Project Communication's Impact on Risk Management and Goal Achievement

A case study of project communication's impact on risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects.

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Abstract

Public place branding in municipalities is increasing in frequency and consists of multiple stakeholders, which enhances the role of communication in this type of project. The research question is how does project communication impact risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects? This is answered by the main purpose of this study, which is to increase the understanding of the project communication’s role in risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects. In order to gain this understanding the thesis has had a qualitative case study with an inductive approach. The focus of the theoretical framework is including place branding, project management, strategic alignment, goal achievement, risk management, and project communication. As a case for the study the project Destination South Lapland has been chosen. The project aims to establish a destination enterprise for the region, and includes four municipalities from the counties of Västerbotten and Jämtland. The focus has been to investigate differences in perceptions and handling regarding goals and risks between the strategic and operational level, and how communication is interrelating these areas. The main conclusion that we can draw from the study is that project success factors are based on the projects goals and that project communication of goals, roles, and risks has an impact on goal achievement. The study shows that project communication is what interlinks the success factors and thus enables public place branding projects to achieve its goals. Project risk management and risk assessment was also found as success factors in public place branding projects. Project communication was therefore also found to incorporate risk management into the project strategy, which facilitates public place branding projects in achieving their goals.
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1. Introduction

In this chapter, we intend on motivating our choice of research subject by reviewing previous literature, which will further evolve into our research question and purpose. Our demarcations and definitions of relevant concepts are also presented in this chapter.

1.1 Problem background

The use of place branding as a research topic and as a marketing strategy has recently increased significantly (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 61). Place branding is the concept of branding, communicating, and marketing a place in order to attract more businesses, investors, and visitors to a specific area (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69). Place branding can for that reason be an important strategy to foster regional growth and prosperity, and many public entities have therefore adopted this trend and are now branding their municipalities. One issue is however that these public organizations often lack the necessary financial resources to spend on place branding. Another issue in place branding within the public sector is also that some public organizations such as municipalities are too small to compete on their own.

To solve the issue of lack of funding and lack of competitive size, municipalities therefore often cooperate with other public and private organizations. Such strategic alignments are then managed as project organizations or individual enterprises connected to the original organization. However, there are several reasons for forming this kind of temporary project organization. Sydow et al. (2004, p. 1475) proposed that one reason for an organization to host a project is to test and evaluate a certain issue to a cost that is not the same as for the permanent organization. A project can further on be defined as a temporary organization that can be found in both private and public industries (Hobday, 2000, p. 874) “...to which resources are assigned to undertake a unique, novel and transient endeavor managing the inherent uncertainty and need for integration in order to deliver beneficial objectives of change” (Turner & Müller, 2003, p. 7). The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth is one institution which funds projects that contributes to increase the regional growth and occupation (The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2013). Managing place branding efforts as projects does hence enable relatively small municipalities to apply for such funding and hence pursue place branding activities.

As noted above the underlying reason for hosting a project is to achieve a certain outcome under a limited time period. This hence leads us to the assumption that the final outcome or success of the project is based on whether or not the project goals are achieved. However, what constitutes a successful project is a frequently studied topic and has been found to be a matter of definition depending on its context. According to Cooke-Davies (2002, p. 185) a successful project is based on the interactions between factors which influences the project management, the project objectives, and the benefits received by the stakeholders. The most frequently used measures of a successful project are: meeting the budget, meeting the performance objectives, and satisfying the customers’ needs (Pinto & Slevin, 1988, cited in Müller & Jugdev, 2012, p. 760). Gomes et al., (2012, p. 317) argues that in order to have a successful outcome of a public sector project, a project manager needs to have the knowledge and abilities to handle policies within the organization as well as externally. An understanding of the project’s context is hence relevant in order to steer the project correctly. It is also important to know how decisions are executed and how to handle these (Gomes et al. 2012, p. 317). According to Liu and Walker (1998, p. 215) project success is the result
of attaining the project goals and gaining a satisfactory result for the stakeholders. For that reason goal achievement can be said to be closely related to project success, although goal achievement could be more focused on the indicators set for the project and success does not necessarily demands that the goal are met to be seen as a successful project. Success in place branding projects is a rather unexplored topic although Klijn et al. (2012, p 515), and Baker and Cameron (2008, p. 93) have found that success factors in place branding and destination marketing are a combination of a strategic marketing approach and stakeholder involvement.

Agreed upon is also that project risk management and risk management planning is essential to achieve project success as it reduces uncertainty (Cervone, 2006, p. 261; Cooke-Davies, 2002, p. 186). Besner & Hobbs (2012b, p. 238) also mentions risk management as a success factor for a project since it is important to have knowledge regarding the risks in the project and then approach it in order to achieve its goals. Risk management could be defined as “...identifying, analyzing, and being ready to respond to risk events” (Pinto, 1998, p. 138). Cooper & Faservuk (2011, p. 27) shows in their study that a strategic risk that is possible to happen leads to a behavior and adaptation with a low risk approach. There are hence different ways to approach strategic risks in a project. Marle & Vidal (2011, p. 205) suggests clustering of risk, meaning that within the project it is necessary to arrange different risks into clusters. The basis of this approach is to regularly communicate around the risks and the tasks that are involved in the different processes.

A distinction could be made in terms of a strategic risk involving to a greater extent the project owner; hence the operational level mainly involves the project manager and project group. However it is not simple to exclude one part in many senses when working with risk management, thus they tend to overlap each other (Krane et al., 2012, p. 59). In that sense it is important to see the project with an understanding that strategic risks and operational risks often are combined and should be dealt with in all parts of the project’s lifecycle. According to Krane et al. (2012, p. 59) “...an operational risk may evolve into a strategic one, or a strategic one may be reduced to an operational one”. For that reason strategic risks can be regarded as the most important ones in order to achieve the project goals. As previously noted, place branding projects often consists of multiple project owners and hence also multiple stakeholders. In projects with multiple stakeholders it is important to align the stakeholders’ business strategies (Artto et al., 2008, p. 10), as well as to align the project’s business strategy with the operational structure in order to incorporate both the strategic and operational risks in the business strategy (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990). The combination of strategic and operational project risk management in place branding projects has however not yet been thoroughly investigated.

Communication is further on said to be one of the most important critical success factors for dealing with risks during the implementation of projects and for corporations’ readiness of risk management (Yaraghi & Langhe, 2011, p. 558, 564). Project communication can be explained as a combination of external and internal communication where the prior refers to communication related to project marketing, and the latter refers to written and interpersonal communication “...defined as the personal interaction in a project between project managers, management, project team members, project stakeholders or other individuals...of importance to the project.” (Ramsing, 2009, p. 347) Aligned with Ramsing’s (2009, p. 347) definition of project communication, it is the project manager’s responsibility to obtain a good internal
communication within the project, which can also be described as a way to implement the strategic visions of the project (Pop & Dumitrescu, 2013, p. 1563). According to Krane et al. (2012, p. 65), collaboration and interaction between the project owner and project management is essential in both project- and risk management, and Belassi and Tukel (1996, p. 145) proved that well-functioning communication channels between the involved stakeholders is a necessity to reach project success. The level of commitment and how clear management are in their expectations also plays an extensive role regarding internal communication and how significant it will be (Ruck & Welch, 2012, p. 301). The different perceptions that could occur between the owner level, or the strategic level, and the project level, the operational level is relevant to understand related to the argumentation above. These two levels could also be divided into the steering group and the project group of a project.

Intuitively and as confirmed in the literature, communication is a prerequisite for successful project management and project risk management to align. The communication in projects with multiple stakeholders, such as place branding projects, is however more difficult to manage. As Turner and Müller (2004, p. 328) found, the project owner’s primary interest lies on the result of the project and in receiving the benefits, whereas the project management prioritize to deliver the result on time and within budget. The perceptions of a successful project and the expectations on the outcome are hence not always aligned. Varied priorities is said to increase the need for high collaboration, trust and strong communication between the owner and management (Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 335). Cooke-Davies (2002, p. 189) confirms this argument by emphasizing the importance of human interactions between decision-makers and managers to reach project success.

Varied stakeholder interests (Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 328), and poor communication (Doloi, 2009, p. 1108) are however not the only factors which could negatively affect the project’s risk management and/or outcome. The perceptions regarding risks of a poor producing project are also different between senior managers and project managers. This in the long run implicates that if a project is not performing satisfactory it is likely that the top management will hold the project manager responsible. Even though it might be risks and events that are not possible to control (Thamhain, 2013, p. 29).

As demonstrated above, place branding in municipalities is increasing in use and are often managed as projects. Project management further on revealed to be a complex field where one of its main issues to deal with is to have common understanding of the project strategy (Turner & Müller, 2004; Artto et al., 2008). As previous researchers have proved, project communication is frequently mentioned as a key success factor (Kerzner, 1995; Pritchard, 2004), but can be difficult in many cases where the project involves graphically distributed stakeholders, meaning that regular meetings and communication between the steering group and the project group might be difficult to arrange. The underlying assumption that we have is that well-functioning communication in public place branding projects is highly relevant for managing project risks and thus the strategy, and consequently accomplishing the goals. Based on this discussion we have found that project communication, project risk management, and goal achievement are frequently researched areas in insolation of one another. We therefore want to further investigating how these areas are related to each other in the context of a public place branding project, which leads us to the research question and purpose stated below.
1.2 Research question
Based on the problem background we will address the following research question in this thesis:
How does project communication impact risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects?

1.3 Research purpose
The main purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of project communication’s role in risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects.

Sub Purposes:
- Identify the steering group and the project group’s perceptions and communication of goals and its impact on goal achievement.
- Identify the steering group and the project group’s perceptions and communication of risks and its impact on goal achievement.

1.4 Demarcations
When investigating our research question we are aware of the fact that there are other both internal and external factors apart from project communication, which could also have an impact on the project’s risk management and goal achievement. As the problem background indicates project communication and its relation to these areas is however much less explored, which is why we have chosen to further investigate this specific topic. We have also chosen to focus on the interrelationship between the strategic and operational level since the strategic level is closely related to the establishment of the project goals and objectives, although the operational level are the ones who puts this into action. The selected project for our case study is further on currently going through the implementation phase of the project lifecycle. This have hence resulted in an additional demarcation from the other phases.

There are certain risks which these demarcations might result in. Project communication’s impact on risk management might for instance be difficult to investigate in isolation as other factors might also have an impact on the result. To minimize this risk we therefore intend to use a suitable research method and design so that the results will solely relate to the communication in risk management.

1.5 Definition of concepts
In this thesis we will refer to several general concepts which can often be interpreted differently depending on the context. To rule out potential misinterpretations, a clarification of our use of the definitions is therefore presented below.

*Place branding* refers to the branding of a location, destination, country, nation, city or region in order to attract businesses, investments as well as visitors to the “place” (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69). The concept of place branding is hence chosen over similar definitions such as destination marketing and place marketing due to the fact that these other definitions are not as inclusive since they are more strictly focused on the attraction of tourists.

A project “...is a temporary organization to which resources are assigned to undertake a unique, novel and transient endeavor managing the inherent uncertainty and need for integration in order to deliver beneficial objectives of change” (Turner & Müller, 2003,
This definition is relevant for this thesis as it frames the project’s operations and interactions to a limited timespan, and implies that specific resources are invested for the specific purpose that is separated from the ordinary business’s operations. A public sector project further on consists of multiple external and internal stakeholders, and are depending on external financing and are hence under tight control (Gomes et al., 2012, p. 315). Since the definition of project also applies to public sector projects, these will be used interchangeably.

The project owner “...is the person or group who provides the financial resources for its delivery, accepts project milestones and project completion...” (PMI, 2000, cited in Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 327), and “...is accountable for the investment in the project and receives value from the operation of the facility delivered“ (Turner, 2000, cited in Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 327). This definition is suitable since it emphasizes that the owner can consist of several stakeholders as well as it clarifies what role the project owner serves. Often the multiple project owners form a steering group. In this thesis we will therefore use the term project owner when referring to the primary owner, and use the term steering group referring to the group consisting of all project owners and occasionally other actors on strategic level.

The project manager “...acts on behalf of the owner and manages the project delivery on a day-to-day basis” (Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 327-328). In this thesis we will use the term project manager when referring the person who is in charge of, and manages the project’s daily operation and serves as the link between the steering group and the project group.

The project group consists of the persons working on the operational level in the project. The project manager is in charge of the operations that the project group performs.

Project communication is “…the overall term for all aspects of communication in a project…” (Ramsing, 2009, p. 346) consisting of both internal (written and interpersonal) communication, and external communication meaning communication to and with external parties. For this thesis we will mainly focus on the internal aspects of project communication, and such use the term accordingly.

Project risk is “…a potential event that will adversely affect the ability of a system to perform its mission should the risk event take place” (Garvey, 2000, cited in Kwan & Leung, 2011, p. 635). This definition of risk covers risks which could potentially occur both internally or externally, but could both have a major or minor impact on the project. As we in this thesis want to investigate what the greatest risks are perceived to be we do not want to limit ourselves to either internal or external risks, which consequently makes this general definition suitable.

Project risk management is in this thesis meaning the handling of risks in a project consisting of “…identifying, analyzing, and being ready to respond to risk events” (Pinto, 1998, p. 138). The definition covers the planning and prevention of potential risks in a project; this is including both internal and external risks that could affect the projects goal achievement.

A stakeholder is an individual or an organization that “can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s objectives” (Freeman 1984, p. 46, cited in Fassin,
In our investigation of a place branding project we will encounter both external and internal stakeholders, as both have an interest and potential impact on the project. For that reason, the application of stakeholders will in this thesis refer to all internal and external stakeholders. However, in some instances we will refer to either external stakeholders, meaning the external actors or internal stakeholders meaning the project group and the steering group.

*Goal achievement* does in this thesis refer to reaching the set goals for the project. We therefore see goal achievement as closely related to project success as this is defined as “... attaining the project goals (first level outcome), and participant satisfaction is the reward brought by goal attainment (second level attainment)” (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215).
2. Scientific Method

In this chapter our pre-conceptions will be clarified along with how they might have affected this study. Further on we will define and explain the scientific methodological choices we have made along with the choices and use of literature. The chapter will be concluded by a review of the ethical considerations we have made in this study.

2.1 Pre-conceptions

When researchers conduct a study they often have some type of pre-conceptions, which may or may not have an impact on how the author’s perceive and approach the investigated topic. This means that the world can be interpreted differently depending on what pre-conceptions a person has (Sohlberg & Sohlberg, 2009, p. 73). The research methodological choices are according to Creswell (2009, p. 19) often influenced by the researchers’ experiences, since they tend to select a research method and design which they are the most familiar with. Johansson Lindfors (1993, p. 76) mentions two types of pre-conceptions: primary and secondary preconceptions. The primary refers to the researcher’s personal experiences and the secondary connects the experiences with knowledge from literature, which in other words can be called theoretical preconceptions (Johansson Lindfors, 1993, p. 76).

Our secondary pre-understanding has been acquired during extensive studies at Umeå School of Business and Economics, where we currently are undertaking our tenth and last semester. During the third year in the Business Program, Liv chose to focus her studies on marketing and has hence undertaken courses in service marketing, consumer behavior, and strategic marketing to mention a few. Nils, on the other hand, has focused his studies on management and acquired knowledge within project management and organizational behavior. Since we are majoring in different fields (e.g. marketing and management), we are entering this thesis project with a large knowledge base in two fields. Our secondary pre-conceptions have therefore had an impact on the methodological assumptions, as it has for instance influenced our perception of the world as being socially constructed and that knowledge is created through social interactions.

Our work-experience is another factor which should be mentioned since it also has an impact on our pre-conceptions. Liv has previously worked for event agencies, a non-profit organization focusing on international business relations and indirectly on place branding, as well as performed extra curricular work for several organizations, all where the work was managed in projects. She has thereby gained insights and knowledge from both the perspective of being the project manager as well as a part of the project team. Nils, on the other hand has been working as a project manager, a project administrator and project coordinator at a regional level. As both of us have observed and/or worked in both well-functioning and poor-functioning projects, our primary pre-conceptions have affected our choice of research topic since we ourselves have identified and experienced that project communication and risk management are crucial factors in achieving a project’s goals.

2.2 Research philosophy

The research philosophies one choose to adopt is dependent on the researcher’s view of reality along with their view of knowledge and how knowledge is generated (Saunders, 2009, p. 130, 128). The research philosophy can therefore be said to reflect how the researcher views the world and what assumptions he or she makes (Saunders, 2009, p. 130, 128). These assumptions affect how the researcher understand the knowledge and
reality which is being investigated, and is therefore what also influences the selection of research topic and the research design, meaning what the researcher intends to investigate and how he or she intends to investigate it. The research philosophy hence clarifies the researcher’s view of reality (ontology) and how they view the knowledge (epistemology). In the following sections, we will further explain our philosophical view grounded in our research problem and purpose.

2.2.1 Ontology
The ontological assumptions “…concerns the ideas about the existence of and relationship between people, society and the world in general” (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 13). The researcher’s perception and assumptions of how the world works is therefore in focus of the ontological research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 130). The ontological stances differ in the sense of whether the researcher views reality as being created through interactions between social actors, or to exist “…external to and independent of social actors” (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 131). In this thesis we view the process of goal achievement as being created by interactions between the project members, which are consequently also subject to change. Social constructivism is denoted by the researcher’s subjective approach when applying meaning to the reality (Creswell, 2009, p. 8), and is applicable when the researcher intends to apply meaning to social interactions or continual processes (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132). Saunders et al. (2012, p. 132) also notes that according to the social constructionist, communication depends on the social environment. We therefore conform with the ontological assumption of social constructivism since we want to enable the respondents to apply meaning to the situation and then, as researcher, subjectively analyze and interpret the results. In social constructionism, interviews with open questions are often used in order to open up for the respondents to apply their own values and perceptions (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). This will consequently enable us to investigate the interactions between the people within the project as well as explore the interplay between communication and risk management. In this thesis we therefore believe that our assumptions of social constructivism are suitable to make since we consider that the individuals perceive situations according to the different positions they are acting in.

2.2.2 Epistemology
The epistemological assumptions define what the researcher regard as acceptable knowledge and how it is created (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 14). For that reason the epistemology takes different stances depending on the researcher’s intentions to create an understanding of an objective or subjective reality (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 134). The interpretivist philosophy acknowledges the complexity in human interactions and social behaviors, and views knowledge as being created through interpretations of these social constructs (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137). According to Creswell (2009, p. 8) the epistemological assumptions of interpretivism are often combined with the ontological assumptions of social constructivism. As social constructionists we seek to gain a profound understanding of project communication and how it impacts risk management and goal achievement. In order to fulfill our research purpose, we will need to understand how project communication and risk management is utilized within the project and hence interpret these aspects. As communication is in our opinion based on the interactions between people, we believe that interpreting how humans communicate and cooperate towards a common goal in this case generates knowledge. For that reason, we will adopt the epistemological position of interpretivism, since it
will enable us to create new knowledge based on our interpretations of the respondents’ perceptions and interactions.

2.3 Research approach
As earlier described, we enter this thesis project with assumptions aligned with the social constructionism and interpretivism. Our intention is therefore to explore the nature of our research topic in order to interpret of the social interactions. The research approach hence clarifies how we intend to use theory. The deductive research approach takes its stance in existing theories, which are hypothesized and tested through empirical research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 22). The initial literature review presented in the problem background however proved that no existing theories of the interlinkage between project communication, risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects have yet been developed. Consequently, there are no theories to test, confirm, or reject. Perri and Bellamy (2012, p. 77) note that an inductive research approach can be adopted when there is a lack of existing literature on the research topic. The inductive research approach is explained to start with the gathering of information to better understand the problem, which is thereafter processed and explained by the development of a theoretical framework (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 146). Inductive research can also be used for investigations of complex problems, which are difficult to grasp on forehand (Perri & Bellamy, 2012, 76). In this thesis, we do not know all the dimensions of our research problem on forehand. For that reason we seek to explore how communication is utilized in a project and how it impacts the risk management and goal achievement. The inductive research approach will hence enable us to gain a comprehensive understanding of our research problem as well as enable us to identify unknown aspects of the problem.

