation is located outside of Stockholm but also for the information about the industry although their membership is quite passive. Fendant was a member but are no longer a member of the VSL because they are disappointed with the actions taken by the VSL in the recent corruption scandal. Viognier is also a member because the manager feels that it is a must to be involved in an organisation that represent the industry, however the manager acknowledges that the VSL has lost the good reputation it ones had. There are indications of sub identities or groups of identities with different content or belief why you decide to be a member of the VSL. One group that do not want to be identified with the bribery scandal, one group having a passive membership with the purpose of gaining information about the industry and one group that believe that the membership gives them the opportunity to change things within the industry and that the VSL is a strong actor within the Swedish alcohol import industry.

The interesting part is that all importers within group are a member of the VSL and two out of three in group two are not members of the VSL. This gives indications of size of sales might affect your decision as an importer of choosing a membership and the possibility to affect decisions within the VSL. The only importer in group three are however a member but very negative about how the VSL have acted in the recent bribery scandal. There is not one or two clear reason why different identities chose being a member or not being a member of the VSL, but there are indications of volume of sales as a impetus for membership and that the bribery scandal have affected the action of being a non member.
6.5.4 How industry identity affect the actions taken within the industry

There is a relation between the two industry identities, product orientation and market orientation, and if the importers decide to be active in personal activities with their customers and those who are not active in personal activities. The industry identity of a product oriented importer work closely with their customers and believe that this is the way you as an importer should work in order to be serious in the industry. To sell wine is not as selling any kind of product you must devote your soul and it is impossible to sell a wine from a producer that the importer have no knowledge about. The product oriented importer focus on selling both premium and commodity wines but it is how they approach the product and decide what producers they want to introduce at the Swedish market. The wine industry is built upon personal relationships and selling wine has always been interconnected with close personal relationship and the product oriented importer stay with this focus. The market oriented importer also have a mix of premium and commodity wines, but these importers believe that to be able to stay on the market and survive in the future and to stay active in the industry you as an importer must be adjusted to what turn the market takes and to be able to be flexible a more marketing approach to wine is regarded.

Model to explain how industry identity affects the actions taken within the industry. (Fig.9)
7. Conclusions

In this chapter, we will answer the stated problem and purpose in this thesis:

*Is there an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol import industry, and if so, what is the content of this identity and how does this (industry) identity affect the actions taken within the industry?*

All that we have brought with us and presented in this thesis leads us to our findings that there is an industry identity within the Swedish alcohol industry based on two orientations; the product or market orientation and the content of these identities are based on how their importers believe that you as an importer should act in selling wine to the customers. Being a product or a market-oriented importer are based on how the importers identify themselves through others in ways of defining (“who we are is what we do”) through the central and distinctive characteristics, or with other words being serious or professional.

The similarities that we found in all importers whether they are product or market orientated are interpreted as industry identities and the dissimilarities or some similarities are interpreted as sub identities within the industry. The sub identities can be explained as small groups of importers that share some similar central and distinctive characteristics and there is a relation between these group identities and structural dimensions like the volume of sales of your organisation and where your organisation is located. The interesting part of the two structural dimensions (professional and serious) that acts as content of the identity of the importers are, that they differ from what Peteraf & Shanley acknowledges as important for an industry identity to arise. Other aspects seem more important in an industry identity than what Peteraf & Shanley states as important for an industry identity, aspects such as values, seriousness or professional.

Industry identity (i.e. product or market) does affect action or rather some types of actions e.g. Type of relationships with customer, future scenarios or industry association membership and these actions can be grouped in to sub identities within the industry that share the same understanding about how you should approach the customers, being member of the VSL but also how you prepare for the future. The link between industry identity and what actions you take is clear for us and we argue that the actions are a part of the identity formation within the Swedish alcohol import industry.

Although this study focus on wine importers these importers do import spirits and beer, we argue that this study can be transferred into other importers (wine, beer or spirit) because all of these importers do import both beer and spirits. Some of the importers also focus more on beer and spirits than wine. We argue that there is an industry identity that can be transferred into other wine, spirit and beer importers as a whole within the Swedish alcohol industry. To be able to transfer this study into other industries further studies must be done, but we believe that this study shows that identity can be shown within an industry at an inter-organisational level and that it is possible to take our model and do a study within other industries. The interesting part with this is to find what structural dimensions are important within other industries and can they be compared with the structural dimensions within this industry.

The figure stated below will clarify the conclusion and show the development of previous model in the chapter of theories were we first presented it based upon the theoretical
framework given there. The identity of the Swedish wine importers is created through identification processes by the managers/top team. The image of ones organisation compared to other similar or dissimilar organisations define their identity within the industry. The identity of the Swedish wine importers is defined as being professional or serious and these characteristics affect what actions they take within the industry. The contribution of this model is that it is possible to take the dimensions within an organisation and take them to an inter-organisational level and thereby find identities within an industry, as in this case the Swedish alcohol industry.

