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| Abstract | The purpose of this study is to ascertain how present methods in branding, used in private sector companies, are or could be transferred to the public sector organizations. It is done by means of a case study of Micasa Fastigheter done through participating observation. It also includes a survey of key decision makers included in the branding process, on different political and administrative levels. Swedish municipalities’ and county councils spend over 50 percent of the Swedish gross national product, their operations affect most individuals just about every day and information and advertising from and about the operations of public sector organizations (PSOs) is vital for the existence of the citizens. How the PSOs communicate what they spend the tax payers’ money on has its own set of rules. The operations of PSOs are controlled by quite a number of laws and regulations. None of the laws apply directly to the methods of communication, yet PSOs have historically been very strict with most types of marketing. The results show that in the last couple of years this has changed and municipalities in particular have started to actively work on and communicate its brands. Stockholm is no exception. The reason for the change is the development of marketing in non-profit organizations, the occurrence of social marketing and image marketing and possibly the globalization and Internet. Micasa Fastigheter is a municipal company that has gone through a branding process during the past 2.5 years. The company has step by step passed through the same stages in its branding process as a private company, the only exception being the very little advertising. It is thus possible for a municipal company to brand itself without clashing with the laws and regulations that govern the public sector. A result that, according to my survey, is due to a maturity in marketing issues amongst decision makers in the City of Stockholm, a general focus in the Swedish society on branding and, the people in charge of the branding process. A look at the municipality of Stockholm is a good start since most trends start in the capital but a more thorough look at a substantial number of Swedish municipalities would be interesting for future |
| Keywords                  | Branding, municipality branding, public sector marketing, city image |
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1. Introduction

Despite the fact that Swedish municipalities’ and county councils’ spending is over 50 percent of the Swedish gross national product\(^1\), and despite the fact that their operations affect most individuals just about every day and that information and advertising from and about the operations of public sector organizations (PSOs) is vital for the existence of the citizens, it is hard to find any research done on “public sector marketing”. Historically any such activities have been disguised as “civic information”. The Swedish public sector operates within a very strict set of laws, rules and regulations. It is under scrutiny by internal and external auditors, the media and by the citizens. And it should be, since its operation is funded by tax money. Never the less, there is a trend towards adopting marketing and branding thoughts and methods in the public sector, Stockholm is no exception. I have therefore chosen to examine one municipal company in Stockholm to see how the new trend is carried out in real life.

1.1 Background

The democratic process is the basis for all operations in a municipality, in all public sector organizations really. Most decisions take a long time to make but along the decision path they get scrutinized by both politicians, administrators, experts and sometimes legal departments. The more important the decision, the higher up in the political structure the decision is made. For a municipal company (let’s use Micasa Fastigheter as an example) the decision process looks approximately like this: The City Council with politically appointed members determines Micasa Fastigheter’s mission. Micasa Fastigheter also gets its task from Stockholm Stadshus AB, its mother company, along with the budget, which is set by the City Council.

If, as was the case with Micasa Fastigheter, a municipal company wants to create a new brand the decision process looks like this: The Managing Director writes the case which is submitted to the Board. If the Board accepts the suggestion it is sent as a petition for a decision to the City Council. To get processed by the City Council the case first has to go through the Council of Mayors and the municipal Executive Board, and it is also sent to Stockholm Stadshus AB. Sometimes it gets sent out on referral. In the Micasa Fastigheter’s branding case only the name was subject to a decision by the City Council, since the name is part of the Articles of Association. All other cases were prepared by the Managing Director and the decisions were made by the Board.

\(^1\) [www.se.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=834999](http://www.se.se/ekot/artikel.asp?artikel=834999), 070815
With this in mind, it is interesting to see what factors actually play a part in the branding process of a municipal company.

1.2 Micasa Fastigheter

Micasa Fastigheter i Stockholm AB is (today) one of several wholly-owned property subsidiaries to Stockholm Stadshus AB. In the beginning of the 1990’s the city of Stockholm decided to organize its property companies according to competency. Micasa Fastigheter i Stockholm AB (former FB Servicehus) was founded in 1999 and started business in 2000 with only 20 assisted living properties as a subsidiary to Familjebostäder AB (which is a subsidiary of Stockholm Stadshus AB). In 2004 the City of Stockholm decided to transfer all assisted living properties to FB Servicehus and to make it a subsidiary directly under Stockholm Stadshus AB. This happened on September 1, 2005. During 2005 over 100 properties were transferred to the company and the amount of employees tripled. Today Micasa Fastigheter has over 70 employees. The company officially got a new name on November 1, 2005.

The work to create the new name, a new vision, a new business concept, company values and a new profile started on March 1, 2005, a long time before all formal decisions were taken. I have followed the company branding process since that day.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to ascertain if present methods in branding, used in private sector companies, are or could be transferred to the public sector organizations. In order to do so I have followed the branding process of the municipal company Micasa Fastigheter for 2.5 years to see what and who determines the branding process and outcome.