2.4 Perspective
The perspective that we have chosen for this study is strategic, since the project performance and the goal achievement relates to the strategic management. Aligned with the choice of a strategic perspective, we will consequently investigate our research problem on an internal level. The internal perspective will hence result in an exploration of the nature of project communication in public place branding projects, of the interactions within the project group, as well as between the project group and the steering group, and its impact on goal achievement.

2.5 Choice of literature
Prior to conducting a study, reviewing existing literature is according to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 73) essential in order to increase the researcher’s knowledge on the subject. As previously explained the use of theories also differ depending on the chosen research approach. Since inductive research departs from an empirical investigation and concludes with a proposed theoretical framework, the literature review serves as a conceptual framework, which provides the researcher with greater insights and knowledge on the research topic. The literature review further on provides with a foundation for where in the literature the findings make a contribution (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 74; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 43). Aligned with our choice of an inductive research approach, the literature review was performed to increase our knowledge of the research topic to ensure that the key areas with relation to our topic was covered, to ensure that a suitable research process was chosen, as well as to make sure that our findings will make a theoretical contribution to the existing literature.
When gathering knowledge regarding our research topic we primarily retrieved our secondary sources through Umeå University library’s search engine which gave us access to a wide range of databases where we primarily used: Business Source Premier. As our research topic relates to project communication, project risk management, goal achievement and place branding we primarily used these search words which resulted in the following hits: project communication + public sector (988), project risk management + public sector (610 hits), Goal achievement + public projects (427 hits) and place branding (1644 hits). Noteworthy is that the filter ‘peer-reviewed’ was used for all searches as to ensure the articles credibility. In some instances these searches did not provide us with sufficient information for our thesis since the findings were not applicable on public place branding projects or did not provide us with the useful knowledge to further investigate our research problem. For that reason we used other search engines such as Elsevier, Web of Science and in some instances Google Scholar in addition to Business Source Premier in order to find relevant material for this thesis. By reviewing the reference lists of the articles we found relevant, we were able to retrieve additional literature, which could be applied in this thesis. Umeå University’s library further on provided us with useful literature for the scientific and methodological design of this thesis.

When we conducted the initial literature review, presented in the problem background, we found that the key concept related to place branding projects included project success. We therefore found Hanna and Rowley’s (2011) model of strategic place brand-management project management suitable for this thesis as it explains the key components of a successful place branding strategy. This framework also emphasized the importance of managing the internal and external success factors which is why Rainisto’s (2003) framework of managerial success factors in place marketing projects was chosen in addition. Baker and Cameron’s (2008) clustering of success factor in place marketing and place branding projects covered both strategic and operational success factors and hence made a contribution since it highlight the key success factors mentioned by Hanna and Rowley and Rainisto. Through our review of the place branding literature we found project management to be an important area as the above authors either explicit or implicit mentioned the importance to manage the key success factors in or order for the project outcome to be success. Gomes et al. (2012) therefore provided us with a profound understanding of how the project management in public projects varies throughout the project lifecycle and on what the key areas of focus should be throughout the different phases. Gomes et al.’s. findings lead us to the understanding that not only the management of people within a project is important to reach success in public place branding projects but also the management of the project strategy. For that reason we chose to include project strategy as a theoretical area to gain knowledge on what type of strategy is suitable in public place branding projects in order to reach success. We then found that Artto et al’s. (2008) framework suitable for our study as it denotes project strategies in public projects with few or multiple stakeholders, and argues for the application and result of the strategies. The key finding in Artto et al’s. framework is that the strategy that a project chooses to adopt is based on the intention to apply, or not to apply the stakeholders’ strategies onto the project. As we have found that public place branding strategies often consists of multiple stakeholders this led us to the belief that strategic alignment might be important for such projects. Henderson and Venkatraman’s (1990) strategic alignment model was hence chosen as it illustrates and explains the interlinkage between the external and internal strategic and operational processes.
With relation to our research question, we saw that goal achievement is consequently the positive outcome of a successful implementation of the project strategy. For that reason Liu and Walker’s (1998) framework of first and second level outcomes of projects provided us with insights on what factor impacts a project’s goal achievement and consequently its success. Related to Hanna and Rowley’s findings we however noted that their model did not acknowledge external factors, which could constitute risks or threats for the project. Continuing on the section of project strategy we therefore chose to investigate project risks and how these should be managed. We therefore found Thamhain’s (2013) model suitable since it explains the actual impact risks can have on project performance as well as what factors influences the management of risks. In addition, Leung and Issac’s (2008) findings provided us with further insights on the components and steps in risk management and risk assessment. Although their findings are practical in nature, it helps us to better explore and understand risk management in public place branding projects.

As our problem background proved, communication is a critical success factor in project management as well as in risk management. The cornerstones in the communication process was initially developed by Shannon (1948) who described the process as a message was transmitted through different channels from the source to the final receiver, trying to break through potential ‘noise’ throughout the process. We however found Shannon’s early model of the communication process as too general for our study of project communication as it does not take communication and interactions between all involved stakeholders into account. For that reason Welch and Jackson’s (2007) framework of internal communication were more suitable for our study as it acknowledge the level, direction and who is involved in different types of internal communication. However, this framework only provided us with a general understanding of internal communication, which is why Pandey and Garnett’s (2006) framework provided us with a more specific understanding of internal communication specifically in a public sector project. The theoretical frameworks and models mentioned above will be further elaborated in chapter 3.

2.6 Criticism of the sources

Critical reviewing the literature is according Saunders et al. (2012, p. 73) important since it includes the assessment and applicability of the previous findings for the research it is intended to be used in. As we will further elaborate on and explain in chapter 3, the applicability of some of our selected theories can be questioned as their studies were not conducted on place branding projects, on projects in the public sector, or the source’s age might question its relevance. Baker and Cameron’s (2008) framework for instance was developed for place marketing projects. However, their definition and application of the concept of place marketing revealed that place branding is a key concept within place branding, which is hence why we found it relevant to include. According to Thurén (2005, p. 13) the source’s authenticity refers to whether it is what appears to be. The articles we have used for this thesis have all been peer-reviewed with the exception of Rainisto’s framework (2003). The time perspective is another area to criticize sources upon since it is based on the notion that sources which is closer in time than the original source will be more credible (Thurén, 2005, p. 13). Henderson and Venkatraman’s framework was developed in year 1990 which might indicate that other researchers would have extended this framework during more recent years, and our literature review also confirmed that the framework has recently been extended. However we chose to include the original sources as it is a highly recognized framework, which explains the cornerstones of strategic alignment. The
application of this framework for our study was also intended as to increase our knowledge base on the interlinkage between its dimensions which is also why the original sourced proved to be sufficient.

2.7 Research ethics
When conducting research there is a need for handling the material ethically, this includes personal contacts as well as the use of web secondary sources (Saunders et al. 2012, p. 208). In this thesis we have used both documents retrieved from the project as well as interviews. We have been informing the respondents that has been interviewed as well as gained the documents what it should be used for in order to get their approval of that use. We have been using secondary data from the projects website that could confirm what we had gained from the interviews and the documents provided. According to Creswell (2013, p. 57) clarifying the research purpose and receiving the participants’ consent are important factors to eliminate ethical issues related to consent, integrity, and confidentiality. We have been handling the results ethically, even though we have interpreted the results we have be conducting this in a way to ensure that the results are presented as the respondents stated. As Creswell (2009, p. 92) states it is important that the researcher does not “...suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet a researcher’s or audience needs.” In the study we have been acting with ethical considerations throughout the whole process to ensure that the results are relevant and that none of the respondents would feel that their responses have been interpreted into a different context.
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter we will review the existing literature connected to place branding, project management, project strategy, project risk management and project communication in order to gain a profound understanding of our research topic.

3.1 Place branding

Previous literature on place branding reveals an extensive variation in terms of definitions and terminology ranging from destination marketing, place marketing, and location branding (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 458). The main difference between those is the definition of the place along with the purpose of such activities. The ‘place’ in place branding has previously been applied in branding practices for both locations, destinations, countries, nations, cities, and regions (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 66). Although these places are public organizations, the place branding projects can consist of a number of both public and private stakeholders such as municipalities, hotels, tourism agencies, and tourism businesses (Klijn et al., 2012, p. 500). A shift in the literature on place branding has however occurred from a sole focus on the attraction of tourists and the increase in turnover related to tourism, to the adoption of a business and marketing focus (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69). Place branding has therefore been described as the branding of a location, destination, country, nation, city, or region in order to attract businesses, investments, as well as visitors to the place (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69). Maheshwari (2011, p. 198) further on stated that “...place marketing is not only limited to increasing the tourist trade, but also plays an important role in regional and urban development, place and/or country positioning in international relations and maintaining continued infrastructural and economic growth”. Maheshwari’s definition is hence relevant to acknowledge for this thesis since we seek to create a profound understanding of a public place branding project’s goal achievement. Our choice to adopt the term place branding instead of place marketing can further on be explained by defining a brand contra marketing. Kotler and Gertner retells the American Marketing Association’s (AMA) definition of a brand “...as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Kotler & Gertner, 2002, p. 249). AMA further on define marketing as “...the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, 2013). The concept of place branding is consequently more suitable for our study since it includes the development of a brand for a place which thereafter serves as a base when marketing the place.

3.1.1. Success factors in place branding

Aligned with our adoption of Hanna and Rowley’s (2008, p. 69) definition of place branding, the main objectives of place branding project is to attract businesses, investments, and visitors to a place in order to achieve an increased growth and occupation rate. A public place branding project’s goals are hence set aligned with the perceived success factors. For this thesis the success factors of place branding therefore provides us with a better understand of the components of the brand building process, which contributes to the goal achievement.

According to Klijn et al. (2012), stakeholder involvement in the sense of governance is crucial to achieve successful outcomes of place branding projects. Klijn et al. (2012 p. 515) states that :“...stakeholder involvement leads both to a clearer brand concept and to increased effectiveness in terms of attracting target groups such as new inhabitants,
visitors and firms”. The author’s hypotheses that stakeholder involvement would be related to the clarity of the brand concept and to the results were confirmed in this quantitative research (Klijn et al., 2012, p. 509). The study also proved that marketing strategies and brand communication are important components in place branding and that their effect is leveraged in combination. (Klijn et al., 2012, p. 515).

Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 462-463) however propose a model of strategic place brand-management (illustrated in figure 1), which presents a more inclusive illustration of the relationship between the place branding components and its processes. The key to a successful place branding strategy is explained by the ‘brand infrastructure relationships and leadership’ box, since the relationship between and engagement from the involved stakeholders forms a base for the creation of the brand identity and architecture (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 464). “Developing brand identity is dependent on the effectiveness of brand leadership in engaging and managing stakeholders on the basis of shared objectives”, Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 464) stated emphasizing the importance of aligning the stakeholders’ goal orientation and commitment. The infrastructure further on relates to the strategies and the development of both tangible and intangible brand attributes (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 464). In this thesis we will primarily investigate the internal components and processes within a public place branding project to see if and how they impact the project’s goal achievement. For that reason, we believe that the stakeholders’ involvement and perceptions are interesting components to investigate in order to gain insights on their goal orientation and how this impacts the place branding project’s goal achievement. According to Hanna and Rowley, the stakeholders’ interest, engagement and hence contribution in a place branding project affects whether the project will perform as intended or “...leave the processes to run their own course” (2011, p. 472). It should be noted that the model was developed to support brand managers in aligning brand strategies with identity and experience. We are consequently aware that the model excludes external factors which could potentially constitute threats or risks for the project. Since we are investigating goal achievement from an internal strategic perspective, we however believe that the strategic place brand-management model is applicable in our case since it pinpoints why all internal stakeholders’ perceptions and actions towards goal orientation has to be investigated and taken into account.

![Figure 1. Strategic place brand-management model (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 463).](insert figure)

As Hanna and Rowley suggested, managing the relationship between stakeholder engagement and infrastructure is essential in achieving place branding success (Hanna
Rainisto (2003, p. 227) hence contributes with a categorization of managerial success factors in place marketing projects and includes external success factors which Hanna and Rowley omit. The framework, presented in Figure 2, illustrates three dimensions of interacting internal and external success factors. The inner components (planning group, vision and strategic analysis, place identity and place image, public-private partnerships and leadership) compose the core of the place marketing strategy and of its management (Rainisto, 2003, p. 227). For this thesis, the place marketing strategy can be said to also constitute the core of the project strategy. As project strategy and the management thereof might influence the goal achievement, Rainisto’s framework indicates that these additional facets of a place branding project will be important for us to further explore. The components on the outside (political unity, global marketplace, local development, and process coincidence) further on refer to the external factors and challenges, which might have an impact on the place marketing (Rainisto, 2003, p. 227). Although we for this thesis are investigating the internal facets of a public place branding project and their impact on project goal achievement, the ‘political unity’ might be interesting to take into account as such projects often consist of multiple project owner from the public sector. Rainisto namely suggests that political unity and “…agreement about public affairs…among political decision makers” is a prerequisite for successful place marketing (2003, p. 79).

Lastly, the ‘outer’ factors (strategic exploitation, organizing capacity, presence of substance, and measurement and follow-up) relates to managerial activities which are said to be crucial to achieve a successful place marketing since the management of these components interlinks the operational implementation and execution of the strategy (Rainisto, 2003, p. 227). These factors thus provide us with knowledge on how strategic and operational success factors can interact and be managed to achieve successful place marketing. For this thesis, Rainisto’s framework assists us in exploring and understanding how our investigated public place branding project manages their project strategy and what factors affects its success.

Figure 2. Modified framework of success factors in place marketing (Based on Rainisto, 2003, p. 227).

Noteworthy is that Rainisto’s framework was developed for place marketing projects. Aligned with our previous discussion of definitions, the purpose of a place branding contra place marketing project can vary some extent. Rainisto (2003, p. 43) uses the term place marketing in an overarching sense and refers to place branding as a way of “…increasing the attractiveness of a place” (Rainisto, 2003, p. 44). Place branding is
for that reason integrated in the framework of successful place marketing (Rainisto, 2003, p. 230), which is why we believe that the findings can also be applied on our study of a place branding project. Baker and Cameron (2008, p. 91) further on support our arguments as they emphasize the importance of strategic place branding in place marketing.

In addition to Rainisto’s managerial success factors of place marketing, Baker and Cameron (2008, p. 79) stress the need to not only identify but also to incorporate the success factors into the project strategy. The author’s clustered 33 success factors into four phases of the brand building process, which according to the authors determine the effectiveness and success of place marketing. The summary of critical success factors can therefore to a certain extent be applied in our case of a place branding project as the themes or phases are closely related to the place branding components proposed by Hanna and Rowley (2011) and Rainisto (2003). The first phase is the **strategic orientation** which highlights the strategic elements such as clear goals and objectives, segmented markets, identification of competition and tourism trends, as well as addresses tourism related issues such as seasonality and overcrowding (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 92). The fact goal clarity and objectives are mentioned as success factors provide us with additional insights with relation to goal achievement. The second phase, **destination identity and image**, relates to positioning, promotional and communicational success factors (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 92) and will be less relevant for our study since it refer to how the brand is communicated and perceived by the target market. The third phase is constituted by the **stakeholder involvement**, meaning that both national and local governmental agencies, local residents and businesses should be involved in the project planning in order to achieve a success (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 92). Aligned with Hanna and Rowley’s findings, Baker and Cameron mention this phase to be crucial since the project manager’s and stakeholders’ interests needs to be aligned in order to achieve a successful marketing strategy in place marketing projects (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 92-93). The last phase sums up the success factors as it relates to the **implementation, monitoring, and review** (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 93-94). Thus, in order for the marketing strategy to be successful the brand building process has to be implemented properly with consideration to the time plan, costs, and resource allocation (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 93-94). This phase hence indicate that the implementation and evaluation of the public place branding project are important factors to investigate in order to further understand goal achievement. As the authors state, “[the checklist’s] value will depend significantly on the users ability to operationalize the individual factors in the context of the specific problems they are seeking to solve” (Baker & Cameron, 2008, p. 94). As we have chosen to investigate goal achievement from an internal strategic perspective, Baker and Cameron’s success factors hence provides us with useful knowledge on important factors which should be incorporated in the project strategy and thus planned for.

### 3.2 Project management

There is a growing interest in using projects as a way of handling operations when organizing work (Söderlund, 2005 p. 371). The most common view of project management is as a form of organizing operations that in turn helps organizations to explore new ways as well as prosper in a controlled way (Gautier & Ika, 2012, p. 8). Lundin and Söderholm (1995, p. 439) discusses the distinction between a project organization and a permanent organization, where the main difference is the sense that there is a clear status before and after. When seeing a project in this sense it is relevant
to have a well functioning management. Söderlund (2005, p. 380) views project management from two perspectives that could complement each other, namely *a knowledge perspective and a time perspective*. The knowledge perspective stresses that a project organization with this perspective involves highly specialized staff (Söderlund, 2005, p. 380). The extensive role that the management of a knowledge perspective serves is mainly to facilitate the communication process and sharing of ideas. The time perspective view of project management is on the other hand focused on deadlines and milestones, which could be used as tools for achieving results (Söderlund, 2005, p. 381). Another issue connected to the time perspective is to synchronize the actions and activities in a project to keep up with the project plan. To be able to achieve the goals of a project it is necessary to have an efficient steering from the project management regardless what the scope of the project is (Crawford & Helm 2009, p. 73). Kreiner (1995, p. 341) further on argued that project managers have a problem to adapt to a strategic approach when the project is shifting in some direction. According to Kreiner’s (1995, p. 341) arguments it is important to be aware that a project manager cannot have full control of a project but that the manager needs to be aware of the changing environment. As previously stated, a project is an organization that is only existing over a certain given time (Turner & Müller, 2003, p. 7) and therefore it is important to have both the strategic approach as well as the operational level covered for the best possible outcome.

### 3.2.1 Project management in the public sector

In recent years it has been more and more common for the public sector to adapt concepts for project management and strategic work, which has an origin in the private sector (Williams & Lewis, 2008, p. 665-666). A public sector project is in many senses more complex than a private owned project, however it is possible to adapt activities and plan it according to a similar structure. You would hence need to get a more extensive stakeholder mapping and involvement in a public sector project (Williams & Lewis, 2008, p. 667). Further on it is important in a public sector project to stress the need for a strong project structure so that it is clear for everyone involved has knowledge regarding this and knows their position (Besner & Hobbs, 2013, p 30-31). The demands and expectations on a public sector project is in many senses diverse from the private sector and one of the keys is to keep the citizens informed to anchor the project (Crawford & Helm 2009, p. 74).

In a public sector project it is necessary for the project manager to have knowledge of the environment surrounding the project since there are many factors that can affect the performance and outcome (Gomes et al., 2012, p. 326). The project manager needs to have both technical as well as good management skills in order to be successful. A public sector project is more connected to the external environment than a private project and might have to be exposed to the public for gaining support of the operations. Further on it is relevant to be aware of the policies in the settings and surroundings of the project, both within the organization and external. The specific characteristics of a public sector project are raising needs of information transfer in a greater extent than a private project (Gomes et al., 2012, p. 326). Williams & Lewis (2008, p. 666-667) argues in the same sense that a public sector project with grace could adapt the tools for management such as *strategic analysis* and *value chain* in order to gain great understanding of the projects context and how it is utilized to benefit the stakeholders of the project.
The differences between a private and a public sector project pinpoints the needs of communication within the study since this thesis is focusing on public projects. The need to have a dialogue and have greater expectations on information both internally for example within a municipality or externally. Use of models for strategic planning of the project could be seen as a way of gaining strategic understanding for a project within the public sector (Williams & Lewis 2008, p. 668). With this knowledge is it important to take into account the communication from a strategic approach and how it is operated in the project to gain the results that are expected. A project manager needs to have a broad knowledge and be able to see all parts of a project and how they interrelates, Gomes et al. (2012, p. 320) is defining this as a holistic approach to balance the project.

In order to understand how project management is performed it is relevant to see the project in it’s lifespan. Gomes et al. (2012, p. 317) are using the following stages when studying the life cycle of a public sector project: “Selection, planning, implementation and termination stage”. Further on it is important to take into account that it is the outcome from one stage in the project that are the ground for the next step, hence it is relevant to adapt the view of project life cycle (Gomes et al., 2012 p. 317).