Previous studies have had a clear focus on organisational level and we feel that with this study we have been able to enlighten the possibility to take the focus up to the inter-organisational level. This because our contribution has shown that the actions taken within a company has much to do with their identity, in this industry it has been clear that it is how you act not how you “look” that matters, in other words: the “actions” is as much involved in a company’s identity as central and enduring characteristics.
Organisational identity at an inter-organisational level

Manager/Top team

Identification Processes

Central  Distinctive  Enduring*

Organisational Identity

Inter-organisational Identity

Industry Identity?

Professional  Serious  Action

*As this study is a snapshot we will not focus on enduring here
8. Discussion for future studies

In this thesis we have found two industry identities but they are just presented and defined in terms of them existing in the Swedish alcohol import industry. To be able to get further knowledge about these identities and to find out more about these there is two ways of doing. Both identities think that they are right and that they act in the best way within the industry, but one could question if these two ways are conflicting or complementing to each other. Is it so that these two identities are complementing and exist in the industry because they are needed? Alternatively, is it so that one of the two will take the most dominant feature within the industry in the future? Is it so that you have to chose one to be able to survive in the future or questions why these two identities are present within the industry rises from this thesis and are fruitful studies that are to be done to get a wider picture of the industry identities.

Is it so that the respondents or the top team member/manager that acts as a representative for their organisation also affect these identities more than we know? It would be interesting to perform a study concerning the industry identities and how the representatives of the organisations affect the study in ways of how long they have been in the organisation. Is it the CEO or the MD that answers the questions, although Peteraf & Shanley argue that the identity is context specific and an outgrowth from the experience of a specific industry? Further Peteraf & Shanley argue that the managers/top team members can act as a representative agent for the organisation and if the top team member has been in the organisation for a long time they have a mutual understanding and experience of their organisation. (Peteraf & Shanley 1997)

How does the history of the CEO looks like, is it a small company run by the CEO himself/herself or does the company have different departments that take care of marketing and so on are questions that have come to our mind. Further, does age of the respondent matter or the numbers of years within the organisation and does the top team member/manager differ in how they perceive the company depending on whether they had been in the business as an agent or has entered later? Is it so that some of the top teams within some importers are more homogeneous, or would we have received different results if we had asked the founders?

It is a relation between the industry identities and the actions taken within the industry. However, is it possible to predict their actions based on what orientation the importers has and if you look at our study we see indications of predicting actions if you relate to the market orientation and non-personal relationship with customer and product orientation and personal relationship with customers. This would indicate that it is possible to predict other actions in a future study.

The actions taken in interaction of an industry identity by different importers gives us indications that a further study within the Swedish alcohol industry concerning strategic groups would be fruitful since there is evidence of such groups with similar strategic goals could exist. We have not asked questions that will cover this area but it could be so that the importers share mutual goals that we do not know about. Is it even so that cooperation within the industry takes place at an industry level? If so, the area of strategic groups would be interesting to study.
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Appendix I Project description (swedish)

Projektbeskrivning Umeå 2005-04-21

Magisteruppsats som behandlar alkoholimportbranschen roll och identitet


Bakgrund
Det är i år tio år sedan importmonopolet släpptes och med tanke på att antalet legala importörer (varumottagare och upplagshavare) har ökat stadigt under senare år så tror vi att det har skett betydande förändringar med avseende på ökad konkurrenssituation och förändrade relationer i branschen. Vi anser också att det är särskilt intressant hur alla dessa företag, nya som gamla, ser på sig själva och de andra aktörer som agerar i den industri eller bransch som de verkar i. Det är även intressant hur de definierar sin roll i branschen och vi tror att olika aktörer kan ha olika uppfattningar om hur omgivningen ser ut. Ytterligare en aspekt som gör ämnet intressant är den pågående muthärvan och den fortsatta mediabevakningen av det ämnet, vi anser att det är viktigt att öka förståelsen för hur branschen agerar och ser på sig själv idag.


Hur vill vi studera ämnet?
Det är ju företagen inom branschen som har den verkliga kunskapen om hur relationer och identitet ser ut inom industrin därför ser vi det som viktigt att det är dessa företag som få ge sin bild av hur deras arbetsrelationer och interaktioner ser ut. Vi kommer att studera ämnet genom intervjuer med VD eller annan person som har god insikt och en betydande position inom organisation för ett antal företag inom branschen. Dessa företag kan skifta i storlek och antal år på marknaden, allt för att ge en så nyanserad bild som möjligt av branschen.

ämnen vi vill beröra:
Beskriv kortfattat hur organisationen jobbar
Beskriv hur ni ser på branschen som ni agerar i
Hur agerar organisationen i industrin och skiljer sig detta ifrån andra?
Vilka ser organisationen som sina konkurrenter - Vad skiljer er organisation från andra konkurrenter och andra aktörer?