My research questions are:

1. What methods are used today to create successful brands?
2. How can the branding processes used in a private company be used in a public sector company?
3. What are the factors playing a part in the branding process of a PSO as exemplified by the Micasa Fastigheter branding process?

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2 Stockholms stadshus AB, årsredovisning 2000
1.4 Definitions

The situation for Micasa Fastigheter could probably be generalized to all public sector organizations in Sweden, with the possible exclusion of District Administrations, but in this study I will limit all discussions and conclusions to municipal companies.

1.5 Data and method of selection

This is a case study of one company, Micasa Fastigheter, and its work to create a new (municipal) company and to position it on the market. Apart from attending all meetings in person as Information Manager and member of the Management team, the materials used are internal work papers supplied by consultants, records from Board meetings, notes from internal meetings, City Council meetings, results from surveys, minutes from meetings, purchasing specifications, and overheads – and of course general literature on branding. I have selected the materials based on its relevance for answering the research questions.

The branding process has been going hand in hand with the building of a new company. I have tried to limit this study to decisions and processes that affect the branding.

The study also includes a survey where I have interviewed decision makers involved in the Micasa Fastigheter branding process and officials in the city responsible for the City of Stockholm brand. Those are:

Py Börjesson (s), former President of the Micasa Board and Stockholm Visitors Board
Irene Lundquist Svenonius (m), Managing Director & CEO, Stockholm Stadshus AB
Anders Nordstrand, Managing Director, Micasa Fastigheter and former MD of Stockholm Visitors Board
Annette Norberg Sandström, Director of Communications, City Hall (responsible for the City of Stockholm Communications Policy)
Sara Blücher, Communications Consultant, Gullers, works with the City communication.

The interviews were first sent to the respondents by mail. One interview was answered by mail, the others were made either by phone or in person.
1.7 Expected findings

Despite many restrictions and regulations that affect marketing work in general and branding work in particular I expect to find that municipal companies not only can but need to work according to the same branding methods as private companies. I expect to find that they already do and that how well the process works is entirely dependent on a strong management with a clear vision, just like in the private sector. However, the goal of a municipal company is the best possible life for the city’s inhabitants, the goal of a private company is profitability for its owners/shareholders.

2. Data and Method

2.1 Case study and survey

This is a case study of the branding process of Micasa Fastigheter done through participating observation. It also includes a survey of key decision makers who were part of the branding process, on different political and administrative levels.

Peter Esaiasson & al, point out in Metodpraktikan that it is advisable in a case study to have two or more units of analysis and that without at least two points of references it is difficult to confirm the theory.³ It would have been interesting to compare the Micasa Fastigheter’s branding efforts to a similar, private, company but since there is no such company in a similar situation the comparison will be against theory, and in comparison with the answers in my complementing survey.

According to Robert K. Yin a case study is advisable when the case is unique and when the phenomenon is new.⁴ The possibility to follow the building of a brand in a municipal company during as long a period as 2.5 years by personal observation is most likely unique. Branding has not been used, at least not the word, in municipal companies until very recently and, considering the lack of literature on the subject, has not been extensively studied.

Participating observation is particularly useful when it is a real situation and events happen in real time, and when it puts an event in a particular context.⁵ The negative side is that it is time consuming and risk for a phenomenon called reflexivity which means that the event itself can be affected by the presence of the observer. It is most likely that as a participating observer and

³ Peter Esaiasson & al, Metodpraktikan, Norstedts Juridik AB, Stockholm, 2004, p. 120
⁴ Yin, K. Robert, Fallstudier: design och genomförande, Liber, Malmö, 2006, p. 62
⁵ Ibid, p. 112
member of the management team I have affected some outcomes, like the secondary colors of Micasa Fastigheter, or certain words in the strategy, but in no way has it been possible to affect the processes, which this study is about. The danger of reflexivity from a process perspective is therefore small.

2.2 Validity and reliability

Validity is a concept that describes if one is measuring what one intended to measure. That can be defined in three ways:

   a) Correspondence between theoretical definition and operational indicator

   b) Absence of systematic mistakes

   c) That one is investigating what one claims to be investigating

In order to verify the findings of my case study and the literature search and to increase the validity of the study I decided to interview decision makers in the City of Stockholm and Micasa Fastigheter branding processes – which in fact gave me the two sources of analysis that Peter Esaiasson & al suggest.

I have also let one other participant in the branding process (Annika Rapp, Administrative Manager) read through the material to ascertain that it is correctly depicted.