Lundin & Söderholm (1995, p. 445) is using the PM Handbook (PMI, 1987) definition of the life cycle of a project. The stages are the following: concept, development, implementation, and termination. Lundin & Söderholm is mainly focusing on project in the private sector. The two alternatives (Gomes et al., 2012 and Lundin & Söderholm, 1995) of the project lifecycle are indeed similar. As we in this study are investigating a public place branding project, we argue that it is more relevant to focus on a public sector model. One stage that is specifically relevant to take into account is the selection stage (Gomes et al., 2012 p. 317) because it has to be given special attention since the project is depending on getting a successful project application. Gomes et al. (2012, p. 326) have identified five important factors to take into account when handling a public sector project. Firstly to be able to tackle the many different factors that affect a public sector project is to have a view of the project both externally and internally. Further on the project manager needs to have knowledge and skills regarding the specific area of interest and management. Since a project in the public sector has several stakeholders externally is it necessary to gain a positive public opinion of the project, thus a communication strategy for this is important to have. The interface between the factors that are affecting the project such as public policy, organization, and behaviors and attitudes. Lastly Gomes et al. (2012, p. 326) concludes that the project organization needs to have a monitoring and an insight in how the policy is affecting the project and how it could be prevented if necessary.
Gomes et al. (2012, p. 325-326) have in their study from a project manager’s view presented the model shown above. The authors discuss the importance for a project manager in public sector project to have knowledge regarding the political situation surrounding the project and how it should be approached. In order to gain this knowledge as well as organizational knowledge is it relevant to recruit the project manager early in the process bearing in mind that the specific situation in a public sector project takes time to understand. Further on in the same stage, the planning stage, is technical knowledge regarding the scope of the project as well as organizational knowledge proposed that the project manager hosts.

In the implementing stage the project manager should be flexible and change the approach from an organizational into a more project focus. Meaning that the abilities needed is both from a technical view when the activities requires delegation as well as managerial skills including handling personal relations and related to the project (Gomes et al., 2012, p. 326).

3.2.2 Project management tools
There are several tools that are important for planning and implementing a project, Besner & Hobbs (2012a, p. 30) are grouping common individual practices and techniques (PMBOK, 2005). Besner & Hobbs (2012a, p. 28) identifies 19 toolsets that should be seen as clusters of practices and the different toolsets also have connections to
each other. It is natural to see them as a whole group. The use of project management tools depends on the maturity of an organization when it comes to project work. If an organization are mature and has well defined structure of project work, the use of project management tools are more extensive. Projects that are using the tools are more likely to be successful. Clear defined projects, when it comes to goals and activities have also a greater chance to perform well (Besner & Hobbs, 2013, p. 31).

3.2.3 Risk management tools
There are different tools or processes that can be used to manage risks within a project. The outcome that is wanted from the risk management process is to increase the possibilities of effects that are positive and to decrease the possibilities of negative events throughout the project. These are processes that should be evaluated and updated during the projects lifecycle (PMBOK, 2005, p. 225).

The organization that is hosting the project needs to have a common way of looking at the risks that are identified in the project, the communication regarding these attitudes are central and needs to be open. (PMBOK, 2005, p. 227) This is relevant for the study conducted in this thesis. Since public sector projects have different stakeholders and often different organizations involved in the strategic as well as the operational work. To have different views of what risk assessment is and how it should be handled plays a significant role in executing a often complex project.

Besner & Hobbs (2012a, p. 30) has grouped the tools for risk management into the following orders regarding how they are used within projects:

- “Risk management documents
- Ranking of risks
- Contingency plans
- Assignment of risk ownership
- Graphic presentation of risk information”

The most important risk assessment tool to use according to the study (Besner & Hobbs (2012a, p. 30) is to have documents that are showing facts that has to be taken into account for the project. The more mature a project organization is determines the extent and the usage of risk management tools.

3.2.4 Goal achievement tools
Goal achievement relates to meeting the set goals of a project, further on Besner & Hobbs (2012a, p. 33) is clustering the tools into a set called monitoring progress which are the following:

- “Progress report
- Stage gate reviews
- Project scorecard/dashboard
- Monitoring critical success factors
- Trend report
- Earned value”

The tools are presented above in the usage in projects. A project report is seen as the highest ranked and mostly used and the other tools can be seen as complementing the progress report. Earned value more complex and can be hard to measure (Besner & Hobbs 2012a, p. 34).
3.3 Project strategy

According to Artto et al. (2008, p. 8) “*project strategy is a direction in a project that contributes to success of the project in its environment*”. The ‘direction’ does hence refer to the elements, which have an impact on the projects outcome such as goals and objectives, measurements, processes, and methods (Artto et al., 2008, p. 8). Project strategy is hence “…related to competitive advantage or survival of the organization in its external environment” (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9), and is further on explained to shift in focus throughout the project lifecycle. As illustrated in figure 4, the number of strong stakeholders involved in the project along with the project’s degree of independence of these stakeholders influences the project strategy (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9). In this thesis, we will investigate our research problem on a public place branding project. As previously mentioned, Klijn et al., (2012, p. 500) explained that place branding projects can consist of a number of both public and private stakeholders such as municipalities, hotels, tourism agencies and tourism businesses. Consequently, we can assume that there might be multiple strong both public and private stakeholders in our investigated project. Joint projects or projects with multiple parent organizations further on consists of several strong stakeholders with potentially different interests in the project’s outcome (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9). Such projects therefore need a high degree of independence from these stakeholders and hence call for what the authors refer to as the ‘strong leader strategy’ (Artto et al., 2008, p. 10). The strategy deals with the issue of multiple stakeholders’ interests by managing the project through a separate project group which sets the project’s goals and objectives, and then uses the strong stakeholders as resources as well as to govern the project (Artto et al., 2008, p. 10).

![Figure 4. Project strategies depending on project's independence of strong project stakeholders and organizations (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9).](image)

In our investigation of a public place branding project, the ‘strong leader strategy’ might however only be applicable to a certain extent. As previously noted, public place branding projects often consists of multiple public stakeholders or project owners Klijn et al., (2012, p. 500). Consequently there might be political facets which constrain the projects independence from its stakeholders. As Rainisto emphasized, political unity is a prerequisite for successful place marketing (2008, p. 92) and therefore needs to be managed. The contrasting strategies should therefore be mentioned since they provide us with a more profound understanding of the how the stakeholders might impact the project strategy. The ‘obedient servant strategy’ “…consider its parent organization as
the most important stakeholder in its environment” (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9), and consequently align the project strategy with the stakeholders’ strategy. The ‘independent innovator strategy’ on the other hand suggests that the project only adopts certain parts of the parent organizations strategy in order to encourage innovative ways to establish the project’s own goals and purpose (Artto et al., 2008, p. 9). The ‘flexible mediator strategy’ lastly adopts the multiple stakeholders’ strategies which hence serves as a base for the project strategy (Artto et al., 2008, p. 10). In relation to our study, the public place branding project’s composition of stakeholders along with the project’s goals and purpose might differ from the parent organization’s/organizations”. To exemplify, the ‘flexible mediator strategy’ could possibly also be applicable on a place branding project when it consists of multiple stakeholders. In this thesis, Artto et als’. framework will therefore assist us in understanding whether the public place branding project’s strategy is separated or unified with the stakeholders’ goals and objectives, and how such a strategy is managed.

3.3.1 Strategic alignment
As our review of Artto et als’. (2008, p. 9-10) framework indicates, the choice of project strategy is based on the intentions to either establish project goals and objectives that are aligned with, or separated from the stakeholders’ strategies. Artto et al. (2008, p. 10) also stated that his findings indicates that “…project strategy could be created continuously throughout the whole lifecycle of the project”. Thus, project strategy is dynamic and can adopt varied focuses throughout its evolution. From our understanding, this emphasizes the importance of ensuring that all project stakeholders have a common understanding of the project strategy and that it is communicated throughout all phases of the project lifecycle. Avison et als’. (2004, p. 223) findings also supports this argument as they state that “…firms cannot be competitive if their business and information technology strategies are not aligned” (2004, p. 223). Strategic alignment is therefore important to further explore in the context of goal achievement since it proposes that alignment between the business strategy and the organizational structure is necessary to achieve a successful strategy.

The strategic alignment model, illustrated in figure 5, was initially developed by Henderson and Venkatraman (1990, p. 6) and interlinks four strategic domains: the business strategy, the organizational infrastructure and processes, the information and technology, and the information and technology infrastructure and processes. The domain business strategy in the framework includes the value offerings, how to achieve a competitive advantage and governing functions on an external level (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 8). In a public place branding project this can constitutes the core of the project strategy. The information technology domain, the upper right box in figure 5, refers to the availability and capability to access and handle information (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 8). As this domain involves resource allocation and management of external information in a public place branding project can be seen as the marketing and external communication of the project’s offerings. The organizational infrastructure and processes further on refers to the internal functions and processes that relates to the management, knowledge and skills that exist within the organization (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 8). In public place branding project’s the organizational infrastructure does according to us serve a key role as its inherent processes is what actualizes the business strategy. As we in this thesis are investigating goal achievement from and internal strategic perspective, this domain will be important to further explore. Information technology infrastructure and processes, the lower right box in figure 5, also relates to the internal processes and skills within the organization,
although this domain refers to the flow and infrastructure for information (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 9). Related to a public place branding project we perceive this domain to explain the internal project communication and the management of the internal communication flow. With regards to our research question we therefore believe the information process to be highly relevant to further explore in this thesis.

![Figure 5. Strategic alignment model (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p.7).](image)

Continuously, the upper horizontal arrow in the strategic alignment model illustrates the external alignment meaning “...positioning the business in the external product-market space” (1990, p. 10). In a public place branding project, the external alignment can be said to represent the implementation of the business strategy and how it is communicated to the target market. Although we have adopted an internal strategic perspective, the implementation of the business strategy is important to take into account in order to understand its relation to the goal achievement. The lower horizontal arrow further on explains the internal management of the business strategy and refers to the “...design of organizational structure processes and systems” (1990, p. 10). The alignment between the internal process will be interesting to explore in order to understand if and how they impact the goal achievement. The vertical arrows in the model consequently illustrates the alignment between the external strategic functions with the internal managerial functions (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 7). According to Avison et al. strategic alignment can help a business to gain a competitive advantage since it is focused on improving the internal and external information systems and aligning these with the business strategy and the management thereof (Avison et al., 2004, p. 225). In our investigation of a public place branding project, we believe that such alignment might serve an important role since one can assume that the operational management and implementation or the business strategy might impact the project’s goal achievement. The strategic alignment model consequently contributes to increase our understanding of the relationship between the business strategy and the organizational infrastructure and processes.

**3.3.2 Goal achievement**

According to Locke and Latham (2002, p. 706), “...goals affect performance through four mechanisms”. Goals in these mechanisms are explained to make sure that the effort and attention is directed towards the goals; affect the amount of effort put in towards
these goals; they affect the time and level of efficiency of effort; and lastly impact which knowledge is being applied in order to achieve these (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 706-707). Too ambitious goals might also have a negative impact on individuals commitment to work towards a goal which consequently might impact the performance (Linderman et al., 2003, p. 201). This argument is supported by Erez and Zidon’s (1984, p. 76) early findings of goal difficulty, where acceptance of difficult goals were positively related to performance and the rejection of such goals had a negative relationship to performance. Vague goals are also said to result in a variation in individuals interpretations of the goals and in their perception of the desired performance, which consequently might affect the performance (Linderman et al., 2003, p. 197). Goal congruence in project teams can therefore be said to be an important factor in order to work towards and achieve common project goals.

Liu & Walker’s (1998, p. 215) framework is for that reason suitable for our study since it illustrates the relationship between project outcomes, performance and individuals behavior. An important cornerstone in the framework is project success as it is closely related to project outcome. In our thesis project outcome and project success is further on linked to goal achievement, which is why this cornerstone is important to explore. Based on previous research the authors summarizes and illustrates the factors in project success as in figure 6. Individuals perceptions and experiences from previous projects are said to affects their behaviors and attitudes of the initial goals (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215). In order to measure the project outcome, the evaluation process is therefore proposed to be based on these preconceptions of the goals, since consensus and clarity of the success criteria is needed to evaluate the goals against the performance (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 214). The evaluation of goals compared to the performance is consequently what determines whether the project outcome is successful or a failure (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 214). The acknowledgement of the impact individuals’ preconceptions and goal consensus have on the project outcome, and thus on project success/failure, is very interesting for our study of project communication and risk management’s impact on goal achievement. For this thesis, Liu & Walker’s findings supports us with insights into the importance of goal consensus and clarity of success criteria among the involved project members in order to achieve a successful project outcome.

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Figure 6. Factors of success (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 213).
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The project success factors is further on incorporated in the first level outcome goal attainment illustrated in figure 7 below (1998, p. 215). The goal attainment is thus dependent on the project success factors meaning the consensus or discrepancy of the goal-performance relationship (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215). The second level outcome further on relates to satisfaction which is refers to the rewards individuals receive at the
project’s completion (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215). “…project success is attaining the project goals (first level outcome), and participant satisfaction is the reward brought by goal attainment (second level attainment)” (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215). The relationship between the behavior and the performance relates to the notion that certain actions will result in the expected performance, and behavior-satisfaction means that the task itself contributes to satisfaction despite the absence of potential rewards (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215). For this thesis Liu and Walker’s framework provides us with valuable insight on how individual’s behaviors impacts project performance and consequently goal attainment. The second level outcome of individual’s satisfaction will merely be applied to a certain extent since our purpose is to increase the understanding of project communication and risk management’s impact on goal achievement in a project as a whole, as opposed to individual’s goal achievement.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 7. 1st-2nd level outcome (Liu & Walker, 1998, p. 215).*

### 3.4 Project risk management

Project risk is according to Pinto (1998, p. 139) the unfavorable outcomes which affects the project objectives. Project risk management does hence involve the avoidance of these risks by “identifying, analyzing, and being ready to respond to risk events” (Pinto, 1998, p. 138). The reason to why projects can be particularly risky are because all projects are: unique to some extent, complex (e.g. technical, relational, commercial etc.), involve individual’s assumptions about the future, constraints, people, stakeholders, and change (Hillson, 2009, p. 14). Theses factors are hence what characterize a project but consequently also what creates risks in projects (Hillson, 2009, p. 14). Projects are further on hosted to accomplish certain objectives over a limited time period (Hobday, 2000, p. 874). Whether the project strategy is to achieve rapid or incremental change, there will always be a certain level of risk inherent in the project (Hillson, 2009, p. 15). The last overarching area which brings risk into a project consists of external environmental factors (Hillson, 2009, p. 16). Risk management should not be seen as an activity that either the steering group or managers within the project organization performs, but rather an activity that is integrated in the projects’ daily operations (Kerzner, 1995, p. 880). Such arguments are aligned with Zhang & Fan (2013, p. 9) who have proposed a model for integrating and handling risks in all project processes, and facilitates the work with a strategic handling of the risks identified.

Depending on the type of project and what the project objectives are, the risks can according to Pinto (1998, p. 145) be categorized in schedule-, cost-, scope-, and quality risks. The level of risk and its impact on the project outcome further on varies throughout the project lifecycle (Pinto, 1998, p. 140). During the later phases the potential loss increases since more is at stake, which results in a higher risk impact than
in the earlier phases (Pinto, 1998, p. 140). The amount of risk on the contrary decreases over time due to a decrease of uncertainty (Pinto, 1998, p. 140). These findings indicate that the type of risks and their impact on the project performance varies through the project’s lifetime. In addition to Pinto’s findings, Thamhain (2013) model of ‘actual risk impact on project performance’ hence contributions to increase our understanding of the relationship between risks and project performance. As illustrated in figure 8, the model proposes a categorization of risks where the risk impact increases with each of the four categories.

Figure 8. Model of actual risk impact on project performance (Thamhain, 2013, p. 26).

The first risk category includes risks in the project’s internal and external environment that has not yet occurred but which might impact the project performance when do (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27). Such risks should for that reason be planned for and potentially prevented in order to decrease or mitigate their future impact on the project performance (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27). In a public place branding project, such risks could include the absence of future project funding or a decrease in customer’s spending on tourism. The second risk category implies that the risks has occurred but does thus far only have a moderate impact on the performance (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27). Such risks do consequently only affect the project tasks since solving such issues internally can eliminate likelihood that the risks affect the whole project (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27). If the risks are however not mitigated their occurrence will have an actual impact on the project’s budget, customer relations etcetera and thus its performance, which is illustrated by the third risk category in the model (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27). This could be seen as crucial in a public place branding project since such risks will damage the project’s internal operations which will consequently affect the project’s overall performance. As an example, the project performance of branding project’s can be said to be measured by customer’s perceptions and knowledge of the brand. If the project thus does not have enough funding to coordinate the marketing activities internally, this will consequently result in a poor communication of the brand to the customers and hence lead to a poor overall performance. The risks actual impact on the project and on the overall project performance is illustrated by the fourth risk category (Thamhain, 2013, p. 27).
The perception of the project risks and how they might affect the project is further explained to sometimes differ between internal stakeholders (Thamhain 2013, p. 30). The authors found that there is a tendency that the strategic managers often have one view of the risks and their impact, but that the project manager and project group conclusively are the ones who has to take the responsibility for the poor project performance (Thamhain 2013, p. 30) discusses the differences in. Even though the risk management in many cases should have been solved on a strategic level (Thamhain 2013, p. 30). The risks impact on project performance is thus not only based on the risk itself, but rather influenced by the internal stakeholders’ perceptions and priorities of which risks to mitigate (Thamhain 2013, p. 33). For this thesis Thamhain’s model hence provides us with insights of the importance to identify, prioritize and prevent risks at an early stage to eliminate or decrease their impact on project performance. In the same sense, project risk management could be seen as a key to project success, according to Besner & Hobbs (2012b, p. 238). However in order to make use of risk management is it necessary to have well defined project, hence risk management is integrated in project management and should be considered as an important part (Besner & Hobbs, 2013 p. 239-240).

As we noted above, risk management is essential to reduce or mitigates its impact on project performance. However, risks impacts projects differently depending on the type of project (Thamhain, 2013, p. 33). In this thesis we have chosen to investigate a public place branding project and are for that reason interested in investigating risk management in the context of such projects. Public sector projects are said to be influenced by political and bureaucratic factors which puts constraints on the internal communication and the project management (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 39; Rainisto, 2003, p. 227). For that reason the components in risk management and of how to assess risks in public sector projects are important to take into account as this might differ from private sector projects. Leung and Isaacs (2008, p. 516) have proposed a four-step approach of executing a pilot study in order to identify, examine, assess, and manage risks. The suggested steps are the following (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516):

1. Establish the context.
2. Identify risks within this context.
3. Assess risks:
   - analyze risks (in terms of probability and impact);
   - evaluate risks (including estimate risk level, evaluate controls and risk tolerance level).
4. Develop risk treatment."

The first step includes a general analysis of the organization or department’s context with regards to the market or environment it operates within (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). For this thesis, the context is constituted by the fact that the project is a place branding project with multiple both private and public stakeholders. Based on the context, the following step entails an identification of the issues and risks that are or could occur within that context (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, 516). There are consequently multiple ways to identify risk. Hillson (2002, p. 237) suggests that performing a SWOT-analysis is one proper way to identify project risks as it entails the identification and listing of the project’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which consequently can be incorporated in the risk management plan. The issue with risk identification is that the risks have not yet occurred. The risk identification therefore essentially entails an evaluation of the perceptions of risks (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 517). However, this reasoning assumes that the risk identification is conducted in the
beginning of a project. As public place branding project in many instances involves multiple both public and private stakeholders, we believe that the perception of risks and consequently the identification of risks might vary to some extent. The third step involves and evaluation and assessment of the identified risk to distinguish what the most critical risks are, based on the likelihood of their occurrence and the severity of their consequences (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). One way to assess risks is to develop a risk assessment matrix as the one illustrated in figure 9 (Wyndarra Consulting, 2005, cited in Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). In such risk assessment plans each risk is assigned a place within the matrix based on its likelihood to occur (vertical level) and how crucial the consequence of the risk’s occurrence would be (horizontal level) (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). The completed matrix hence illustrates what the high and low risks are which then serves a base for determining which risk that should be prioritized (Leung & Isaacs, 2008 p. 517).