Vad kännetecknar en bra konkurrent?

Har detta förändrats över tid och Hur i så fall?

**Vad vill vi?**
Vår önskan är att du som representant för Heba Trading har möjlighet att avsätta tid för en sådan intervju där du får ge organisationens syn på er roll och identitet. Vid en intervju är vår önskan att du som respondent har möjlighet att avsätta ca 30-45 minuter till vårt förfogande. Detta för att vi i lugn och ro ska kunna reflektera över frågor och svar och täcka i de områden som är intressanta för oss. Vi kommer att skicka tillbaka intervju materialet så att du får en möjlighet att korrigerera eventuella oklarheter och liknande. Vi har så mål att utföra en fallstudie varför vi i rapporten kommer att presentera materialet och referera till er med era karakteristika (storlek etc.) och inte med namn. Har du önskan om ytterligare anonymitet är vi öppna för att diskutera frågan.

**Vad ska vi använda det empiriska materialet till:**
I första hand är insamlad och analyserat empiriskt material till för vår studie; att färdigställa en magisteruppsats men materialet kommer även att kunna användas som empiriskt underlag till vetenskapliga artiklar av och eller i samarbete med vår handledare Andrew Baldwin.

**När kan denna intervju genomföras?**
Vi är medvetna om att de företag som vi är intresserade som goda representanter för branschen av är upptagna men vi hoppas ändå att du har tid och möjlighet att ställa upp på en intervju, som kommer att ta formen av en telefonintervju. Vi är även medvetna att det är med kort varsel vi önskar en intervju men vår förhoppning är att du kan ha möjlighet att ställa upp under början av vecka 19 alternativt under vecka 20.

Har du några frågor eller synpunkter är du givetvis välkommen att kontakta oss eller vår handledare.

Med stor förhoppning om att du ska ha tid att avsätta för vår studie!

*Med vänlig hälsning*

Maja-Lisa Junkka: maajua02@student.umu.se, 070-595 43 66

Lena Karlsson: leakan01@student.umu.se, 070-303 23 44

Vår handledare: Andrew Baldwin: drew.baldwin@fek.umu.se, 070-568 24 18
Appendix II

Interview manual (Swedish)

Utformad frågemanual till respondenterna utifrån ”mutual understanding” of the central and distinctive characteristics together with actions by the manager

Who are we, What kind of business are we in? What do we want to be?
Innan vi börjar kan du beskriva dig själv osv:

Utbildning:
År i branschen
År i organisationen:
Organisations start:
Hur ser din roll ut i organisationen:
Tid i organisationen som helhet och på nuvarande post:
Utbildning: Formell eller informell (upplärd, ekonom sv) Från lärling till marknadskompetens till förlorad kompetens – kompetensutveckling?

Central as something important and essential, How are their answers affected by the context of the questions? How do organisations answer the identity question? Defined by its entrepreneurial activity?

1. Beskriv er utveckling från starten till idag och hur det är att vara leverantör i Sverige vid starten och idag. (Samt vilken relation ni har till monopolet).
2. Beskriv vad ni gör för att hämta in kunskap och överföring av kunskap om vin i organisationen - all sorts kunskap – logistik administration
3. Beskriv de värderingar som ni tycker att er importfirma står för (kvalitet, moral och etik)- vi får läsa ut! – få de att diskutera generellt...
4. Är ni medlem i sprit och vinleverantörsföreningen, vad innebär det för er? Eller är ni med i någon annan förening? Om inte – varför? konsekvenser

Distinctive – Identity as classification

1. Finns det olika typer av vinimportörer i branschen? – vilka olika?- grupperingar eller mängd försäljning, seriositet, etiskt, traditionella eller nya?
2. Tycker du att ni skiljer er från andra importörer? – vilka är era konkurrenter – sättet att beskriva ger bild av sig själv!
3. Skulle ni vilja identifiera er med någon annan importör?
4. skillnader och gemenskaper mellan er och era konkurrenter men även andra leverantörer

Actions

1. Har er roll som aktör inom branschen förändrats sedan starten; geografiskt läge, produkt portfolio, storlek, värderingar, joint venture, marknader… (andel leverans till Systembolaget och till restauranger) – HUR i så fall?
2. Kan du beskriva om det är någonting som har skett den senaste tiden som har gjort att du har ändrat uppfattning om andra importörer.- bestäm ”senaste tiden” – laddad?
3. Kan du beskriva er roll bland importörerna – läge på marknad, storlek
Konkurrens

1. Hur upplever du konkurrensen på den Svenska Marknaden?
2. Hur ser du på att antalet upplagshavare ökar varje år?
3. Vad kännetecknar en dålig/bra konkurrent