Reliability is about how dependable the results are and deals with the consistency of the results. It must be possible to repeat the study and reach the same result. Naturally if one observes a specific course of events, it is not possible to redo the study. The part that needs to be repeatable is the analysis. All records in a municipal company, including Micasa Fastigheter, are public. All meetings during the branding process have eventually resulted in an item to make a decision about on the Micasa Board’s agenda. Those records are also public and thus possible to read for any researcher.

There is one possible risk in the survey part – the translation of the English word brand into and from Swedish in the survey. (The survey was done in Swedish.) The Swedish word brand (varumärke) is used for both trademark and brand. Sometimes the English word brand is used. It leaves a certain opening for personal interpretations of the meaning of the words. Communications professionals would have a full understanding of the different words and answer accordingly while for example politicians would be less familiar with the concepts. I
opted not to explain any words to any of the respondents since I wanted them to answer the survey with the same knowledge that they had when they made the branding decisions. Anyway, each respondent has answered from their perspective in the hierarchy.

3. Brands & branding – a theoretical discussion

3.1 Introduction brands

There are a number of definitions on brands and branding. On the one hand branding is said to be just a logo and a profile. On the other, brand is something that needs to be cared for by the entire company. We either live in a world that is one big story telling brand porridge that confuse consumers or brands are “lighthouses in the ocean of uncertainty”\textsuperscript{6}. Brands either form in the consumer’s head or it is the result of a manipulating marketing manager. Regardless how one chooses to see it, brands are a part of our daily lives.

3.2 Brand history

According to Naomi Klein in No logo the idea of brands was born in the mid 1980’s by some management theorists who said that the successful company first and foremost must produce brands, not products. For all well established producers it had up until that point been the prime task to produce goods, even if they understood the importance of building their brand or company name.\textsuperscript{7} Naomi Klein explains that a new type of company saw the light, a company that didn’t produce any products themselves (subcontractors did that), they produced brand image and their main task was marketing.

3.3 Brand definition

A brand is a symbolic embodiment of all the information connected to a company, product or service. A brand serves to create associations and expectations among products made by a producer. A brand often includes an explicit logo, fonts, color schemes, symbols and sound which may be developed to represent implicit values, ideas, and even personality.\textsuperscript{8}

The verb “to brand” refers to all the activities that shape customer perceptions, particularly the firm’s activities. Branding then is a management perspective that focuses on shaping the perceived value of the product as found in society\textsuperscript{9}, says Douglas B. Holt.

\textsuperscript{6} Holmberg, Ingalill & Wiman, Mats, red, 2002, En varumärkt värld, p. 19
\textsuperscript{7} Klein, Naomi, 2000, No logo, Ordfront förlag, Stockholm, p.27-28
\textsuperscript{8} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brand, 070121
Philip Kotler thinks that brands are good for consumers because once they decide which brands they like it makes decision making simpler, faster and less risky. For the company it simplifies product handling or tracing. The brand also offers the company legal protection for unique features or aspects of the product. To a company brands represent enormously valuable pieces of legal property that can influence consumer behaviour, be bought and sold, and provide security of sustained future revenues to their owner. The power of the brand lies in the minds of existing or potential customers and what they have experienced directly and indirectly about the brand, says Kotler.

One could also, like Ingalill Holmberg and Miriam Salzer-Mörling, take it to a higher level: An organization’s identity is more and more portrayed as something that continuously has to be constructed and reconstructed and is therefore something that has come to get more and more attention from leaders and marketers. Research shows that companies today use more resources than ever to express their identities. In a western world, that is characterized by an abundance of products, it is said that the great challenge for the companies has become to fill the products with meaning, to reshape them into lifestyles and concepts. When the companies more and more move production outside of the company the companies become more free to work with what could be called the most important production, that is to create a company mythology that is strong enough to fill the relatively anonymous and homogenous products with symbolic content. The thing that gets produced and consumed in a branded world is not primarily material products but signs, symbols, and brands, according to Holmberg & Wiman.

3.4 Successful brands

On July 26, 2007, Interbrand published their Global Brand Report. The report identifies the 100 most successful brands in the world. They all show a sense of understanding customers’ needs and desires, and an appetite to meet their customer promise. Brands that succeed are born into an environment where they are seen as assets by their organizations. Ultimate responsibility for delivering the brand to stakeholders rests with the whole company. The CEO of Interbrand’s London office, Rune Gustafson, was quoted on CNN in connection with the release of the report. He claims that the most successful companies put the customer in the centre of their business and make every experience count.