![Risk assessment matrix](image)

*Figure 9. Risk assessment matrix (Wyndarra Consulting, 2005, cited in Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516).*

After identifying and categorizing the risks into a matrix the authors suggests that a plan should be developed as for how the impact of the high or very high risks can be prevented or reduced (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). “Such a plan also defines risk ownership, roles and responsibilities, and timeframes to implement mitigation strategies” (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 517). Hillson (2002, p. 239) further on stresses the importance of risk planning in this stage since this is the stage within the risk management process where the decisions of actions are taken. The risk treatment plan hence includes both strategic and managerial aspects with regards to risk. In a public place branding project the risk assessment and risk treatment plan could hence help to clarify whom of the internal stakeholder, which is responsible for the risk management and how it should be managed. The risks can therefore be treated differently depending on how the management chooses to approach the risks. As illustrated in figure 10, the choice to accept, reduce, share or avoid risks impacts how the risks are treated and managed (Leung & Isaacs, p. 517). The acceptance of a risk does for instance mean that the risk has been identified and evaluated but will not be prevented or mitigated (Leung & Isaacs, p. 517). A risk that is decided to be reduced, involves the option to reduce its probability to occur, or reduce the risks possible outcome, or both (Leung & Isaacs, p. 517). Sharing risk is further on an option which involves strategic planning of either spreading the risks onto other stakeholders or to strategically plan for and transfer the risks in order to insure the project (Leung & Isaacs, p. 517). The avoidance of risks lastly refers to the option of not engaging in activities, which involves the identified risk
(Leung & Isaacs, p. 517). Although Leung & Isaacs’s (2008, p. 516) study was focused on risk management in public sector research, we believe that the steps can also be applied on public place branding project since the process of identifying and assessing risk can be assumed to be similar. In our investigation of a public place branding project we will however bear this fact in mind.

![Risk treatment options](image)

*Figure 10. Risk treatment options (Wyndarra Consulting, 2005, cited in Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516).*

### 3.5 Project communication

Communication has by many researchers been found to be a critical success factor in project management as well as in risk management (Boddy, 2002; Kerzner, 1995; Pritchard, 2004; Yaraghi & Langhe, 2011). The definition that we have adopted for this thesis is that project communication is “the overall term for all aspects of communication in a project...” (Ramsing, 2009, p. 346). Although general in nature, it implies that project communication consists of both internal and external communication. According to Turner and Müller (2004, p. 335) communication between the project owner and the project manager can be used to solve both strategic and operational issues. As previously noted, issues related to goals can however affect the project’s performance (Linderman et al., 2003, p. 197). Liu and Walker’s findings that goal clarity and consensus of success criteria for instance impacts goal attainment (1998, p. 213) hence leads us to the assumption that communication might serves an important role in goal achievement. For this thesis we have chosen to investigate a public place branding project from an internal strategic perspective. Internal project communication consists of interpersonal and written communication (Ramsing, 2009, p. 347) and serves an important role in the project management as it highlights issues in the strategic communication planning (Ramsing, 2009, p. 352). Key factors in achieving a successful communication are further on explained as a combination of formal and informal communication, regular meetings, and in some instances measurable data to track the project’s performance (Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 335). Based on our choice of perspective, the internal project communication therefore serves the greatest relevance for our study.

#### 3.5.1 Internal project communication

According to Katz (1982), group longevity impacts project communication and thus performance. Group longevity is explained as the composition of behavioral stability,
the group’s homogeneity, the likelihood to communicate with like-minded, and the different roles in the group (Katz, 1982, p. 84-85). Katz’s findings proved that the internal communication as well as the performance decreased in project groups with high group longevity (Katz, 1982, p. 98-100). These findings thus indicate that the recruitment of new project group members has a positive impact on project performance as they bring new competences and ideas to the project (Katz, 1982, p. 98). The authors also notes that groups with high longevity tend to communicate less within the project group and that this factor is consequently what results in a decrease in project performance; it is hence not the decreased project communication per se that impacts the project performance (Katz, 1982, p. 99). In a public place branding project these findings can be applied as to investigate if the tenure of the project group and the replacement or recruitment of additional project members has affected the internal communication.

The group longevity is however only one aspect of internal communication which might impact the project’s performance. Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 185) found that internal communication exists on four different dimensions namely: (1) Internal line management communication, (2) Internal team peer communication, (3) Internal project peer communication, and (4) Internal corporate communication. These dimensions differ in terms of what level, direction and who is involved in the communication on each dimension. As we in this thesis will investigate the internal communication between the steering group and the project group in a public place branding project, all four dimensions will be relevant to take into account as they cover communication on both the strategic and operational level. The first dimension, line management, refers to communication on all levels regarding daily activities and “...employees roles and the impact of their personal communication” (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 185). In a public place branding project this can be seen as the daily communication between the project manager and the project group. The second dimension, internal team peer communication, takes place between peers or employees and regards the operational chores (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 185). Such communication is hence executed between the project group members within a public place branding project. The third dimension, internal project peer communication, is related to project specific communication regarding project goals or activities and involves both managers, employees and peers within the project (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 185). The fourth and last dimension, internal corporate communication, focuses on “...communication between an organization’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims” (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 186). Noteworthy in Welsh and Jackson’s framework is that communication predominantly works two-ways on all dimensions apart from in the internal corporate communication. Communication on this level namely involves strategic issues or decisions that has to be consistently communicated throughout all channels, which consequently explains why it works one-way and top-down (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 187).

In the case of a public place branding project, Welch and Jackson’s dimensions of internal communication can be applied in order to develop an understanding for how, who, and what is being communication on each level within the project organization. Conclusively, the framework places internal corporate communication, the fourth dimension, as the core in internal communication and interlinks it to the other dimensions of internal communication as well as to external communication (Welch &
Jackson, 2007, p. 192). This finding thus indicates that the one-way communication from the strategic managers to the internal stakeholders constitutes the core of the communication. In a public place branding project this thus indicates that the project owners and/or the steering group serves an important role as to clearly communicate the project strategy to the project group.

3.5.2 Public sector communication

As previously noted, Hanna and Rowley (2008, p. 66) explains the place in place branding as either a country, destinations, region or city. For that reason places can be regarded as public entities, which consequently explains why place branding projects often are managed by public organizations or through an alliance of public and private stakeholders. In this thesis we will investigate our research problem on a public place branding project. Since public organizations in our opinion are subject to governmental control and affected by political decisions, we believe that communication specifically in public projects is interesting to highlight as its impact on project goal achievement might differ from private sector projects. In addition to Welsh and Jackson’s (2007) framework of internal communication, Pandey and Garnett’s (2006, p. 38) model of public sector communication performance (illustrated in figure 11) therefore makes an additional contribution as it explains goal clarity, red tape, organizational culture, and size’s impact on communication performance.

![Communication Performance Diagram](image)

*Figure 11. A model of public sector communication performance (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 36).*

Goal clarity in the model was investigated as a way to “...mitigate conflicts and improve the quality of communication, measured by communication” (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 38-39). Organizational red tape was explained as bureaucratic and formal procedures, which might put constraints on the communication performance (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 39). Organizational culture was in the model explained to consist of the values and actions which affects the project communication, and organizational size referred to the number of employees in the organization (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 40). The variables relation to interpersonal-, internal-, and external communication were then conclusively tested (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 38). The results showed that goal clarity was positively related to internal and external communication performance but not for interpersonal communication (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 43). This implies that goal clarity in public sector communication is important to achieve a successful communication of internal strategic and operational decisions, as well as for communicating with external stakeholders. Red tape was further on found to have an impact on internal communication, which meant that the more bureaucratic the public
organization got, the poorer the communication got (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 43). The organizational culture lastly had a strong impact on the internal communication performance (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 43). The control variable organizational size was found not to have an impact on either interpersonal, internal, nor external communication (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 43). With relation to our investigation of project communication and risk management’s impact of goal achievement, Pandey and Garnett’s findings support us with useful insight on which components impacts different kinds of communication, and consequently communication performance. The fact that Pandey and Garnett’s model showed that red tape affects communication performance will also be useful in our study, since politics might affect the communication in the public place branding project of our investigation.

It should further on be noted that Pandey and Garnett’s (2006) model was tested on managers working within the public health and social services industries; hence its applicability for our study of a place branding project should be discussed. Despite the variation in public sectors between our study and the authors’, the study was found to be applicable for investigations of communication performance in other public sectors than the health and social services sector. The author’s further states that “the empirical support for our exploratory model of communication performance is particularly strong for internal communication but is not as strong for external and interpersonal communication” (Pandey & Garnett, 2006, p. 45). This argument hence supports the application of these findings onto a public place branding project.

3.6 Summary of the theories with relation to the research question

As we have previously noted, this thesis has an inductive research approach which means that this theoretical chapter is intended to provide us with a profound understanding of our research topic which will later serve as a base for creating new knowledge and theory. When analyzing our empirical material we therefore do not intend to relate to all of these theories as some merely serve the role of increasing our knowledge prior to conducting the study. In order to clarify what we have learnt from our theoretical chapter with relation to our research question: How does project communication impact risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects?, we will therefore present a brief summary below.

In this thesis we have adopted Hanna and Rowley’s (2011, p. 458) definition of place branding as the branding of a location, destination, country, nation, city or region in order to attract businesses, investments as well as visitors to the place. Based on Klijn et al. (2012) we found that place branding projects in the public sector demand a high level of stakeholder involvement and a clear project strategy in order to reach success. Hanna and Rowley’s (2011, p. 463) model of strategic place brand-management was aligned with Klijn’s findings as well as emphasized the importance of a successful management of the stakeholder involvement and of the project strategy, in order to reach success in place branding projects. In order gain a successful stakeholder involvement we included Henderson and Venkatraman’s (1990) framework of strategic alignment as it explains the relationship between internal project communication and the management of the business strategy, as well as how these are interlinked. Rainistö’s (2003) framework was thereafter acknowledged as it emphasized which managerial factors that should be considered in order to reach success. Since the above mentioned framework was only related to success factors but not to goal achievement per se, we included Baker and Cameron’s (2008) framework of success factors as it
emphasized for instance the importance of goal clarity and that the success factors has
to be incorporated into the project strategy in order for it to become successful and to
hence achieve the project’s goals. In order to further explain goal achievement we also
included Liu and Walker’s (1998, p. 213) framework, which in essence stated that goal
consensus and clarity of goals is essential in order to achieve a project’s goals.

As we initially found that project management served an important role in order to
achieve the project’s goals we further on found that managing a project within the
public sector is more complex than in the private sector, something that Williams &
Lewis (2008, p. 665-666) acknowledged. For instance Gomes et al. (2012, p. 326)
highlighted that such projects are influence by factors in the projects external
environment to a larger extent than private sector projects are. Gomes et al. also
suggested a project life cycle for public projects including the stages of selection,
planning, implementation, and termination.

Since we for this thesis are investigating project communication’s impact on risk
management and goal achievement we also reviewed previous research on these topics.
We thereby learnt that both communication and risk management are essential in order
to gain a successful outcome of a project and thus achieve its goals. Thamhain (2013, p.
26) for instance emphasized that risks have different impacts on a project depending on
when they occur, and that their actual impact on the project outcome can be sever if
such risks are not mitigated or planned for. Welsh and Jackson (2007) noted that
internal communication exists on different dimensions, which are important to
acknowledge since the level and direction of the communication needs to be managed
and planned for. Pandey and Garnett (2006, p. 36) also emphasized that factors such as
goal clarity, red tape and organizational culture and size might impact the
communication performance. However, a thorough investigation of project
communication’s impact on risk management and goal achievement in a place branding
project is however lacking, which is why we will further investigate this.
4. Practical Methodology

In this chapter we will explain our choices of a qualitative research design and a single case study along with the method of choosing a suitable case and respondents. Based on these choices we will thereafter elaborate on our choice of semi-structured interviews along with the procedure of collecting and analyzing the empirical results.

4.1 Research design: Qualitative design

According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 27) “It is...the research question that ‘dictates’ the choice of research methods and the type of research setting, and not the other way around’. Aligned with this reasoning, we have chosen to adopt an ontological philosophy of social constructionism, an epistemological philosophy of interpretivism and an inductive research design for this thesis as it best assists us in answering our research question. According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 163) a qualitative research design is suitable for interpretive studies since the researcher aims to interpret and assign meaning to the investigated phenomenon. A qualitative research design is also said to be preferred in inductive research since the researcher aim to formulate a theoretical framework based on their findings (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). For this thesis we seek to identify new aspects of our research problem and follow interesting paths throughout the research process. This can further on be described as an exploratory study, since such studies enables the researcher to explore and develop an understanding for the nature of a problem (Saunders et al., 2012, p.171). The adoption of a qualitative design will therefore enable us to gain a profound understanding of the context, which the respondents interact in, which for this thesis is constituted by a public place branding project. Our adopted research design will also enable us explore our research problem, gain new insights as well as develop increased understanding of our research problem. For that reason, the adoption of a qualitative research design of exploratory nature will allows for us to identify deviations from previous theories as well as further explore new paths.

4.2 Research strategy: Single case study

Case studies or case-based research as Perri and Bellamy (2012, p. 103) denotes it is a suitable research strategy in inductive research since the small number of cases enables the researcher to develop a profound understanding of a complex phenomenon or of social interactions. Perri and Bellamy (2012, p. 104) also explained that case studies are useful when the researcher want to study factors that are dynamic and/or interacting with one another. For this thesis, project communication can be said to constitute such a dynamic factor as communication is based on the interactions between people. According Saunders et al. the case study “…has considerable ability to generate answers to the question ‘why?’ as well as ‘what?’ and how?’” (2012, p. 179), which further on supports our choice to adopt the case study as research strategy. As opposed to research strategies in quantitative studies, the case study does not limit the investigation to certain variables, but instead enables the researcher to investigate the context as a whole (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 179). As we have adopted an inductive research approach we are interested in making a theoretical contribution within the field of communication and risk management, and therefore wish to gain insights in the context where these concepts interact. The case study strategy will therefore not only enable us to conduct a profound investigation on a limited number of respondents, but also enables us to create a greater understanding for the context of which the communication is taking place.
When conducting a case study the researcher further on needs to determine the suitable number of cases to study with relation to the research topic and purpose. According to Creswell (2013, p. 99) the type of case study one chooses to adopt depends on the researcher’s intent with the case study. Perri and Bellamy (2012, p. 107) also mentioned the choice to be dependent on the diversity within the case and/or cases. Creswell (2013, p. 99) stated that instrumental case studies focuses on creating an understanding of a specific problem which can be studied through one or a small number of cases. In intrinsic case studies a single case is also selected although here, a specific case is in focus since the researcher intends to develop a greater understanding for its unique elements (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). For this thesis, we seek to investigate and explore our research problem with the context of public place branding. Hence, intentions are in line with the instrumental case study strategy. According to Creswell (2013, p. 99) and Saunders et al., (2012, p. 180) collective case studies/multiple case studies can however also be selected to investigate a specific problem. Such studies investigate the research problem from different perspectives, and the researcher hence needs to ensure that the results from the selected cases will be comparable (Saunders et al., 2012, p.180). As we will elaborate upon in section 4.3, the cases we compared prior to our selection varied to a great extent in terms of budget, size, and phase in the project lifecycle. A multiple case study would therefore have enabled us to compare the cases and then draw conclusions based on the collective results. Since the cases however proved to vary to a great extent we found that a multiple case study would have resulted in findings, which would have been difficult compare and analyze. Based on the above, we have therefore selected to conduct a single case strategy.

A limitation for case studies is that its results might be difficult to generalize since those types of studies only allows for a small number of cases to be studied (Perri & Bellamy, 2012, p. 105). For this thesis, we have adopted an inductive research approach where we intend to make a theoretical contribution to the field of project communication and risk management. We do for that reason not intend to generalize our findings, but rather seek to achieve findings which can be transmittable onto other cases.

4.3 Choice of case: Destination South Lapland
In order to select a suitable project for our study, we reviewed the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growths’ list of projects, which they support financially (The Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth, n.d.). The Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth was chosen since they fund regional projects whose goal is to increase regional growth, and also because a large number of these projects are related to place branding. The project database provided us with a list of all ongoing and recently finished projects that they fund or have funded, from which we selected and listed the ones in Västerbotten. The selection of Västerbotten was made since it is currently a hotspot for marketing projects, greatly contributed by the fact that Umeå has been selected as the Capital of Culture of Europe 2014. What we found was that Umeå is not the only city or municipality in Västerbotten who is marketing itself to attract visitors, businesses and investors. The number of place branding projects has recently increased all over Västerbotten. For that reason we compare the projects based on their budget, purpose, project time and project organization in order to gain insights in what type, size and phase in the project lifecycle the project was.

The projects we found were similar in many senses, and in order to gain deeper insights of the project organization and the accessibility of potential interview persons we studied each project case through their web sites. Through this background research we
found Destinations South Lapland to be an interesting project for our case study since the project team was geographically dispersed and the steering group consisted of local government commissioners from the four involved municipalities. Based on our choice of research topic, we found their organizational structure and the geographical dispersion interesting. Relating back to Perri and Bellamy’s method for case selection, we also found that Destination South Lapland consisted of sufficient diversity to conduct an inductive single case analysis on.

Lastly, the fact that we are both studying and living in Umeå has also affected our choice to study a case in Västerbotten. Although this might be viewed as a convenient choice, we cannot neglect that this is the region of which we have the greatest knowledge and interest. On almost a daily basis we are informed about new projects and activities through newspapers and broadcasts. For that reason we have developed a great interest for the growth of the region and are therefore also interested to study a case whose goal is to increase the regional growth.

4.4 Respondent selection

Based on our choice to conduct a single case study of Destination South Lapland we sought to select respondents within the project which could provide us with diverse insights on how they communicate, how they work with risk management and how the risk management was communicated in order to gain sufficient information for our inductive research. When selecting respondents in qualitative studies, researchers can either adopt a single, or combination of multiple overlapping strategies (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). The selection of respondents can for instance be based on predetermined criteria, or be based on variations in individuals’ characteristics, strategies Creswell (2013, p. 157) calls ‘criteria’ and ‘maximum variation’. As described in section 4.2, the project Destination South Lapland was chosen since its organizational structure and geographical dispersion makes it an interesting case for our study of communication and risk management. When we initially did research on which case to study we found that the project organization of Destination South Lapland consisted of a project group with nine persons along with a steering group consisting of four persons, one local governmental commissioner from each municipality. Since we intended to investigate our research problem between the steering group and the project group, aligned with Creswell’s strategies mentioned above, we adopted a combination of the strategies since we found the different positions to be a suitable criteria, and that the steering group/project group’s roles and geographical location varied to a great extent. The number of selected respondents was based on the size of the project along with our limited period for the thesis. Aligned with this choice we contacted the possible respondents related to the project to interview and we reached 8 persons that were willing to participate namely: the project leader, the acceding project leader, two other members within the project group, along with three out of the four persons in the steering group.

Post the initial selection of respondents, we sent an email to the project manager of Destination South Lapland stating: who we were, the topic and purpose of our research, our interest in the project, the estimated time for the interview, who we were interested in interviewing and how we intended to use the information. According to Creswell (2013, p. 57) clarifying the research purpose and receiving the participants’ consent are important factors to eliminate ethical issues related to consent, integrity, and confidentiality. The project manager replied with his consent as well as provided us with the contact information to the members of the steering group. According to both
Creswell and Saunders et al. a gatekeeper can initially be used to get access to other respondents (Creswell, 2013, p. 154; Saunders, 2012, p. 211). In our case we used the project manager as a gatekeeper, which helped us to get access to the members of the steering group. Consequently, we sent individual emails to our selected respondents stating the same as above as well as informed that we had received the project manager’s consent. All respondents apart from one replied with their interest and the interviews were scheduled. In the end of each interview, we asked the participants to approve our used their answers for the purpose of our thesis study, in order to ensure we had their consent.