10 Holmberg, Ingalill & Wiman, Mats, red, 2002, En varumärkt värld, ”Det expressiva projektet”, p. 36
11 Best Global Brands 2007, Interbrand,”All brands are not created equal”p. 9
12 CNN, news cast, July 26, 2007, Interview with Rune Gustafson, CEO
3.5 Strong brands

AC Nielsen has evaluated 8,551 brands within the consumer goods and service sector as well as the car market, in 73 countries. The study resulted in eight statements about strong brands that describe customer attitudes:

1. Strong brands are the exception, not the rule. Only 18 percent of the tested brands got an index over 3.0 (on a 10-point scale) and are thus considered strong.
2. Strong brands are known by almost all consumers. Being known is a prerequisite for success. Strong brands are recognized by 95 percent in their target group.
3. Strong brands are always “top of mind”. Strong brands have twice the recognition level as that of average known brands.
4. Strong brands are purchased very consciously. At least 80 percent of consumers in the targets groups consider buying a strong brand.
5. The same brand is bought again after trial. Strong brands get 70 percent of the “test buyers” to buy again.
6. Strong brands can attract two thirds of the buyers. From the “test buyers” 60 percent become regular customers.
7. People like to recommend a strong brand to others. People recommend a strong brand three times as often as a brand of medium strength.
8. The customers “love” their brand. Strong brands give the customers greater emotional ties than just buying loyalty.  

The AC Nielsen findings are supported by findings by Kevin Lane Keller as reported by Kotler: He has identified what attributes the world’s strongest brands share:

1. The brand excels at delivering the benefits consumers truly desire.
2. The brand stays relevant.
3. The pricing strategy is based on consumer perceptions of value.
4. The brand is properly positioned.
5. The brand is consistent.
6. The brand portfolio and hierarchy makes sense.
7. The brand makes use of and coordinates a full repertoire of marketing activities to build equity.
8. The brand’s managers understand what the brand means to consumers.

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13 Pressinfo AC Nielsen, Austria, 061103 from Tendens Special nr 1, 2007
9. The brand is given proper, sustained support.
10. The company monitors sources of brand equity. \(^{14}\)

### 3.6 The naming strategy/process

The brand company Rewir suggests three things to think about when choosing a name for the brand/product:

- Think through what the name is communicating. Test on ten randomly selected people and note their reaction.
- Make sure the name is accepted internally. The employees must like the name.
- The name must have a strategic business connection. Make sure the name can be used on the web, that it can be protected globally and that it can be used on the market intended. \(^{15}\)

Rewir’s CEO, Johan Gromark, says in a SvD-article that it can be an advantage to be noticed. To name the garbage company Garbage Company AB, is not a good idea.

### 3.7 Branding on the web

89 percent of Swedish marketing and communications managers believe that their web service is an important channel for building their company’s brand, according to a survey by Brand Clinic.

The following channels got a high ranking as brand builders according to Brand Clinics survey:

1. Web service \(89\%\)
2. Advertisement in daily papers \(67\%\)
3. Advertisement in trade magazines \(62\%\)
4. Printed matters \(60\%\)
5. Advertising on the web \(59\%\) \(^{16}\)

### 3.8 Brands and value

Bengt Håkansson, with long experience in branding, claims that it is important not to pick value concepts that are so obvious that everyone can support them. The values tend to be identical regardless of business or market position. Whether it is a bank, a toy manufacturer or a firm that deals in electronics all have the core values human, competent, innovative, committed and sensitive, dependable, considerate etc. The problem is that these values are so basic that nobody can question them. In fact companies that wouldn’t live up to these values would have trouble.
Something that everyone embraces isn’t distinguishable. You have to offer something that in some way is better and more relevant that your competitors, says Håkansson.

### 3.9 How to build a successful brand

David A. Aaker has written several books on branding and in Building Strong Brands he suggests ten guidelines for building strong brands. Clearly he has a bigger company and brands as products in mind but nevertheless the guidelines can be useful in all sorts of settings. This is the researcher’s way of putting it:

1. **Brand identity.** Identify the core identity. Remember that image is how the company is perceived and identity is how the company aspires to be perceived.
2. **Value proposition.** Consider emotional and self-expressive benefits as well as functional benefits.
3. **Brand position.** Pick a brand position that will provide clear guidance for how to implement a communication program. It is the part of the identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated.
4. **Execution.**
5. **Consistency over time.** Have as a goal a consistent identity, position and execution over time.
6. **Brand system.** Make sure the brands in the portfolio are consistent and synergistic.
7. **Brand leverage.**
8. **Tracking brand equity.** Track brand equity over time, including awareness, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and especially brand association.
9. **Brand responsibility.** Have someone in charge of the brand who will create the identity and position and coordinate the execution over organizational units, media, and markets.
10. **Invest in brands.** Continue investing in brands even when the financial goals are not being met.

The following is the advice from the practitioners:

Step 1. Give the product or service a name. The most important is that it sounds good, according to Håkansson, avoid geographical names says Carin Fredlund in Quo Vadis.

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17 Håkansson, Bengt, Det missförstådda varumärket, Liljedahl & Co Förlag, Helsingborg, 2004, p.18
19 Quo Vadis, 2006, Varumärkesbygget, Fälth & Hässler, Värnamo, p.15
Step 2. Create a logo. Give the name a distinct and individual graphical design. Make sure it is easily recognizable and can be printed on all sorts of materials in different sizes, says Quo Vadis. It can include more elements than just the name, claims Håkansson.

Step 3. This is the legal part where it is important to protect the trademark. The name of the company gets registered with the Swedish Companies Registration Office (Bolagsverket) and products or services are registered with the Swedish Patent and Registration Office (Patent- och registreringsverket).

Step 4. The most important step in the process is to give the “trademark” a content, a meaning. The goal is to get this “trademark” to be associated with a message, a promise. In order for that work to be successful the promise to the market needs to be relevant and credible and the communication with the market must be consistent over time, says Håkansson.

Most failed branding projects, according to Håkansson, happen because the company start the work from the wrong end. Since a brand is a competitive means that will differentiate a company’s product or service from the competitors’ it can’t be defined from what the company itself thinks. Instead the market, i.e. the customers have to be involved from the start.

### 3.10 Measuring and evaluation

In order to develop the brand it is important, vital really, to stay in touch with the market, the customers. Brand management is to get continuous and reliable information from the customers. There are all kinds of surveys and evaluations but the important thing is to not let them be just reports but that they are turned into knowledge that is acted upon. It is also important to measure the same thing every time so that reliable comparisons can be made.

Kotler describes a lovely, simple formula for evaluation:

**Goal setting:** What do we want to achieve?

**Performance measurement:** What is happening?

**Performance diagnosis:** Why is it happening?

**Corrective action:** What should we do about it?

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20 Håkansson, Bengt, 2004, Det missförstådda varumärket, Liljedahl & Co Förlag, Helsingborg, p.188
21 Kotler, Philip & Keller, Kevin, 2006, Marketing Managements 12e, Pearson Education, N.J, p. 717
In short, there are some important ingredients in creating a successful brand, like the literature review indicates; the name of the brand/company, customer recognition, focus on customers and their needs, differentiation, perseverance and Internet presence.

4. Public Sector Organization branding

4.1 Introduction

The manipulation of city images, cultures and experiences has become a very important factor in the lives of today's municipal politicians. All activities within a city (whether they concern economic, cultural, social, tourist or any other development of the city) are done in the name of the city’s residents and the ultimate goal is to improve their quality of life. It is the development of the city brand and the correct understanding and treatment of its components that carry the most importance for how city marketing affects the life of its residents.22

4.2 Communication in a public sector company vs. a profit-seeking

There are a number of things that separate external communication in a municipal/public sector organization (PSO) from that of a profit-seeking corporation:

1. The PSO is (more or less) funded by tax money
2. A PSO is a politically governed body
3. The PSO target group is generally “everybody”
4. The success of the PSO cannot be measured in financial terms
5. Strict governmental laws, rules and regulations apply
6. The PSOs must uphold democracy

4.2.1 Tax funding

A tax funded municipal organization is, and should be, constantly scrutinized by internal and external auditors and by the media. That means that every marketing/branding activity will be measured and compared to other public spending, like care for the elderly and handicapped, and books for school children.

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22 Kavaratzis, Michalis, From city marketing to city branding: Towards a theoretical framework for developing city brands, Place Branding, Vol 1, 1, p. 58-73, Henry Stewart Publications 1744-070X (2004)
4.2.2 Political govern

There is always a political agenda. The politicians can make a political issue out of the company’s business. One example is the housing companies of Stockholm. When the right wing group is in power the rental apartments are sold out and when the left wing group is in power the goal is to build as many rental apartments as possible.

4.2.3 Target group is everybody

It gives everyone the right to have demands on everything. It is hard to create communication suitable for “everyone”.

4.2.4 Measuring success

Robert Kaplan claims that PSOs can’t measure their success rate in monetary terms. It has two groups to please, the citizens and its funding agency. The financial perspective provides a clear long-run objective for profit-seeking corporations; however, but not for PSOs. Certainly, these organizations must monitor their spending and comply with financial budgets. But their success cannot be measured by how closely they match spending to budgeted amounts or even by how they restrain spending so that actual expenses fall well below budgeted amounts. Public-Sector Organizations (PSOs) should measure their success by how effectively and efficiently they meet the needs of their constituencies. They must define tangible objectives for their mission, customers, and constituencies, says Kaplan.

He continues that an important “customer” for any government agency will be the organization that provides the funding for the agency. To ensure continued funding for its activities, the agency must strive to meet the objectives of its funding source – the legislature and, ultimately, citizens and taxpayers.23 Thus, a public-sector organization has three high-level objectives it must satisfy if it is to accomplish its mission: create value, at minimal cost, and develop ongoing support and commitment from its funding authority, says Kaplan.