An overview of the chosen respondents is illustrated in the table below, followed by a short presentation of their role in the project Destination South Lapland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Position, location</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
<th>Interview duration</th>
<th>Interview order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Håkan Sandberg</td>
<td>Project manager, Strömsund</td>
<td>Project group</td>
<td>2013-11-27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Lindström</td>
<td>Local governmental commissioner, Åsele</td>
<td>Steering group</td>
<td>2013-11-28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Åke Nilsson</td>
<td>Local governmental commissioner/ Chairman, Vilhelmina</td>
<td>Steering group</td>
<td>2013-12-02</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trude Westgaard</td>
<td>Acceding project manager, Dorotea</td>
<td>Project group</td>
<td>2013-12-02</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gudrun Hansson</td>
<td>Local governmental commissioner, Strömsund</td>
<td>Steering group</td>
<td>2013-12-04</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Mellström</td>
<td>Marketing/Strategy, Stockholm</td>
<td>Project group</td>
<td>2013-12-05</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida Collin</td>
<td>Business Developer, Strömsund</td>
<td>Project group</td>
<td>2013-12-05</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanette Olofsson</td>
<td>Administrator, Åsele</td>
<td>Project group</td>
<td>2013-12-06</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Overview of the chosen respondents presented in chronological order.*

### 4.4.1 Håkan Sandberg

Håkan Sandberg acceded the position as project manager for Destination South Lapland in March 2013, when the previous project manager Sofie Jonsson went on maternity leave. He is currently working part time for Destination South Lapland and part time as a tourism consultant at the tourism agency in Strömsund. Håkan is the key person who coordinates the daily activities and functions as the link between the steering group, the tourism group and the project group.

### 4.4.2 Peter Lindström

Peter Lindström is the local government commissioner of Åsele municipality in the county of Västerbotten. He has been a member of the steering group since 2012. Peter was not in the position during the application and the pre-study. The previous councilor was part of the steering group before.
4.4.3 Åke Nilsson
Åke Nilsson is the local government commissioner of Vilhelmina municipality in the county of Västerbotten. He has been a part of the project from the starting discussions in 2009. He is now the chairman of the steering group of Destination South Lapland.

4.4.4 Trude Westgaard
Trude Westgaard started working as business developer for Destination South Lapland in May 2012. As she previously worked for Dorotea municipality she continued working with the local tourism businesses in Dorotea and assisted them in the development of activity packages and to activated them in the project. When she is now acceding the position as project manager her chores will be more focused on project management and administration, although she intends to stay in touch with the local businesses in Dorotea.

4.4.5 Gudrun Hansson
Gudrun Hansson is the local government commissioner of Strömsund municipality in the county of Jämtland. She started as a representative in the steering group of Destination South Lapland in 2011 as there was a shift in the steering of the municipality. Gudrun was part of the decision process where it was decided that Strömsund should be a part of the project.

4.4.6 Per Mellström
Per Mellström initially started working as a consultant for Destination South Lapland, concretizing the group and conference market. One and a half year ago, he was recruited to work 2 days per week with the project’s marketing and sales, and is currently in charge of the development of marketing strategies, coordinates the advertising and initiates strategic partnerships. Prior to his position at Destination South Lapland, Per has an extensive career in the service industry including engagements in hotel-, destination-, tourism-, conference- and restaurant sectors. For instance he previously held the position as head of marketing and sales for the destination enterprise Hemavan/Tärnaby, as well as worked as head of the destination enterprise Åre-congress.

4.4.7 Ida Collin
In May 2012, Ida Collin got recruited for the business development position based in Strömsund. The position makes her one of the point persons for the tourism businesses, mainly for the ones in Strömsund but also in the entire region. Ida works 80% for Destination South Lapland where she assists the local tourism business in the creation of sellable tourism packages, posts these on the website as well as promotes and sells these packages on fairs and through partners.

4.4.8 Jeanette Olofsson
Jeanette has been administrator in the project since April 2013. She is based in Åsele municipality. Earlier she has been working with tourism related questions in the municipality before she was employed in the project.

4.5 Data collection methods: Semi-structured interviews and organizational documents

4.5.1 Semi-structured interviews
When conducting qualitative research, the researcher most commonly choses between structured-, semi-structured-, or unstructured interviews (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 374). In this thesis we have used semi-structured interviews which Saunders et al., (2012, p. 374) describes as interviews that consists of different themes and questions. We found this appropriate to the exploratory nature that our study has, since we intended to increase the understanding for how communication impacts risk management and goal achievement in public place branding projects. In order to identify differences between the strategic and the operational level we have interviewed respondents from both the project group and steering group in order to capture each individuals perceptions based on their role in the project. Instead of sending out the themes on forehand, we chose to only inform the respondent of the overall topic and purpose for the thesis, as we seeked to capture their perceptions and knowledge of the project. The interviews were held in Swedish since this is our as well as the respondents primary language. For that reason we believe that this might have ruled out eventual misunderstandings. due to language barriers. The interviews were conducted over telephone, recorded and then the full interviews were transcribed. The main reason for choosing this method was because of the distance to the respondents and the limited time span for the thesis project. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 348) describes the relevance to choose this method for having gaining access since the personal interview approach would be hard to conduct related to time and cost. When using this method it is necessary to establish a contact before the interview is performed in order to extend the credibility and ethical issue in relation to the respondent (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 348) As discussed in chapter 4.4 the first contact were taken with the project manager who expressed a will to participate as well as he sent out an email to the participants of the project informing that we were going to take contact for an interview.

When conducting interviews over the telephone there are some limitations related to the possibility for the interviewer to keep the speed and right level of the interview. As well as the chance to see the interviewee’s facial expression and by that interpret and give follow up questions related to this (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 348). We have been aware of this limitation when performing the interviews; by transcribing and sharing the results of the interviews with each other we see the interpretations to be transparent and representative for the respondents.

4.5.2 Documents
According to Creswell (2009, p. 181) other sources in addition to the interviews could provide with additional information that otherwise could be missed. For the case of Destination South Lapland we have been able to get access documents that has been produced both prior and during the project. This is denoted as qualitative documents that are related to the case (Creswell 2009, p. 181). The documents that we found most relevant for the study is the original business plan that was made before the project started and still functions as a base for the project. The project has also had an ongoing evaluator who has developed a project report, which evaluates the projects performance. As we are interested in develop an understanding for goal achievement we found it important to include the project report as to see how the project is performing. We have also received the regular reports to the financiers, however we have decided not to use these since we believe that the information from the business plan (Razormind 2011) and the on going evaluation report (Project Report 2013) summarize the project’s performance connected to communication, risk and goal achievement. The SWOT analysis (Destination South Lapland, 2013) has helped us to identify the perceived risks
that the project group and the tourism group have identified. All the documents provided helped us to gain a good understanding of the project. This in connection to the semi-structured interviews gave us the opportunity to verify information that we have gained from the documents.

4.6 Interview guide
When constructing the interview guide we thematized the questions based on the theoretical areas of project management, project strategy, project success, project risk management, and project communication presented in chapter 3. The theoretical theme of place branding was not included in the interview guide since it relates to the case project per se and was therefore reflected in all questions. Our adoption of an inductive approach resulted in the use of the theoretical framework as a knowledge base. Perri & Bellamy (2012, p. 208) states that it is necessary to have an understanding of the field that is researched. According to Saunders et al., (2012, p. 374) semi-structured interviews gives the researcher more flexibility in the sense that he or she can reorder the questions in the interview guide or omit unnecessary ones throughout the interview. Since we interviewed respondents on different positions and levels in the project, the choice of semi-structured interviews proved to be suitable since some respondents were less or more involved in different parts of the project.

4.7 Processing and analysis of the empirical results
According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 179) and Creswell (2009, p. 191) triangulation is a technique where different sorts of data is collected and compared in order to ensure that the data is coherent. When we conducted the interviews we found that some of the respondents referred to internal documents such as the business plan, the project report and the SWOT analysis when answering our questions. For that reason we asked to get access to those documents in order to improve our ability to make accurate and correct interpretations of their responses. To gain a logical meaning when presenting the results and make it easy to follow we started the empirical chapter (see chapter 5) by presenting a summary of the case based on the business plan, the SWOT analysis, and the project report. According to Creswell (2009, p. 186) a researcher should summarize the gathered material under relevant themes. Since the interview guide followed the theoretical themes in chapter 3, we consequently decided to follow the same thematization when present the results in chapter 5 since those were the most relevant themes. Within these themes we however found that the results from the interviews needed to be separated in order to distinguish similarities and differences within and between the steering group and the project group. For that reason we further divided the results into two sub-themes where the responses from the steering groups represented the strategic level, and the ones from the project group represented the operational level.

Since we collected the empirical material through triangulation, we thereafter combined a few different methods when analyzing the material. As noted above, we firstly conformed to Saunders et al’s. (2009, p. 490) method of summarizing and categorizing data, meaning that we condensed and summarized the empirical material as well as categorized related material into themes. This presentation enabled us to identify difference and similarities between the responses and the documents. We therefore consequently adopted a method that Saunders et al. (2009, p. 514) refers to as narrative analysis, in order to further analyze these relationships with relation to the existing theories. The analysis and discussion of the empirical material were therefore grouped into two sections based on our two sub purposes.
5. Case Description

In this chapter we will provide with a thorough description of the case Destination South Lapland, which includes the empirical data and the internal documents we have reviewed.

5.1 Background - Destination South Lapland

Destination South Lapland is a place branding project and a strategic alliance between Vilhelmina, Dorotea, Strömshult, and Åsele municipality with the purpose to establish a joint destination enterprise called Destination South Lapland which will sell and market the destination (Razormind, 2011, p. 4). The purpose is also to attract investments to the region, ensure that the marketed offerings are of high quality, and to encourage cooperation’s between the public and private sector to achieve a joint ownership of the destination enterprise (Razormind, 2011, p. 31). The project was initiated in August 2009, when three of the municipalities (Vilhelmina, Åsele, and Dorotea) hired a consultancy firm to conduct a pilot study on their behalf (Razormind, 2011, p. 4). The results from the pilot study indicated that the region consisted of the preferred prerequisites to develop the region into an exclusive international destination (Razormind, 2011, p. 4). Later that year the three municipalities together with Strömshult municipality, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, regional authorities and businesses in the area decided that the business idea should be developed into a startup project (Razormind, 2011, p. 4).

In November 2010 the project’s business plan was finalized and the project’s business idea was formulated as the following: “The destination enterprise South Lapland will through clever and cost efficient marketing, bundling, and sales of the region’s supplies create an increased turnover for businesses related to tourism which in turn will result in an increased occupation rate and growth” (Razormind, 2011, p. 30). Aligned with the business idea, the business plan presented a strategy spanning over the following five years (2011-2015). The strategy proposed that the short term focus would be on areas and activities which would produce quick results, which in turn would positively reflect on the destination enterprise and hence create a long term trust and belief in the enterprise (Razormind, 2011, p. 32). The destination enterprise’s long term strategy was then to be responsible for the development and coordination of all areas of tourism in the region, to in turn increase growth and the occupation rate (Razormind, 2011, p. 32). The project’s vision was stated as: South Lapland should be an exclusive international destination with unique and untouched wilderness, accessible 365 days per year (Razormind, 2011, p. 6). A list of overarching goals was formulated, which can be summarized as to (Razormind, 2011, p. 7):

- Establish a destination enterprise.
- Attract more domestic and foreign tourists to the region.
- Increase the visitor’s average consumption.
- Increase the tourism turnover throughout the year.
- Increase the number of employed within the tourism industry.
- Increase the investment rate within the tourism industry.
- Improve the product and service quality to improve customer satisfaction.
- Increase the skills and competence of the employed in the tourism industry.
- Foster and preserve the region’s nature, cultural heritage, and cultural assets.
- Influence the international accessibility of Vilhelmina airport.
- Influence road constructions to improve domestic and international accessibility.
During 2010-2011 the project encountered a few pitfalls, which made them unable to receive funding from the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. One major pitfall was that it appeared that the procurement of the pilot study was not conducted in an appropriate manner, which resulted in economic issues for the project. The project’s launch date was therefore postponed to January 1st, 2012. To this day, Destination South Lapland is funded by the 4 municipalities (Vilhelmina, Åsele, Dorotea, and Strömsund), the European Regional Development fund, and Region Västerbotten (Destination South Lapland, 2013a).

According to the business plan, the destination enterprise is organized by a steering group and a project group (Razormind, 2011, p. 59). The steering group consists of 4 local government commissioners, one from each municipality, along with 3 external persons representing the regional tourism businesses (Razormind, 2011, p. 59). Åke Nilsson from Vilhelmina municipality serves as the chairman and has the final mandate. Vilhelmina municipality hence serves as the primary project owner although all four municipalities own equal shares in the destination enterprise. The project group is further on stated to consist of 9 full- or part-time position in accounting and administration, business development and project manager, marketing and head of sales, sales, IT and web, external services (Destination South Lapland, 2013a).

Evaluations, reports, and follow-ups are said to be conducted on an ongoing basis and presented at the annual shareholder’s meeting as well as at the quarterly steering group meetings (Razormind, 2011, p. 58). In terms of the communication channels, the decision making processes nor a declaration of who is responsible for the risk management are however stated in the business plan. The risks and challenges that could have a great impact on the project’s outcome is briefly presented in the business plan. The main risks which are presented are if (Razormind, 2011, p. 26):

- The project do not receive the promised public funding.
- The capital market cannot see the growth value in the sector.
- Regulations limit the use of public land.

When reviewing the business plan further, these risks will partly be prevented by achieving the project’s purpose to attract investments to the destination, and to form a destination enterprise, which will be jointly owned by both the public and private sector. A precondition for the destination enterprise is according to the business plan said to constitute a low risk for the owners (Razormind, 2011, p. 67). A financial goal is also said to within 3 years achieve an owner structure where the private sector owns a majority of the shares (Razormind, 2011, p. 67). In terms of the project’s revenue stream, the business plan suggests that 79 % of the revenue is accounted for by commissions from tourism reservations (Razormind, 2011, p. 62).

The project was in its initial form supposed to proceed until December 31st 2013, but according to Håkan Sandberg it has been decided to continue until September 30st 2014. During 2014 the project can however not receive EU-funding through the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth and therefore downsizing the organization during this period.

5.2 SWOT Analysis
During the spring 2013, the project group together with the tourism group conducted a SWOT analysis for internal usage, where they summarized the project Destination South Lapland’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The analysis showed that the project’s strengths were perceived as the brand Destination South Lapland and
its increased recognizability, the large supply of tourism products in the region, the internal know-how and variety of competences, the excellent image in the target markets, the cooperation between the stakeholders, the ability to exchange knowledge between stakeholders and leverage on the shared resources, and the project report (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 1-2).

The weaknesses were further on presented as the poor infrastructure and communication in the region, the organizational differences between the municipalities, the rather low budget for 2014, the poor project image among the population within the region, poor marketing and communication within the region, difficulties to market such a large geographical area both to the public and to manage internally, lack of internal market- and activity plan, and clarity of the sales function (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 2).

The fact that the project can be viewed as an underdog was perceived as an opportunity as it would enable them to grow faster (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). Other opportunities were seen as the project’s past and present as it was perceived to serve as a solid base to build on, and the fact that the establishment of the project proves the municipalities prioritizes tourism (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). Since the place branding project is a cooperation between multiple municipalities and local businesses it creates an opportunity for increased cooperation and continued financing (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). The final opportunities which were mentioned in the analysis were those involved with the infrastructure, the accessibility of- and cooperation with the airport, and the local population’s belief and involvement in the project (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3).

The major threat which was acknowledge was that the regional tourism businesses have different perceptions of-, and belief in the project and are for that reason more or less involved (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). Since the regional tourism businesses involvement is crucial for Destination South Lapland’s future, the analysis stated that the stakeholders’ perceptions have to be improved and their involvement increased (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). Competition was further on mentioned as a threat but was stated to be less important (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). The involved municipalities were expected to suffer from a poor economy during 2014, which was said to increase the need for tight collaboration between the project group and the tourism agencies (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). The organizational structure was lastly mentioned as a threat. During 2014, Destination South Lapland are downsizing the organization which results in a heavier workload and difficulties to continuously manage the same amount of activities (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3). The fact that the place branding project involves 4 municipalities, the project group, the tourism group, the tourism agencies, and the industry representatives also results in a threat since the organization will be difficult to manage (Destination South Lapland, 2013b, p. 3).

5.3 Project Report, Nov 2013
The project Destination South Lapland has had an ongoing external evaluator that has been following the project since the start in February 2012. To have an on going evaluator is not required for achieving the finance for the project, however Destination South Lapland did procure an on going evaluator to follow and support the project. The evaluator has presented three reports; in February 2013, June 2013 and a final report in November 2013. It is not a demand from the financial stakeholders such as Swedish
Agency of Economic and Regional Growth that are the economically seen, largest stakeholder, to have an ongoing evaluator. This is something that the project decided to procure (Project report, 2013, p. 3).

Since the project has been granted an extension of the project for nine months, the final report does not go into the results of the project. It should be seen more as recommendations and an analysis of the results so far. In the final report the focus is on processes that have had an impact on the project outcomes. The perspective that is approached in the report is mainly from the operational level. The business plan (see section 5.1) is the basis of the project plan and vision, purpose, goals, strategies, business model and activities are applied from that.

In table 2 presented below, is the results of the project in relation to the measure of what is stated in the grant contract for the project from the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth, meaning what the project has said that they would achieve when they were granted the funding. The result represents what the project has achieved until the 31th of August 2013 (Project report 2013 p. 5-6). The numbers presented below should be seen in relation as they are described in the indicator column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Grant contract Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Result 31/8 -13 Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Grant contract</th>
<th>Result 31/8 -13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New or created work positions</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New companies, including mixed ownership</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased visitors to the region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>233</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased guest nights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>535</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookings through the booking system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td>108</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased tourism revenue in the region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 750 000 kr</td>
<td>1 066 107 kr</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Indicators for Destination South Lapland. Stated goals and achieved goals by the 31th of August 2013 (Project Report, 2013, p. 5).*

In the final report has an evaluation been done with the external stakeholders from the suppliers of the products and services that are connected to the tourism sector in the region Most of the respondents stated that they feel a connectedness with other actors in the region, however a fifth respondent answered, “I don't know” on that question. The suppliers see the tourism sector as an important sector for the region in the future. The goal with the project is to create a destination company that is driven by the business in the region. Most of the respondents are interested in this to happen and invest money in
the company, however there are not as clear regarding if they really would be interested in financing it. Regarding the involvement in committing time and resources for influencing Destination South Lapland has an overweight of positive answers. (Project report, 2013, p. 6) The focus that the respondents think the company should have is to work with marketing. But also work for an increased cooperation between companies and to package products. One priority that is necessary to address is infrastructure issues (Project report, 2013, p. 6-7).

The project members perceive that the project plan and the goals are unclear and too abstract, and that the evaluation of activities is not extensively done. Several other factors are also perceived to have functioned poorly such as the work descriptions for the project members which has led to a delay in the project. The project members also mention the problems with several municipalities with different internal policies and the fact that the South Lapland is located in two counties is also an issue that has been affecting the project. Regarding the purpose and goals of the project the respondents stated that the business plan has not been giving enough direction on how the project group should work. The project members would for that reason like to have a plan with more direct and applicable goals to work towards (Project report, 2013, p. 7-8).

The project management has not been functioning as well as the project group wanted. There is a problem to define roles and limitations. This has led to independence for members in the project group since the steering has not been clear enough. A challenge with the project is that the project group is not located in the same place, this has given mixed intentions where some persons thinks the technical tools has been working well, hence some mention that it is an issue. One part that everyone in the project group share is that they want better internal information and more extensive reports regarding what they all are doing. The communication within the region to the citizens and the suppliers has not been working. A communication plan was developed in February 2013 but it has not been followed (Project report, 2013, p. 8-9).

The results and effects of the project that the project group is enhancing is that the brand South Lapland is starting to spread and be more accepted. Another thing is to reach the target group in the Stockholm area and to close deals with suppliers and established new connections to build on for the future (Project report, 2013, p. 10).

The recommendations that are stated in the project report:
- Set clear and achievable goals and then to plan for this.
- Regular meetings and decide together on how to work.
- Agreements with infrastructure suppliers, and decide who are responsible.
- Involve the suppliers more extensively.