4.2.5 Rules and regulations

Public sector organizations have a set of laws and rules to follow in their daily operations. The laws are strictly enforced. Companies of the City of Stockholm, including Micasa Fastigheter, operate under the Principle of Public Access to Official Records which means the right of every citizen to read all public documents (Offentlighetsprincien). The rules about public access to

official records can be found in the Press Law (Tryckfrihetsförordningen). The extent to which official records are secret is stated in the Official Secrets Act (Sekretesslagen). An investigation, to see if a document falls under the Official Secrets Act, must be done every time someone asks to see a public record.

In the Press Law and in the Freedom of Speech Law (Yttrandefrihetsförordningen) there are rules about the so called Freedom of Informants (Meddelarfrihet) which means that it to a certain extent is possible for civil servants within public sector organizations to give otherwise secret information to the media. It is not allowed for the PSO to investigate who gave out the information. Other applicable laws are the Law of Administration (Förvaltningslagen), the Law of Personal Particulars (Personuppgiftslagen) and the Copy Right Law (Upphovsrättslagen). Yet another law that greatly affects the daily operation of a PSO is the Public Purchasing Law (Lagen om offentlig upphandling).

4.2.6 Democracy

Our democratically governed organizations have already intrinsic – and sometimes determined by law – values. They just aren’t negotiable. The relationship between democracy, the institutions and the basic values is complex. In the subject political science, there is a distinction made between what is called democratic basic values and democratic process values. The distinction is usable in the discussion about the public sector’s core values. With democratic basic values they mean the democratic ideals like equality, freedom and justice. Those are values Swedish people have agreed upon that the politically governed organizations shall uphold. The process values of the democracy, on the other hand is about how these organizations shall function towards the citizens and the society. 24 Typical Swedish process values are participation, rule of law, openness and dialogue, according to Kraft & Strandberg.

4.3 City Marketing

Even though marketing of urban places has been a fact for over 100 years, the use of marketing methods for city branding is about three decades old. Michalis Kavaratzis has searched the literature and attempted to create a theoretical framework for developing city brands.

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What is new, he claims, is the conscious application of marketing approaches by public planning agencies not just as an additional instrument for the solution of intractable planning problems but increasingly, as a philosophy of place management.

There are some theories as to why there has been a theoretical emergence of place marketing and Kavaratzis states three developments that have paved the way for transferring marketing knowledge from its initial field of industrial goods and services to places:

- The development of marketing in non-profit organizations
- Social marketing
- Image marketing

The development of the concept of non-profit marketing has freed the application of marketing from its connections to direct profit making, while the concept of social marketing introduced the possibility to alter and reinforce sets of attitudes held by targeted individuals or groups, with the final goal being the good of society at large.

Another concept that, according to Kavaratis, has emerged in recent years and has a clear and direct relevance to marketing implementation on cities is the concept of corporate branding and corporate-level marketing, which is a theoretical and practical development of the earlier concepts of corporate image and corporate identity.

Jesper Falkheimer and Mats Heide, in their book Reflexiv kommunikation, agree with Kavaratzi that the view on symbolic values like profile and image has altered the communication scene. If everything an organization communicates affects the brand, then the brand no longer is an area only for the marketing department it is an important area for the information department as well. Falkheimer and Heide also mention the fact that there is no longer just mass information from public organizations (who only used printed materials) and mass marketing from private companies, (who used advertising). There are many channels today, many of them interactive.

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26 Falkheimer, Jesper & Heide Mats, 2003, Reflexiv kommunikation: Nya tankar för strategiska kommunikatörer, Liber
Louise Jarn Melander as well says that PSOs in fact are working with their brands, its just been called strategic profiling, according to her, and been performed by the information department and not the marketing department. The reason for working with their profiling, she claims, is that the citizens and taxpayers should know about the PSOs societal mission, what can be expected from them and what service the citizens have the right to. Jern Melander also says that PSOs in some way might be obligated to report how they perform their mission. In some PSOs it is part of the mission, in others it is a discussion point whether this type of information work should be financed with tax money.

### 4.4 Creating a city brand

Kavaratzis, quoting other researchers (Hatz & Schults, 2001) mentions that creating a brand is difficult and that three variables interplay and need to be aligned to create a strong corporate brand. They are vision, culture and image.

Everything a city consists of, all that takes place in the city and is done by the city, communicates messages about the city’s image. The image is communicated through three distinct types of communication - primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary communication relates to the communicative effects of a city’s actions, when communication is not the main goal of these actions like for example: Actions and decision that are relevant to urban design, architecture, green spaces and public spaces in the city.

Secondary communication is the formal, intentional communication that most commonly takes place through well-known marketing practices like indoor and outdoor advertising, public relations, graphic design, and the use of logo. It is largely the same as what is meant by the promotion component of the traditional marketing mix and it has been so far the one marketing variable that cities have adopted with great ease.

Finally, tertiary communication refers to word of mouth, reinforced by media and competitors’ communication. It is not controllable by marketers. The whole branding process and the other two controllable types of image communication have as a goal to evoke and reinforce positive tertiary communication – especially so in the case of the city’s own residents, who are at the same time the most important target audience of city branding and the most important city marketers, claims Kavaratzis.
4.5 City branding in Sweden

There is very little written on municipalities and marketing but a small research project in Skellefteå & Umeå shows that the municipalities are hesitant to talk in marketing terms. Umeå municipality says they don’t work with marketing, only information and Skellefteå has just started looking at a marketing strategy. In both municipalities the external communication is governed by political decisions/documents, according to Grännsjö & Henriksen.

In Karlstad a survey was made with two private companies and two PSOs out of which one was Karlstad municipality. At Karlstad municipality they believe that it is vital for a municipality to work with its brand. The municipality is well aware that the entire organization, over 7,000 people, are carriers of the brand. Karlstad has a communication strategy that aims at communicating its brand the same way in all channels. All four companies were aware of the importance of working with its brand. The major difference seemed to be that the two PSO organizations had considerable less money for the branding work.

In November 2002 a communication policy for Stockholm was approved by the Stockholm City council. There the authors talk of communication, information and “the image of Stockholm” but in the document of 20 pages, not one time does the word brand appear. In 2006 a new policy was approved by the new majority. In that document branding is a major concept: “The City of Stockholm brand is the picture and the opinion about our organization and our operations that are in the mind of those we meet. The quality of the services that the City offers and the way they are perceived by the City’s interest groups is the core of the City brand. But it is also the eye to eye meeting, how the City expresses itself in advertising, print, in the letters that are sent out, that affects the brand of the City. In other words, it is by communicating that the brand comes to life and is strengthened. The communications work shall convey the feeling that Stockholm is an attractive city to live and work in, to visit and return to.”

There could certainly be all kinds of reasons to communicate a city’s image and not all advertising is about attracting new inhabitants, but lately in Sweden a lot of municipalities have done advertising campaigns to attract people to move there. In fact, according to an article in

27 Johansson, Jörgen & Lofmark, Simon, 2002 Reklam som kommunikationsverktyg inom kommunal verksamhet, Luleå tekniska universitet
28 Grännsjö, Louise & Henriksen, Johanna, 2006, The brand as a Strategic Resource – The link between four Värmland brands and the region, Karlstads universitet
29 Bilden av Stockholm och hur vi kommunicerar den, Information Stadshuset, 2002
30 Stockholms stad kommunicerar, vår kommunikationspolicy och visuella identitet, Stadsledningskontoret, 2006
Dagens Nyheter, it is more common in Sweden than anywhere else. Every other municipality uses advertising to attract more inhabitants. The ultimate reason behind that is, again, the good of its citizens. If more people move in, there is more tax money to distribute and the taxpayers get better service. However, the advertising has little effect. “When I compare municipalities that do marketing with those that don’t, I see no difference in the number of people relocating”, says Tomas Niedomysl, researcher at Institutet för framtidsstudier (The Institute for Future Studies).

Nyköping municipality has been marketing the city for three years and the cost has been several million SEK. The municipality has not reached its goal of 500 new inhabitants but feels like the municipality is developing in a positive direction. Is it possible that the advertising just makes the present inhabitants pleased with their choice to live in Nyköping?

4.6 What is a communications policy?

In a municipality/PSO it is the communications policy that determines the information and marketing work.

What is a communication’s policy? It is to work out a message and activities by auditing different target groups and their needs. The communicative platform of the public organization is strictly regulated and scrutinized. It has to be transparent because of the citizens’ and the employees’ right by law. It is slow because democracy takes time and the organizations are big. The public sector also has to “fight” the issue of trust, both within and outside the organization. The communication strategy for the public sector or administration is as much a survival strategy as the financial strategy is for a profit-seeking company, claims Kraft & Strandberg in their book Samhällskommunikation.

4.7 The City of Stockholm’s Communications Policy

All communication in Stockholm, for district administrations and companies alike, including Micasa Fastigheter, the governing document is the Stockholm City Communications Policy.

The City’s internal and external communication springs from the City’s municipal mission. It shall help improve efficiency and support the goals of the operation. It shall also help realizing

the City vision: That Stockholm shall be experienced as one of Northern Europe’s most attractive places for living, visiting and doing business.  

The Communications Policy states that everybody who works for the City is part of how the external world perceives the City and its many operations. The main purpose with the City’s communication is to give its interest groups a clear picture of the City’s many operations and create the right expectations and develop a relationship with the different interest groups of the city. These are for example citizens, employees, businesses, politicians, visitors, and journalists.