5.4 Project management
The conducted interviews proved that the project organization of Destination South Lapland is divided into 3 different levels or groups; the steering group, the tourism group and the project group. According to the project manager Håkan, the steering group consists of the local governmental commissioners from each municipality and they are the ones deciding what should be done, and how the resources should be invested. Åke and Jeanette states that the steering group consists of both the local governmental commissioners and one business representative from each municipality. In addition to the steering group there is a tourism group that consists of representatives from each tourism agency in the municipalities as well as from the airport which serves
as a reference group to the project group. The project group does further on consist of 9 full- or part-time employees located in the municipalities as well as in Stockholm, which decides how the project’s activities should be managed and executed. Jeanette says that Destination South Lapland has a rather large organization for a project of this size. Per further on retells that the tourism group consists of the CEO of Vilhelmina Airport, the industry executive in Vilhelmina municipality, the head of Strömsund tourism agency and representatives from the regional tourism businesses, and functions as a support to the project group. Håkan currently works as the project manager and will be replaced by Trude at the end of 2013. As Håkan explained, since the project has been extended, the project organization is currently undergoing a reconstruction where the project group and tourism group will work more closely and the tourism group will take over some of the operative tasks. Jeanette explains the reconstruction of the organization as: “This tourism group as it is called, which consists of tourism responsible in the municipalities and the airport. It has been a side all along the time but it is it that now will go in as a operative steering group the turn of the year. Then will the business representatives be moved to that instead.”

Starting 2014, the project group will decrease in size although as Trude Westgaard stated “…we are going to be less people working with the project but we will have more resources” referring to cooperation’s with for example Vilhelmina Airport and the local tourism agencies who will take over a larger responsibility for the booking system and assist the local tourism businesses in developing packages. After the organizational reconstruction the project group will consist of the project manager Trude, the sales/marketing person Per in Stockholm, the web-/ business developer Magnus, an EU-coordinator, and an accountant. The project group will be in charge of customer relations and initiating partnerships, but the local business will be the ones driving the sales. Per stated that “…the future destination enterprise will most likely be a platform for communication, in this case focusing on marketing and sales”. Destination South Lapland will hence initiate sales by marketing the destination. The tourism agencies will be responsible for the contact with the local business, and the local businesses will in the end drive the sales.

According to the project group, the operative decisions are made by the project group and then approved or rejected by the steering group. Per mentioned that “…almost all of the decisions that has to do with the project are made by the project group, so the steering group has not made a lot of decisions”. According to Ida the steering group determines how the finances are going to be used based on the project groups proposals. Trude also stated that the project group has proposed revised budgets and activity plans to the steering group. For the forthcoming reorganization a greater focus will lie on the strategic level since the steering group, consisting of the local governmental commissioners, will take strategic decisions whilst the operative steering group will be responsible more for the daily work, Jeanette says.

**Strategic level**
The strategic level of Destination South Lapland has been changing throughout the project. From the beginning it was consisting of a steering group where the local government commissioners from the four municipalities had positions. According to Åke, the steering group has been extended with one business representative from each municipality. In connection to the steering group, there are also a tourism group that serve as a support to the project group.
The agreement for the steering group is that strategic decisions are taken in the steering group and that the project group has mandate to take own decisions that are following the project plan and is within budget. This is something that Åke, Gudrun and Peter confirmed. Åke draws a parallel to a limited company when it comes to the organization with a large amount of operative freedom for the project group. “The running operations has been on the project manager, so you could compare the structure with how you can think it is in a registered company. It is a rather big operative liberty and the steering group decides regarding strategic directions.”

The cooperation within the project has been functioning well according to the members of the steering group. Peter say that it is because of: “.. we see it as a region that it is an equal and democratic way.” This is a factor that the other persons stress as well as a key factor to a well working organization. Throughout the steering group the members does not see any difference between the municipalities role. However there are distinctions made because of the conditions that are in the municipalities. Vilhelmina and Dorotea both have large winter tourism destinations whilst Åsele and Strömsund has more focus on the summer tourism. In the project the staff are employed by Vilhelmina municipality. Gudrun says that: “Vilhelmina municipality is the main project owner. Therefore there is a difference which means that the staff working in the project are employed by Vilhelmina municipality.”

Operational level
According to Håkan, the steering group has since its start consisted of the same local governmental commissioners since the project has been running throughout the same mandate term. The term ends on December 31st 2014, which he explains will most likely result in an exchange of the people in the project’s steering group.

The involved municipalities does according to Ida have similar roles in the project since they are all owners and governing. Håkan, on the other hand, stated that the municipalities do however have different roles in the project based on differences in their organizational structures and their geographical locations. He explained that some of the municipalities are organizationally better prepared, have a larger budget to spend on tourism, and work with tourism related questions to a larger extent than the others. Trude mentioned that although Vilhelmina municipality is the project owner and has appointed the chairman, the municipalities owns 25% each of the currently inactive destination enterprise which hence gives them all an equal position and mandate in the steering group. Per explained that the municipalities with representatives in the steering group are main responsible for the project’s economy. “They are the ones who own’s the project and they are the employers, they are the ones who delegates the chores to the tourism agencies”. Per continued on by explaining that after the organizational reconstruction in 2014, a larger responsibility will lie on the tourism agencies in each municipality and the local governmental commissioners will then have a greater responsibility for delegating chores and make sure that the tourism agencies are aligned with the strategic objectives. According to Per, the project group is currently supported by the tourism group which has so far taken most of the operative decisions in the project. The steering group has then, according to Per, confirmed or rejected these proposals.

The project manager Håkan perceives that he has the steering group’s trust and liberty to make decisions and solve problems on the operational level with the resources he has. This trust is according to him based on the fact that the steering group are the ones who
makes the initial decisions regarding what activities they should proceed with, which provides a solid base for the project group to work from. According to Trude, “...the project manager serves as the link between the project group and the steering group so according to me we have a rather large mandate to make decisions...we have to make sure that the project is proceeding in the right direction, meets the time plan, the budget and so on.” Trude also explained that the steering group makes the final decisions, since they have to make sure that the project follows the governmental and the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth’s regulations.

The respondents in the project group shared the perception that the cooperation within the project group worked satisfactory. The cooperation between the project group and the steering group was also mentioned not to work well but with some difficulties. Håkan mentioned that “…there is a will from all four municipalities to accomplish something great...despite the fact that they work under different preconditions...so i believe it has worked really well”. He further on explains that this is due to the fact that all municipalities have a shared belief that the project is important for the future growth and occupation in the region. Ida on the other hand noted that the fact that the enterprise is organized into three groups makes it difficult to cooperate and communicate between the groups. According to her the enterprise would function better if they worked in close proximity to one another, since the steering group would then have greater insights in the operations, which they are making decisions of. Per on the other hand mentioned that cooperation is working very well, despite the fact the expectations initially were too high. According to Per, the success factors of the cooperation is the fact that the people within the enterprise are humble and prestigeless. Trude stated that the cooperation has worked satisfactory but can be improved. She mentioned that they need to improve the communication between the project group and steering group, in order to keep all the involved stakeholders informed and have a tighter cooperation. Jeanette thinks that the cooperation within the project group has been working well and one reason is the project managers work: “He is a very good project manager in keeping the group together and then I think that everybody is excited about this project.”

5.5 Project strategy
Strategic level
All the respondents in the steering group had a common vision of what the project should accomplish; to create a platform for the tourism sector in the region and to offer services that all stakeholders could benefit from. Åke stated that it is necessary to get the understanding from the companies in the region that they should operate the destination company that is established. Åke says that: “It is the goal to have a destination company that are controlled by the businesses”.

Peter mention the issue with getting the business involved in the work and to adapt the thought that this company is a form that could enhance all companies in the municipality as well as in the region of South Lapland. The goals that are set in the project plan are very ambitious according to Gudrun, this can be an issue to deal with she means and refers to the fact that a process involving a new brand takes time. Therefore she says it is important involve the businesses to a greater extent to clarify that this is a long process that all could benefit from. All the respondents comply with the fact that it is important to gain a positive opinion for the project so that it can be accepted and in the long run be controlled by the businesses in the region.
Regarding which phase the project are in at the moment is somewhat clear according to the steering group members. Peter is stating that the project is going in the right direction, however it has been issues before that has had influences on the current phase where they had a problem with a public procurement, which led to a new start in 2012. Gudrun says that the phase that they are going in to now is a implementation in the regular work and a preparation for the work after the project has ended in the autumn 2013. She says that: “Development work takes time but it feels like we are on the right way.”

The evaluation of the project is something that has been conducted all through the project. Surveys to the suppliers and they have had a ongoing evaluator following the project. According to the evaluations that has been done there has been changes in the project plan and strategy. Åke and Gudrun mention the shifting from working with sales to focusing more on marketing activities. This is also affecting the project organization where there will be a new organization focusing more on marketing activities from 2014.

**Operational level**

The interview respondents in the project group had a relatively common understanding of the project’s purpose. Håkan Sandberg stated that “[t]he purpose is to form some sort of enterprise, a destination enterprise that is, and the purpose with the project has been to bundle, market, and sell the tourism products including everything from food, activities, trips and accommodation”. Trude Westgaard stated that the purpose is to increase the turnover for the tourism businesses in the region, to get a larger number of tourism business to get established in the region in order to increase the occupation rate, achieve a more even gender distribution within the tourism industry in the region, attract a greater number of tourists, and communicate the diversity in the region. Per mentioned that the main purpose is to “…create new and additional job opportunities in the region”, and continuously said that the sub purposes are to create and foster a greater traffic in all segments, create strategic alliances and target the most important markets. Ida explained the purpose as “…to attract a greater number of visitors to the destination” by marketing the destination to the tourists.

There were further on a somewhat unclear understanding of what the primary goal of the project is. Håkan summarized the goals as “…the achievements of a certain number of tourists staying overnight in the region, the number of new established companies in the region and so on”. Trude on the other hand said that the goal is to establish a destination enterprise and that the enterprise should be jointly owned by the tourism businesses in order for them and the enterprise to work and function more independently than it currently does. Per mentioned that “…the primary goal is to increase the number of guests staying overnight…and to extend the seasons in order to increase the tourism over an extended time period”. Ida also said the projects has several goals which includes to create job opportunities, increase the number of guest nights, and to increase the quality of the tourism.

The project group members shared the understanding of what phase the project is currently going through. Both Håkan and Trude mention that the project was currently supposed to go through its final phase as the initial project was set to end on December 31st 2013. Since the final date has been pushed until September 30th 2014, they agree that they are still somewhere in the middle. Trude mentioned that when she started working on the project in May 2012 the project in some senses went through a start-
over, and she explains that at the point of our conversation they have just successfully filled the previous gaps and have managed to create a more structured organization. Both Håkan and Ida explained that they quite recently were able to see that their activities have started to give results. The number of bookings has gone up, and a previous successful cooperation with Friskis & Svettis has resulted in an additional large booking. The strategic partnerships that they have worked on have also given results and enabled them to initiate additional partnerships. Per confirmed that the project is somewhere in the middle, but emphasized that “...this is not a project in its usual form since this will last forever”. Ida also stated that “...this is a never ending project....We cannot just stop and say ‘now we have done this; now it is finished’. We will always be needed to market the region”. Per continued by explaining that even though the project receives EU’s project funding they have “...chosen not to be a travel agency which will get paid by its customers, but the customers is more like a distributor. We have now chosen to be a platform so the enterprise Destination South Lapland will not be self-generating in the sense of pure money, but instead we have chosen to be an enterprise steered by the municipalities which actively works to increase the traffic so that the distributors earns the money”. Per further on mentioned that they will develop a new business model during 2014 where the municipalities will partially finance the destination enterprise, but where the tourism businesses in the region will be part-owners of the enterprise.

The evaluations and status reports are conducted on a continuously bases. Håkan explained that the fact that they receive funding from the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth forces them to evaluate the executed activities on a quarterly basis. Trude and Ida also explained that they recently conducted a survey which was sent out to all tourism distributors in the region, and that they have had a researcher who have objectively observed the project and presented the results, feedback, and recommendations in an extensive report (see project report Nov, 2013 above). These evaluations and reports did, according to Per, serve as a base when the steering group decided that the project should be extended.

5.6 Project success/Place branding success

Strategic level

Within the steering group the view on a successful project within place branding which this project are. They all want to have results that the business and the citizens can rely on and spread. Åke explains that communication is the key to success so that all stakeholders can feel as a part of the brand Destination South Lapland. “The ones that are in it and work with it has probably a clear view, however the ones that are a bit away might have a more ambiguous picture. There a feel that our communication plan has not had the effect that we thought it should.”

This complies with what Peter sees as the most influencing effects for Åsele municipality is that it is accepted by the business. If this will happen and the business are growing it gives other effects such as people are visiting and also moves to the municipality and the region. Another thing connected to the brand is a gained attraction for the region which is something that all are promoting as a success of the project.

Gudrun is talking about the anchoring and acceptance at a municipal level as a success for the project. Since Strömsund municipality does not have large destinations as the ones in the other municipalities there is a need for acceptance in being in a larger brand. This in connection to the local development of tourism in the municipality. Another
success that Gudrun discusses is the implementation in the regular work, both on a municipal level and by the business. “To implement this into the regular operations.” They all agree that the project is going in the right direction; however there have been issues on the way but the common vision from the steering group is positive.

**Operational level**
The project team’s expectations on the project are somewhat diverse. Ida stated her expectations as “...for the [destination] enterprise to continue to exist”. Håkan mentioned that he initially expected to have a more overarching role, but due to the fact that he is only working part-time on the project his main focus has been on the operational chores. He however also mentioned that the execution of the campaigns and the creation of strategic partnerships moves them one step closer to the goals. Trude on the other hand mentioned that she initially expected that it would be easier to get the local tourism businesses involved in the project. When she is now acceding the position as project manager, her expectations are more long term since she has realized that they need to establish better cooperation’s between the project group and the steering group in order to achieve the project’s goals. Per explains that he is expecting the distributors and other actors to get more involved and engaged in the project, and “…to understand that they stand stronger together than alone”.

In terms of the results, the project group agrees that the project is currently on the right track. Trude explained that the project was previously not going in the preferred direction but that is started to get results when the new project manager Håkan acceded the position since he created a better organizational structure and enabled them to work more aligned. Per also mentioned that the previous pitfalls created turbulence in the project which thereafter put the project on a halt, but that the current organizational structure has enabled them align their operations with the goals.

Trude mentioned that the municipalities which have put the most effort into the project also are the ones which have received the greatest result. Håkan emphasizes that they currently have reach a point where they have to decide whether the enterprise Destination South Lapland should primarily work with marketing or sales, since the distributors perceive the primarily goals to be diffuse.

What the project group’s perception of what the project’s success factors are, and whether the project is going in the right direction are also varied. The project manager Håkan views the project’s success factors as the strengthening of the region’s image and of the brand South Lapland. According to him they quite recently started to see results of their activities. He mentioned that the campaigns have been successful and have as a result put Destination South Lapland on the map. Another reason for their success was because they managed to create cooperation’s with Vilhelmina airport and NextJet. Before the restructuring of the organization the municipalities worked towards common goals but prioritized differently which resulted in a somewhat chaotic structure. The restructuring was therefore, according to Trude, what resulted in a shift where they all started to not only work towards a common goal but also align their operations and prioritizations.

**5.7 Project risk management**
**Strategic level**
The risks that were stated during the interviews vary from the different respondents. Gudrun is stating that it is a risk that the companies from Strömsund municipality that are participating is not satisfied with the outcome of the project. This could be an issue for the cooperation and the destination company since it is a platform for the companies. Further on Gudrun mentions the fact that the companies in the municipality did not believe in the idea before the project started. “... that the companies that has joined don’t think that this is good is a risk of course. And that is what’s good with project and that you could get this test money to try different things.”

Another issue that Strömsund sees as a risk is the lack of infrastructure. If the tourists should come to the region, there has to be a functioning infrastructure. Gudrun states that: The big question is always how will they arrive here? If you look at a municipality like ours, it are the roads, but there is not anything else.”

Åke is saying that the largest risk is financing. “It is the financing, that you don’t get anyone to take the responsibility to finance it. That is the largest risk and that risk is connected to that you don’t believe enough on this that it is giving an added value.”

The idea of the destination company is grounded on that the companies in the region will invest capital in combination with money from the municipalities. It is not a sustainable solution to rely on external capital from project. However to get there it is necessary for the companies and other stakeholders to see benefits with the destination company.

This is also connected to the other large risk that Åke sees, communication. That it is communicated both internally within the municipality and to the citizens and companies. This is connected to anchoring of the project that it is a positive platform for the region that all could benefit from. In a common way Peter is mentioning a financial risk mostly in having a EU-project and that it earlier has been costing the municipality extensive money. The other large risk that is mentioned is to reach the relevant persons from the business and tourism sector in all municipalities. Once again this is connected to seeing the benefits of being a part of this project and thereby be interested in cooperating. Peter is saying that risks that are identified during the project are discussed according to their background and then the group decides how to react in order to prevent it from happening.

During the project they have not been doing any risk planning besides the SWOT analysis, see section 5.2.

Operational level

The respondents’ perceptions of the greatest project risks varied to a great extent. Håkan emphasized the differences between the four municipalities, both in terms of size, organizational structure and how they work with tourism related questions, as great risks. He also mentioned that the project is currently dependent on governmental funding, and that a another great risk is that the regional tourism industry and the municipalities will not be able to finance the destination enterprise’s operations in the future. Trude mentioned emphasized that there is a risk that the small tourism businesses might perceive themselves to be left out of the enterprise. She explained that the interest from the regional business has been very diverse. Some business have been keen on joining the cooperation and put a lot of effort aligned with Destination South Lapland’s goals and purposes, whereas others have not showed the same interest. Early on in the project, the project’s business developers paid all the local tourism businesses a visit to make them involved and assisted them in preparing suitable tourism packages.
To make the organization more efficient, they have instead recently started to send out the activity schedule and invitations to road shows and fairs, which hence enables the tourism business to choose whether to attend or not. This calls for a more active participation from the tourism businesses, and as Trude continued, some small business might hence think that Destination South Lapland might not want them to participate since they are smaller actors. Another risk that Trude mentioned was that many of the tourism business in the region perceive the geographical region South Lapland to be too large to brand as one region. Per said that the greatest risk will be present if they fail to get the tourism business involved and engaged in the enterprise Destination South Lapland, and if one of the municipalities perceives their brand to be stronger than the others and for that reason do not want to continue the cooperation. Ida mentioned that “...the risk is that not enough people believe [in the project] and gives it a chance. The risk is that it will just disappear”.

Neither of the respondents on the operational level, meaning the project group, recalls that any risk analysis have been conducted during the time which they had been working in the project. According to Per, this is due to the limited time frame for the project which have resulted in a strict focus on gaining successful results instead of focusing on risks. The respondents in the project group however perceive that all involved parties have a common understanding of the inherent project risks. Håkan and Ida explained that the project group together with representatives from the regional tourism industry have conducted a SWOT-analysis, and that they at that point had similar perceptions of the project’s both strengths and weaknesses. Trude mentioned that the involved municipalities however prioritizes differently and have not reach as far in terms of organizational structures, which affects their level of risk aversion. Per further on stated that he believes that it is the steering group’s responsibility to conduct a risk analysis.

In terms of risk preventing efforts Håkan explains that most of the major risks are beyond the project group’s level, meaning that some of these risks relates to issues on the political level in the municipalities which they can not make decisions about. Trude mentioned that since the municipalities as well as the regional tourism businesses have different opinions regarding risks and what the destination enterprise should focus on, the perception of risk prevention efforts are also diverse. Ida explained that she believes that they could have been better at promoting the project to the people within the region. “After all, they are the ones whom we are supposed to do this project together with and we therefore need the local population on our side, so for that reason we should have been better at promoting us within the municipalities as well”. Ida however also says that there are regulations which says that the EU-funding cannot be spent on marketing within the destination, which hence limits them to solely use free channels.

5.8 Project communication
Strategic level
The steering group is meeting on a regular basis, once a month or once every two months. If there are issues that have to be decided they have meetings more often. The fact that the local government commissioners meet in other forums in their positions is giving them an opportunity to discuss informal as well. In the project several tools are used such as, telephone, e-mail and Google hangout. The common impression that the members of the steering group have is that the internal communication is working well. Peter means that the project in some senses has been “over communicated”. He says that this has to do with the problems that earlier has occurred and led to extensive
economic costs for the municipalities. The external communication is something that all members are mentioning as an issue where the business and the citizens do not always know what are going on and where it is going.

The communication and cooperation has been working well according to Peter because of the fact that all municipalities sees the destination as one region and not just their own municipalities. Regarding the communication between the steering group and the project group, Gudrun sees the project manager as the key to a good cooperation. She stated “it is there we have the project manager as the spider, who is the one that is leading the operative work with the different groups. It is a key function that mediate to us what is happening.”

Operational level
Since the project group is geographically distributed with employees located in Stockholm, Vilhelmina, Åsele, Dorotea, and Strömsund, the communication is mainly managed through emails, phone calls and weekly Google Hangout meetings. The project group physically meets once a month at one of the regional facilities in South Lapland or in Stockholm, as well as in conjunction to fairs.

During the Google Hangout meetings, the operational activities and chores are being discussed and the main operational planning takes place. Each person in the project group usually retells what they have worked on over the past week, and what they will be doing next. The project manager is in charge of communicating with the steering group and later informs the project group of what have been said and decided at the steering group meetings.

All respondents in the project group had a mutual agreement that the communication is working very well but that it can be improved. Per stated that “we are communicating a lot in the project group, we are entirely dependent on each other so we have a great dialog. We are the best team ever. There are no communication problems”. Håkan explained that despite the time consuming travelling between the municipalities, they have successfully managed to create a communication structure, which enables them to cooperate despite the fact that they are not located at the same place. According to Trude and Ida, the main reason for the well-functioning communication is because the current project team have a tight collaboration in the sense that they think alike, constantly knows what each person is doing, and have a mutual understanding of what they want and where they are heading. Ida stated that “within the project group, the communication have worked very well, although i think it is difficult that we are located so far away from each other. I think we would have performed better if we were not as far apart from each other.” She also mentioned the Google Hangouts as a suitable channel for planning the activities and the operational chores, but says that the drawback is that it is not a suitable channel for discussions or creative exchange.

According to Trude, the steering group meets approximately once a month. Håkan explained that the steering group meetings discusses strategic questions which have arisen, and to align the operations with the decisions from the Swedish Agency of Economic and Regional Growth.
6. Analysis and Discussion

In the following sections we will analyze and discuss our empirical results.

6.1 Perceptions and communication of goals and its impact on goal achievement

Identify the steering group and the project group’s perceptions and communication of goals and its impact on goal achievement.

In Destination South Lapland the project group hosts weekly online meetings where the operational activities are discussed and the operational planning takes place. In addition, the project group members frequently communicate regarding other operational chores by email and phone. The steering group meets regularly approximately once a month to discuss and decide strategic directions for the project. Communication between the project owner and the project manager is an important tool for solving operational and strategic issues (Turner & Müller, 2004, p. 335). According to Artto et al. (2008, p. 8) the success of a project strategy is dependent on elements that impact the project outcome, such as the goals and objectives. Our empirical results indicated that the project members’ perceptions of the goals and objectives and how they work in accordance varied to some extent. Destination South Lapland’s business idea was initially stated as “The destination enterprise South Lapland will through clever and cost efficient marketing, bundling, and sales of the region’s supplies create an increased turnover for businesses related to tourism which in turn will result in an increased occupation rate and growth” (Razormind, 2011, p. 30). The primary goal was further on stated as to establish a destination enterprise (Razormind, 2011, p. 7). When interviewing three of the steering group members we received rather similar responses: that the project’s primary goal is to establish a destination enterprise, which will offer services that all stakeholders can benefit from. We can for that reason say that the steering group shared the perception of the project’s primary goal. The project group however proved to have an un-unified view of what the project’s primary goal is, and struggled to make a distinction between the goals, the primary purpose, and the sub purposes. According to Baker and Cameron (2008, p. 92) a project’s strategic orientation including clear goals and objectives constitutes strategic success factors. As Liu and Walker (1998, p. 213) proposed, goal consensus and clarity of project success criteria impacts the relationship between the goals and the project performance. The ability to achieve consensus and clarity is in turn what determines if the project will reach its goals and thus become successful (Liu and Walker, 1998, p. 213). Applied on Destination South Lapland this would indicate that the ambiguity between the steering group and project group’s perceptions of the goals would lead to difficulties in achieving the project’s goals. However, we have found that Liu and Walker as well as Baker and Cameron’s findings does not explain the complexity and the issues that are specific for public place branding project’s, which consequently indicates that these frameworks has to be modified in order to explain such project’s goal achievement and success.

For instance public sector projects are subject to red tape, which according to Pandey and Garnett (2006, p. 43) have an impact on internal communication, meaning that public organizations that are highly bureaucratic have poorer communication than less bureaucratic organizations. This model was however developed for public sector communication, and not specifically for communication in public project organizations. In Destination South Lapland, most of the respondents shared the perception that the municipalities have similar roles in the project. Håkan however stated that the municipalities have varied roles based on their different organizational structures and
geographical locations, and Trude mentioned that the municipalities neither put the same amount of effort into the project. The project report also showed that internal policies within the municipalities have made the project difficult to manage. We can for that reason say that Destination South Lapland is a somewhat bureaucratic organization. For that reason we can also apply Pandey and Garnett’s findings on public place branding projects since red tape also impacts the internal communication performance in such projects. Poor communication in public place branding projects then leads to difficulties in communicating the goals clearly to and between internal stakeholders. However, Pandey and Garnett (2006, p. 43) also found that goal clarity improves the communication performance in public organizations since it strengthens the internal communication. Since red tape is present in public place branding projects we see that goal clarity serves an important role in achieving a good communication.

Project management in a politically governed organization demands knowledge regarding the preconditions in political settings (Gomes et al. 2012, p. 325-326). Rainisto (2003, p. 227) have also found that political unity meaning a consensus among political decision makers is essential in place marketing projects. Destination South Lapland’s SWOT analysis has identified the fact that the project consists of multiple stakeholders as a threat, and the project report showed that the project members have the same perception. Trude further on mentioned that the municipalities have different opinions of what the destination enterprise should be and therefore prioritizes differently. By this we can see that the politicians in the steering group are not unified regarding the project strategy. The project has not been successful in managing the differences between municipalities and we see that this could be due to a lack of knowledge and clear communication within the steering group. According to Gomes (2012, p. 325-326) findings, the project manager needs the skills and knowledge of the political context and its issues in order to communicate and manage the project organization successfully. Gomes et al’s. (2012, p. 325-326) model also emphasizes that the project manager is supposed to possess this knowledge and skills and is consequently in charge of managing and unifying the political stakeholders. In Destination South Lapland the local government commissioners are represented in the steering group and have the political knowledge regarding their own municipality. However the differences in the perceived outcome indicate that there is a need for more knowledge about the other municipalities within the steering group. For that reason we have found that knowledge of the political context is in public place branding projects not only important for the project manager to possess, but is also important for the political stakeholders.

In order to gain this knowledge is communication an important factor. According to Pandey & Garnett (2006, p. 40) organizational culture including the values and actions impacts the internal communication. The empirical results shows that the political stakeholders are not unified since they do not have sufficient knowledge of each other’s municipalities. As Söderlund (2005, p. 380-382) found, knowledge enhances the communication process and the sharing of ideas. We therefore see communication as the key for unifying the politicians. In connection with Pandey and Garnett’s (2006, p. 39) theory regarding red tape where bureaucratic settings in different organizations involved in the project affects the internal communication. Unifying the politicians can hence reduce the bureaucratic nature of public place branding projects, and we therefore see that an increased and improved communication facilitates this.
According to Turner & Müller (2003, p. 7) a project is a temporary organization. Gomes et al. (2012, p. 317) mentioned that the focus of the project strategy varies throughout project life cycle, and that it serves an important role since it forms a foundation, which the next phase is built upon. When applying Gomes et. als’ phases of the project life cycle onto Destination South Lapland, the responses we received from the steering- and the project group members indicated that the project is currently going through the planning and implementation phase interchangeably, since they are implementing the project strategy while planning for the future. They however did not have an entirely shared perception of which phase they are currently in. They also stated that they have a long way left in achieving their goals, which is also indicated in the project report. The difficulty of applying Gomes phases of the life cycle can be explained by the fact that the theory was developed for public projects in general, and not for place branding projects. Two of the respondents from the project group for instance mentioned that the project is never ending, and emphasized that Destination South Lapland will always be needed to market the region. This indicates that concept and goals of public place branding projects however extends beyond the lifespan of the project. For that reason we conclude that the traditional project life cycle is not applicable on place branding projects due to its long-term goals. This increases the importance of communication regarding the project’s strategy and specifically the goals since the focus shift over time.

Williams and Lewis (2008, p. 667) argues that it is important to have an extensive stakeholder mapping and stakeholder involvement in public project organization since the organizational structure is more complex than in private. The definition of place branding projects is to brand a place in order to attract businesses, investors, and visitors to the place (Hanna & Rowley, 2008, p. 69), which hence also emphasizes the importance to attract and involve external stakeholders to reach success. The initial business plan proposed a business model where the local business in the future will own a majority of the destination enterprise and hence partly finance the project (Razormind, p. 67). Thus, involving the local businesses is hence crucial in order for the project to transcend into a permanent destination enterprise. The project report however proved that some of the external stakeholders, meaning the local businesses were not entirely convinced that they should invest money in the project. They were however positive to commit time and other resources to influence Destination South Lapland (Project Report, 2013, p. 6). The project group members also mentioned that they have experienced difficulties in attracting and involving the local businesses, something, which is also acknowledged in the SWOT analysis. We can for that reason see that the project’s intention to involve the stakeholders has not been realized. The external stakeholders do similarly wish to participate and be involved in the destination enterprise to some extent. As Baker and Cameron (2008, 92-93) has found, a crucial factor in stakeholder involvement is the alignment of project manager’s and stakeholder’s interests. However, Destination South Lapland has not been able to involve these stakeholders on their preferred level. The reason for this can be explained by the internal ambiguity of the project goals. This can in turn be said to have had a negative impact on the stakeholder involvement since they have not been able to communicate the goals and the project’s benefits to the external stakeholders. For that reason we have found that Baker and Cameron’s list of success factors could be extended with goal clarity and steering, as those are crucial in achieving success in public place branding projects.

As Besner and Hobbs (2013, p. 30-31) stated, public sector projects are in greater need for a stronger project structure than private sector projects because both internal and
external stakeholders compose it. Destination South Lapland has many internal and external stakeholders and the steering group consists of local government commissioners. A project group consisting of employees from the involved municipalities manages the project. According to Artto et als’. (2008, p. 10) ‘strong leaders strategy’ a project with multiple strong stakeholders with different interests in the project outcome needs to be managed by a separate project group where its goals and objectives are separated from the stakeholders’. For that reason Destination South Lapland can be said to have adopted this strategy. However it has not been implemented as the theory suggests since the purpose of such a strategy is to align all stakeholders. Instead Destination South Lapland appears to follow the ‘flexible mediation strategy’ since all stakeholders partially incorporates their own strategies on the project’s operations as well as partially works towards different goals. The reason to why Artto et als’ framework is not entirely applicable on public place branding projects can be said to be due to the complexity of the organizational structure since it consists of multiple public project owners along with the fact that all stakeholders are geographically dispersed.

Rainisto (2003, p. 227) emphasized that the alignment and management of the operational and strategic level is important to achieve a successful operational implementation and execution of the strategy. The respondents in Destination South Lapland however gave us varied responses regarding whether the strategic or operational level are responsible for the decision making and for making sure that the strategy is being implemented properly. The project group in general stated that they are responsible for managing the operational activities as well as for making sure that the strategy is executed properly. The steering group on the other hand stated that they take all strategic decisions but that the project group is empowered to make operational decisions in line with the budget. We have therefore found that the project roles in Destination South Lapland are unclear. The unclarity of the project roles can further on be seen to have affected the involvement and alignment of the internal stakeholders. As Hanna and Rowley (2011, p. 464) have previously found, stakeholder involvement is an important success factor in place branding projects. Such involvement however needs to be managed in order to align the stakeholders’ objectives (Hanna & Rowley, 2011, p. 464). As stated in the project report, the project group members perceive the goals and the project roles as unclear and they seek a better steering in order to know how to work in accordance. Based on these factors we have found that that the project group members work in different directions. As Linderman et al., (2003, p. 197) mentioned, vague goals enables individuals to make their own interpretations of the goals and of the desired performance, which consequently might affect the performance. Another influencing factor is also that all internal stakeholders seem to perceive and interpret the goals differently. Klijn et al. (2012, p. 515) further on mentioned that stakeholder involvement in terms of steering can lead to a clarified brand concept which could consequently improve the attraction of the target group. In public place branding projects the goal should be to develop a clear brand concept and communicate this to the target market. We can for that reason apply Rainisto (2003) Hanna & Rowley (2011), and Klijn et als’. (2012) findings on public place branding projects since stakeholder involvement is also important in order to achieve the goals in such projects. We would however make an additional contribution to their findings since goal and role clarity is particularly important in public place branding projects since it consists of multiple stakeholders.
Based on the above reasoning we can therefore conclude that the vague goals and unclear role descriptions has resulted in various interpretations which consequently has resulted in various actions towards the perceived goals. This can be explained by Henderson and Venkatraman’s (1990) strategic alignment model, which emphasize that that the integration of the internal operational functions and the external strategic functions can result in a leveraged implementation and execution of the strategy. The goals are important cornerstones in the business strategy (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 8) and the roles serves as a base in the organizational infrastructure and processes (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1990, p. 9). The fact that Destination South Lapland have issues in both of these domains hence explains why these have been difficult to align. We can thereby also confirm that an increased stakeholder involvement in public place branding projects in terms of steering could lead to a greater alignment of the project organization’s perceptions as well as implementation of the strategy in order to achieve the goals. 

As Turner and Müller (2004, p. 335) suggests, communication between the project owner and project manager is important to solve operational and strategic issues. We can for that reason argue that an improved communication could solve the issue of a poor stakeholder involvement. According to Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 186-187) strategic decisions are necessary to communicate one way, explained by the internal corporate communication process, since it enables the strategic manager to communicate a consistent message throughout all channels. We find this relevant to take into the analysis since the project intends to establish a destination enterprise. In relation to this the local government commissioner in Vilhelmina explains the structure of the project like a limited enterprise with a great extent of liberty for the project manager and the project group. When viewing the internal corporate communication process in this way as a limited enterprise, is it relevant to adapt Welch and Jackson’s (2007, p. 186-187) discussion regarding one-way communication. In the case of Destination South Lapland this has not been followed. As the result shows most of the decisions are discussed and put forward by the project group for approval or rejection by the steering group. When it comes to communication and incorporate the overall setting of the project and its direction, the steering group or the strategic level would according to Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 186-187) be extensive in this matter, their arguments are applied for private companies but we believe that it is relevant to discuss since the empirical results shows that it is in some senses governed as a limited company. We however need to apply this into the actual setting of a public sector place branding project. There are many stakeholders in the project, internal as well as external and four municipalities in two counties. When having this organizational structure and building this new brand together there is a need for a common setting, and communication is an extensive facilitator for this. The conclusion is that the internal communication process in a public place branding project opposed to Welch and Jackson’s (2007, p. 186-187) model regarding strategic communication meaning that it demands a two-way communication between the strategic level and the operational level. 

According to Pandey and Garnett (2006, p. 38-39) goal clarity can improve the internal communication performance in public sector projects. In Destination South Lapland, we have however found that the project’s initial goals were not perceived to be clear enough which for that reason poses an interesting question as to whether the unclear goals has affected the communication performance. Despite the perception that the goals are unclear, the project group members explained that the internal communication
has worked satisfactory. The fact that the project has not clearly communicated the
goals along with the fact that they do not communicate regarding risks leads us to the
assumption that the communication regarding the operational activities has been
working well, but not the communication of the project strategy. This can consequently
be explained by the fact that we have also found that role clarity is a preconception for
communication, since role ambiguity will lead to an ineffective communication since it
will not clear who is responsible for a certain action. Goal clarity and role clarity can
therefore be said to constitute the foundation for how communication should be
performed in a project. Communication does also serve as a facilitator for defining
goals and roles as these are interacting. Communication hence assists the project in
implementing its project strategy. If the project strategy is clearly defined will it lead to
achieving the projects goals. As Baker and Cameron stated regarding their list of
success factors for place branding, its “...value will depend significantly on peoples
ability to operationalize the individual factors in the context...” (2008, p. 94), and in the
case of Destination South Lapland this might be the case. As our empirical findings
suggests the respondents are well aware of what their success factors are, but the project
report and evaluation at the same time proves that the project to some extent have not
been able to reach its goals. For instance, the project report shows that their achieved
results are far from the set of indicators measured by the number of new work positions,
new companies, visitors, guest nights, bookings, tourism revenue etcetera. This also
indicates that the communication of the goals and roles have not been clear, which have
resulted in difficulties in steering the project as well as aligning and involving both
internal and external stakeholders.

As we initially found in the analysis, Liu and Walker as well as Baker and Cameron’s
findings of goal clarity as a success factor for achieving the project goals did not explain
the complexity and issues inherent in public place branding projects, and thus were not
entirely applicable. Based on our findings we can now conclude that due to the fact that
factors such as red tape impacts public place branding projects, clear goals, clear project
roles, steering and stakeholder involvement are prerequisites for achieving the project
goals. Liu and Walker and Baker and Cameron’s findings are hence transferable to
public place branding projects although an additional aspect namely the project
communication should be added as it facilitates and interlinks these areas. We can
therefore conclude that project communication is what interlinks the success factors in
public place branding projects, and is hence crucial for achieving the project goals.

6.2 Perceptions and communication of risks and its impact on goal achievement

Identify the steering group and project group’s perceptions and communication of risks
and its impact on goal achievement.

According to Thamhain (2013, p. 30) there are in many cases differences in the risk
perception between the internal stakeholders and of how these affect a project. In
Destination South Lapland, both the steering group and the project group mentioned the
largest risk which could affect the project’s goal achievement as the absence of future
financing. This is correlating with the brief risk analysis in the business plan, where the
lack of funding for the project was mentioned as the main risk (Razormind 2011, p. 26).
This indicates that the strategic and the operational level has a common view regarding
this risk. Another great risk that one member of the steering group mentioned was that
because of the fact that Destination South Lapland is an EU-project they might not get
retroactive coverage for their costs if such costs are not eligible for that kind of funding.
The respondent continued by explaining that this risk has already occurred in the
project’s past, and for that reason they are currently more thoughtful before they take on any costs. Other risks that the steering group mentioned were the failure to attract investments to develop the infrastructure, and the risk that the participating companies would be unsatisfied. The project group on the other hand mentioned that the main risks are the differences between the municipalities’ size and organizational structure as well as the failure to get the local business involved in the project. The overall perceptions of the project risks can therefore be said to have differed between the project group and the steering group, since the steering group primarily acknowledged strategic risks and the project group mentioned operational risks. This might be explained by the different perceptions of roles, which we have found in Destination South Lapland. It might be natural since the municipalities are the ones who has to deal with the consequences if accounted costs will not be approved, and the project group similarly experience greater risks related to the project’s operations which they are responsible for.

However, according to Thamhain (2013, p. 33) the risks’ impact on project performance is influenced by stakeholders’ perceptions of the risks and which risks they prioritize to mitigate. This reasoning indicates that a consensus regarding risks is preferable since a shared perception of risks creates a solid foundation for the risk management. Although Thamhain’s model was developed to create an understanding for risk impact on project performance in general, we also find it applicable on public place branding projects as the risk impact in such projects can be describe in a similar sense. As Liu and Walker (1998, p. 214) have found, consensus of success criteria and goal clarity is important in order to evaluate a project’s success. From our understanding, consensus regarding project risks is therefore closely related to goal clarity since goal ambiguity makes it difficult to identify the risks that will impact the project’s performance and thus its ability to achieve the goal. In the context of public place branding projects we can therefore say that it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the operational level and the strategic level might have different perceptions of risks, meaning that this has to be disclosed and discussed in order to have a consensus in which the risks are in relation to its goal.

To further understand if and how these risks have had an impact on Destination South Lapland’s goal achievement, we need to analyze how the project organization work with and assess risks. According to Leung and Isaacs (2008, p. 516) the first step in risk management and risk assessment is to establish the context. Destination South Lapland can partially be said to have defined the context in the business plan since they have defined the market and what risks are inherent on the market. The second step in the model is to identify the risks within the defined context (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). As noted above the perceptions and the perceived risks, which the respondents mentioned, varied to some extent and were mainly related to financial or organizational risk. The business plan and the SWOT analysis stated a few additional risks. Our findings showed that Destination South Lapland has had issues with communicating the goals, specifying and communicating the project roles and defining who should respond to certain issues (Project report 2013, p. 7-8). As we can see there is a need for specifying the roles in the project in order to assess the risks. Leung & Isaacs’s (2008) model was developed for risk management and risk assessment in public research institution, however we can see that it is also applicable on public place branding projects since the understanding of the context is important in order to identify the risks and how to assess them due to the fact that there are many stakeholders involved.
After the risks have been identified Leung and Isaac suggests assessing the level of probability and impact for all risks as well as evaluating the individual risks and determine how much risk the organization can take on (Leung & Isaacs, 2008, p. 516). The responses we received from both the operational- and strategic level was that the involvement from the local businesses is not good enough. Consequently, this perceived risk has partially already occurred. As the project got extended for another nine months, this could be seen as one way of assessing the risk as well as postponing it. As the business plan states, the local businesses will in the future possess a majority of the shares in the destination enterprise (Razormind, 2011, p. 67). Related to Leung and Isaac’s risk treatment options, one way is to share the risks. Even though Destination South Lapland have not conducted a risk analysis and risk treatment plan the fact that they plan to incorporate the local businesses to a greater extent indicates that they intend to spread the risks onto a greater number of stakeholders. The fact that the project has also been transferring knowledge when setting up the destination enterprise they have thereby developed a kind of contingency plan. According to Thamhain (2013, p. 26) the project risk’s impact increase over time, meaning that the risk could be mitigated if it is handled early in the process. The reason why this is not applicable in public place branding projects is due to the fact that such projects have limited financial resources and hence does not prioritize to invest in risk preventing activities.

Our previous conclusions hence lead us to an interesting question: How can the project organization identify and assess risks if they do not communicate regarding risks? As we have previously noted, the respondents have different perceptions of what the main project risks are. The current project manager for instance stated that some risks are beyond the project group’s level to manage and prevent. One of the local government commissioners on the other hand stated that the steering group discusses the risks whenever they identify one. The empirical results indicate that the project group and the steering group have different approaches as to how the risks should be treated. These varied approaches to risks can be explained by Leung and Isaacs’ model of risk treatment options (2008, p. 516). The project group namely seems to accept the identified risks but do not seek to prevent or mitigate them. The steering group however seem to aim to reduce and/or share the identified risks. According to Leung and Isaac a risk treatment plan “...defines risk ownership, roles and responsibilities, and timeframes to implement mitigation strategies” (2008, p. 517). The fact that management, leadership, and strategy are important influencers as to how great the risk impact will be on the project’s performance is also confirmed by Thamhain (2013, p. 24). The varied perceptions of risks between the steering group and the project group can therefore be explained by the fact that they have been unable to clearly communicate the goals and the project roles. As a result, the project group and steering group works to mitigate the risks that they individually have identified. In public place branding projects the stakeholders have different prerequisites and different internal policies, which affects their roles in the project. For this reason they have different abilities to work with risks. In public place branding projects communication serves a role in creating a unified approach to risks.

As previously mentioned, developing a risk treatment plan is according to Leung and Isaacs important as to determine and prioritize which risks should be reduced and how this should be done (2008, p. 516). Although the involvement of the local businesses is not stated as a goal it is a risk that is crucial to take into account. As the respondents mentioned the project’s outcomes would be beneficial for all involved citizen, business et cetera in the region, and they for that reason see a close relationship with and
involvement from the internal- and external stakeholders as natural. However, this is not the case since the respondents both from the steering group and the project group perceives this as a risk for the project. As the municipalities are held accountable for all project risks, they will consequently also be held accountable for the inherent costs which the risks could result in. If the involvement and support from the citizens and the local businesses are too low, the municipalities has to decide if they can continue to finance the project or if they can find other financiers. The risk of low involvement from the local businesses will have an indirect impact on the project’s goal achievement. Hanna & Rowley (2011, p. 464) states that involvement of stakeholders in place branding project, internally and externally are a prerequisites for a successful project. As public place branding projects are depending on stakeholder involvement it also serves an important role in such project’s risk management and risk assessment.

Another risk that was solely mentioned by the steering group was the lack of infrastructure when extending the area and offering tourists to come to the region. That fact the project group members did not mention this risk can be explained by our finding that the project manager Håkan, means that most of the major risks are beyond the project group’s level of influence even though they might have identified it. According to Thamhain’s model (2013, p. 24) this could be seen as external contingencies and factors that must be seen as a condition for the project and the proposed outcome. What is being done regarding risk prevention is the close involvement with the airport, which serves as a base for tourists coming from areas far from South Lapland. In addition, the cooperation with local transport companies could also be seen as risk preventing activities. Aligned with Leung and Isaacs’s (2008, p. 516) model, Destination South Lapland have for that reason shared the risk with other stakeholders. However, the building of new roads or other large infrastructure settings is nothing that the project group itself could be in charge of. It is therefore an assumption that the strategic level, in this case the local government commissioners in the steering group, should have this responsibility as the project manager states. As the cooperation between the steering group and the project group partially functions as risk preventing activities and the fact that the project group are not involved indicates that the steering group has to clearly communicate and steer those activities. According to Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 187) communication, which seeks to create an understanding of the project’s environment, is held by strategic managers and is explained to predominantly work one ways. With relation to risks this would mean that the strategic manager communicates the risks to the internal stakeholders but do not open up for any response or feedback. In public place branding projects, we have however found that communication of risk has to work two-ways in order to be successful. This is due to the fact that such projects consists of multiple stakeholders with different project roles, which means that they might perceive the risks differently based on their perspectives. A two-way communication of risks would for that reason enable public place branding projects to align these varied perceptions of risks, which thus will create a unified foundation for the risk management.
7. Conclusions
In this chapter we will summarize our primary findings from the analysis answer our research purpose as well as our research question. The theoretical, managerial, and societal contributions of this study along with its truth criteria will thereafter be accounted for.

7.1 Project communication’s impact on risk management and goal achievement
What we have seen through the research is that communication is what interlinks the success factors in public place branding projects, and is hence crucial for achieving the project goals. For that reason we have found that project communication should be integrated into the traditional models of place branding success (Rainisto, 2003; Baker and Cameron, 2008; Hanna and Rowley, 2011). The conclusion that we draw from the project communication within public place branding projects is that communication serves a great role in involving the stakeholders and by that clarifies the goals and the roles of the project. Communication is also includes important for gaining a common perception regarding risks, which we see as a preconception for risk assessment. We can further conclude that project communication between the steering group and the project group as well as within each group serves as a facilitator for overcoming obstacles related to the different policies in the municipalities. The main conclusion that we have found is that communication regarding goals, roles and risks are important in order to achieve the project’s goals.

Clarity of the project goals and of the project roles have further on also been found to impact project members perceptions of the goals and how they work towards these. Communication regarding these factors is particularly important in public place branding projects since such project involves multiple stakeholders, are geographically dispersed, and impacted by political policies. As a result the implementation of the project strategy could be facilitated by a well-functioning communication of goals and the project roles as it unifies the project organization. We can for that reason apply Rainisto (2003) Hanna and Rowley (2011), and Klijn et als’. (2012) findings on public place branding projects since stakeholder involvement is also important in order to achieve the goals in such projects. We would however make an additional contribution to their findings since the communication impacts goal and role clarity, which is particularly important in public place branding projects since it consists of multiple stakeholders. An increased stakeholder involvement in public place branding projects in terms of steering could lead to a greater alignment of the project organization’s perceptions as well as implementation of the strategy in order to achieve the goals. We have further on found that the political context of public place branding projects put constraints on the project management. For that reason we have found that knowledge of the political context is in public place branding projects not only important for the project manager to possess, but is also important for the political stakeholders. Unifying the politicians can hence reduce the bureaucratic nature of public place branding projects, and we therefore see that an increased and improved communication facilitates this. We have also found that Baker and Cameron’s list of success factors could be extended with goal clarity and steering, as those are crucial in achieving success in public place branding projects. Project risk management or rather the lack thereof have been found to have a great impact on goal achievement. Our findings showed that public place branding projects consists of different types of risks, internal and external, which constitutes a need for a consensus regarding the goals (Liu & Walker 1998) in
order to identify the project risks that could influence goal achievement. We can see from the theory (Welch & Jackson, 2007) that internal corporate communication should be handled in a one-way direction. However we have seen that in a public place branding project there is a need for a two-way communication regarding the perceptions of risks and how they should be handled. The same correlation was found regarding communication of goals.

As noted above project success factors are based on the projects goals, which is why these are closely connected. In conclusion we have found that project communication is what interlinks the success factors and thus enables public place branding projects to achieve its goals. Project risk management and risk assessment was also found as success factors in public place branding projects. Project communication was therefore also found to incorporate risk management into the project strategy, which facilitates public place branding projects in achieving their goals.

7.2 Research contributions

7.2.1 Theoretical contributions
We have by this study been able to contribute to the existing literature regarding place branding and project communication. Communication of goals and roles serves as the base for a public place branding projects to prosper and reach success. We have by this been using Liu and Walker’s (1998) theory regarding the different components that are influencing goal achievement. In a public place branding project this needs to be modified in the sense that communication also tend to facilitate the process to achieve goal clarity and to clarify roles. Meaning that we see that there are factors that are affecting the communication process and this is interacting with the success factors for a project. Our contribution to the field of place branding is that project communication of goals, roles, and risks is an important factor in achieving the project goals.

Further on we have seen that a traditional communication theory such as Welch and Jackson (2007) regarding internal corporate communication serves as a base also in public place branding projects. However it is necessary to modify the approach and that communication needs to transfer in two ways regarding strategic decisions such as goals, risk assessment, and risk planning. Our contribution to the field of project communication is that communication in place branding projects demands a two way communication because of its complexity involving multiple stakeholders with different roles that influences the project.

7.2.2 Managerial contributions
In a public place branding project it is necessary to have clear goals and a shared perception of the goals in order work in the same direction. Clarify the roles in the project, both in the involved individuals roles and the roles of the steering group, project group regarding strategic decisions such as risk assessment and operational actions. Risk analysis serves an important role for gaining a common perception of the risks so that they could cooperate to prevent them from occurring. However, the result of the risk analysis and the perceived risks has to be communicated within the project in order to achieve a unified assessment of risks. Well functioning communication facilitates goal clarity and role clarity. Stakeholder involvement is important in public place branding projects since they are important actors as owners and partners, when a municipality solely cannot host such project. Because of the political involvement in public place branding project it is important to have knowledge of the role it has since it
can assist in solving problems that could occur by that reason. Since stakeholder involvement is important and that political policies impact strategic and operational decisions, is it important to have a strong steering in order to align. In this context is it relevant to have a two way communication.

**7.2.3 Societal contributions**

As public place branding projects like Destination South Lapland are funded by governmental institutions such as the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and by the local municipalities, it is essentially national and local tax money which is being invested in this type of projects. For that reason our managerial contribution thus also makes a societal contribution, since an improved management of public place branding projects would hence make better use of public investments. If the citizens see results of the project could it lead to an increased believe in the project, which might contribute to further success for the project. Our findings also contributes to the regional development and prosperity for the involved municipalities in Destination South Lapland, since if the project achieves their goals it will lead to an increased tourism, establishment of new businesses as well as immigration to the region.

**7.3 Limitations and future research**

For this thesis we chose to conduct a single case study, meaning that our research problem was only investigated on a single case. For that reason our findings could hence be transferred and investigated on a different public place branding project in order to increase the knowledge of the research topic even further. By conducting a multiple case study additional findings could arise which would hence contribute to the research area of public place branding.

In this thesis we found that the traditional project lifecycle were not applicable on public place branding projects due to the fact that the concept and thus the goals of such projects extends beyond the lifespan of the project. The fact that the lifecycle is however mentioned as a useful tool in project management therefore indicates that an area for future research is to develop a project lifecycle for place branding projects and/or specifically for such projects in the public sector.

**7.4 Truth criteria**

In a qualitative study there are several options for determining the quality of the research design (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192). We have chosen to evaluate the quality of our research design by applying reliability and validity. Even though these concepts are generally applied for quantitative research (Yin 1999, cited in Saunders et al. 2012, p. 194), we however believe that they applicable since they are related to the concepts of credibility, reliability, dependability, and internal validity which is sometimes applied for qualitative studies. The concepts related to respondent bias and researcher bias (Saunders et al. 2012, p.192) serves as relevant to handle, and will further be explained in section 7.4.1. However since we do not seek to produce results that are generalizable but in some sense transfer the findings to other public place branding projects.

**7.4.1 Reliability**

Reliability is according to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 192) the possibility that the method that was used in the sampling and material gathering would be showing similar results if another researcher would conduct it in the same way. We have followed a systematic
handling of the data and have been discussing issues relating to different interpretations of the answers in order to minimize the risk of errors. Another aspect of reliability refers to whether the results would be the same if the study was conducted at a different point in time (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192). If we would have been conducting the study and collected the data at another time the results would probably not have been the same. This is due to the fact that our case project is currently undergoing an organizational restructuring as well as is modifying the project strategy. A public place branding project can also be said to be dynamic in nature since it is dependent on several factors such as economical prerequisites for the tourists that are expected to come to the region. Despite the fact that this indicates that the reliability of our study would have been affected by these issues, we believe that our research topic is static since the importance of project communication in risk management and goal achievement would remain the same.

The interviews were conducted by telephone where we divided the interviewees into operational level and strategic level. One person held four interviews each. We did this division in order to be efficient since the time span of the thesis period was limited. Participant bias does according to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 192) occur when the participant or respondent for instance are in a rush or does not want to participate at the given time. To eliminate the participant bias we therefore let the respondents chose the time for the interviews and prior to starting each interview we asked the respondents if the time was still convenient for them. After the interviews the person who conducted the interview transcribed and summarized the results. We then shared and reviewed each other’s transcriptions in order to gain knowledge and be secure that the interpretations that come into the empirical part are transparent. This could have been affected by what Saunders et al (2012, p. 192) refers to a researcher bias meaning that the researcher who conducted the interview let subjective interpretations influence the result. By following the interview guide and be aware of the fact that it could affect the results we perceive the factor of researcher bias to be minor. Based on the above discussion, we believe that our study has a high reliability.

7.4.2 Validity
Creswell (2009, p. 191) suggests that a qualitative research design should apply several strategies for obtaining a valid study. We have been using semi-structured interviews as well as documents related to the project Destination South Lapland. This is a method that Saunders et al. (2012, p. 179) and Creswell (2009, p. 191) refers to as triangulation, which is a technique where different sorts of data is collected and compared in order to ensure that the data is coherent. We found this as an appropriate method since we are studying a rather complex case that is requiring different sources in order to be able to deeply understand the context, which we wish to achieve.

Both of us researchers have knowledge within the field of projects and project management, which have given a certain insight in how projects should be functioning. Our pre-conception to conducting the study is further described in section 2.1. Creswell (2009, p. 192) describes this as “clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study.” We believe that the knowledge that we had when conducting the study has helped us to understand the processes that influence a project’s performance. It might have affected the validity of the study in a sense that we interpret according to what project’s are relating to in other cases. However we have been aware of that and described our pre-conceptions entering the study and by that perceive that the interpretations are valid.
By this thesis with the chosen research method we do not intend to generalize the findings. Creswell (2009, p. 193) states that “...the value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in the context of a specific site.” We have reached conclusions that could be used within the theoretical field of project communication and place branding, however we do not see the entire study to be generalizable for all public place branding projects.
List of References


Appendix 1: Interview guide, English

1. Background information
   1. Name
   2. What is your role in the project?
      a. What does it involve?
   3. For how long have you been working within the project?

2. Project management
   1. How is the project organization structured?
   2. Does the municipalities’ roles differ within the project?
   3. Has the project group been modified during the project’s lifespan?
   4. Has the steering group been modified during the project’s lifespan?
   5. How does the cooperation function within the project group?
      a. What is that based on?
   6. How does the cooperation function within the steering group?
      a. What is that based on?
   7. How are decision being made within the project?
      a. What kind of decisions are made on the different levels?
   8. How empowered is the project group by the steering group?

3. Project strategy
   1. What is the purpose of the project?
   2. What is/are the goal/goals of the project?
   3. What phase do you perceive the project to currently be in?
   4. How is the project being evaluated?
      a. Which factors do you evaluate?

4. Place branding success
   1. What makes Destination South Lapland a successful/unsuccesful project?
   2. What are your expectations on the project outcome?
      a. Short term and long term?
      b. What is that based on?
   3. Do you perceive the project to be going in the right direction?
      a. What is that based on?
      b. What consequences has it resulted in?

5. Risk management
   1. What do you perceive as the project’s greatest risks?
      a. How did you reach that conclusion?
   2. Do you, within the project, share the perception of the project risks?
   3. Do you share the perception of how these risks impacts the project?
   4. Have you executed any risk preventing activities?
   5. Have you conducted a risk analysis?
      a. If so, has it been evaluated?
   6. Who is responsible for the risk management?

6. Project communication
   1. Which communication channels do you utilize?
   2. How often do you meet within the project group/steering group?
      a. What is discussed during those meetings?
3. How do you communicate regarding risks?
4. How is the communication functioning?
   a. Why is that?
   b. What consequences has it resulted in?

Conclusive question
1. Are there any other viewpoints which we have not discussed that you wish to acknowledge?
Appendix 2: Interview guide, Swedish

1. Bakgrundsinformation
   1. Namn
   2. Vilken roll har du i projektet?
      a. Vad innebär din roll?
   3. Hur länge har du arbetat inom projektet?

2. Projektledning
   1. Hur är projekt organisationen uppbyggd?
   2. Skiljer sig kommunernas roller i projektet?
   3. Har projektdet förändrats under projektets gång?
   4. Har styrdet förändrats under projektets gång?
   5. Hur fungerar samarbetet i projektdet?
      a. Vad beror det på?
   6. Hur fungerar samarbetet i styrdet?
      a. Vad beror det på?
   7. Hur fattas beslut i projektet?
      a. Vilka typer av beslut fattas på vilken nivå?
   8. Hur mycket frihet har projektdet gentemot projektägarna?

3. Projekt strategi
   1. Vad är syftet med projektet?
   2. Vad är målet (n) med projektet?
   3. Vilket stadium/fas är projektet i?
   4. Hur utvärderar ni projektet?
      a. Vilka faktorer utvärderar ni då?

4. Framgångsfaktorer i projektet
   1. Vad gör Destination South Lapland till ett lyckat/mindre lyckat projekt?
   2. Vad har du för förväntningar på projektet?
      a. Kort och lång sikt?
      b. Vad beror det på?
   3. Är projektet på väg dit det ska?
      a. Vad beror det på?
      b. Vilka åtgärder har det lett till

5. Riskhantering
   1. Vad ser du som de största riskerna i projektet?
      a. Hur kom du fram till det?
   2. Har ni en gemensam bild av de projekt risker som finns?
   3. Har ni en gemensam bild av hur dessa risker påverkar projektet?
   4. Vad har ni gjort för att förebygga att dessa uppstår?
   5. Har ni gjort någon riskanalys?
      a. I så fall, följs den upp?
   6. Vem är ansvarig för riskhanteringen?

6. Projekt kommunikation
   1. Vilka kommunikationskanaler finns och används?
   2. Hur ofta möts ni inom projektdet/styrdet?
      a. Vad diskuteras på dessa möten?
3. Hur kommunikerar och diskuterar ni kring risker?
4. Hur fungerar kommunikationen?
   a. Varför?
   b. Vilka konsekvenser har det lett till?

7. Avslutande fråga
1. Finns det några övriga synpunkter som vi inte har pratat om som du vill lägga till?