It is clear that PSOs/municipal companies have a very special situation. The laws are strict but despite them municipal organizations have become more open to marketing processes used in the private industry. There are many reasons for this but the most important is the development of marketing in non-profit organizations and image marketing. The City of Stockholm has also changed with the times and started to see branding as an important tool in the development of the city.

5. Case study

5.1 Background on the City of Stockholm

The City of Stockholm consists of 14 District Administrations. These are headed by politically appointed committees and boards whose composition reflects the distribution of seats on the City Council. There are also 14 Specialist Committees and Administrations. The Administrations carry out the day-to-day operations and the Specialist Committee is the head of the Administration in each area.

Certain of the City’s activities are undertaken in the form of a corporate enterprise. There are 17 companies and most companies are coordinated by Stockholms Stadshus AB, which acts as the group board. Micasa Fastigheter is one of those 17 companies.

5.2 Background on Micasa Fastigheter

Micasa Fastigheter i Stockholm AB is (today) one of several wholly-owned property subsidiaries to Stockholm Stadshus AB. In the beginning of the 1990’s the city of Stockholm decided to

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32 Stockholms stad kommunicerar, vår kommunicationspolicy och visuella identitet. Stadsledningskontoret, 2006
33 www.stockholm.se, 070721
organize its property companies according to competency\textsuperscript{34}. Micasa Fastigheter i Stockholm AB (former FB Servicehus) was founded in 1999 and started business in 2000 as a subsidiary to Familjebostäder AB (which is a subsidiary of Stockholm Stadshus AB). In 2004 the City of Stockholm decided to transfer all assisted living properties to FB Servicehus and to make it a subsidiary directly under Stockholm Stadshus AB. This happened on September 1, 2005. During 2005 over 100 properties were transferred to the company and the amount of employees almost tripled. The company officially got a new name on November 1, 2005. Its actual branding journey, to create the new name, a new vision, a new business concept, company values and a new profile started on March 1, 2005.

5.3 An early start

On March 1, 2005, Preera, a management consultant company, won the public purchasing out of 42 companies to lead the work with Micasa Fastigheter’s (at the time FB Servicehus) new business concept, vision, name, profile and a common value-system. The first meeting was a briefing with the Managing Director, the Administrative Manager, and the Communications Manager (styrgrupp). A deadline was set for June 15 when the company kick-off would take place. It was a tight timeframe and the major part of the work with the business concept, the vision, the name and the strategy was finished in little over six week. The process included two full days with the entire staff and several half days with the management group.

Preera proposed to work according to a process which included answering the following questions:

- Why do we exist? (Mission)
- What are we aiming for? (Vision)
- How shall we go about it? (Strategy)
- What is essential in order for us to succeed? (Factors of success)
- What do we evaluate to ascertain that we are doing the right thing? (Indicators)

5.4 The business concept

The consultant’s first measure was a full day’s workshop together with the management team to try to work out the new company business concept. A business concept is a platform from which everything else in the operation originates. It describes the market one plans to work on and what

\textsuperscript{34} Stockholms stadshus AB, Årsredovisning 2000
needs that will be satisfied by the products and services the company has to offer. It should preferably express the company’s strengths and unique position.

The following set of questions formed the base for the discussion:

1. Why do we exist as a company and which is our purpose on the market?
2. Who do we exist for and which of there needs do we need to satisfy?
3. On which markets will we operate?
4. Which products and services will we offer to satisfy those needs?
5. Why do those we exist for choose us and not somebody else?  

A fairly loose set of words that represented where the company wanted to go was the result. Shortly after that the entire company spent a whole day discussing the same thing and another full day discussing the vision. Divided into a number of groups the employees produced quite a bit of documentation about the company’s strengths and weaknesses and where they wanted to see the company in 2010.

5.5 The name

The consultants brought all documentation back to their office and started working on a vision. On May 25 the consultants presented a suggestion for a new business concept, a new vision and a company name to the management team. It was the management team and ultimately the Managing Director that made the final decisions on the business concept, name and vision, based on the work done by the whole company. Regarding the name the Managing Director had been very clear that he wanted a “different” kind of name. One option that he felt was out of the question was for example “Omsorgsfastigheter i Stockholm AB” (approx. Assisted Living in Stockholm Inc). There is a tradition in the City of Stockholm to name their company according to operation (Sisab, Stokab, Familjebostäder etc).

5.6 The vision

The word “vision” means approx. future perspective, utopia, fantasy. A vision is more a feeling than a wording. It must be a common guiding-star that inspires. A useful vision speaks to the heart and gives meaning to the company goals.

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35 Internal Preera work papers
36 Internal Preera work papers
The consultant had felt during the discussions among the staff and management team that the company wanted to offer their tenants safety, comfort and cosiness, like coming home. This then was reflected in the consultant’s suggestion for both the business concept, the vision and the company name. The suggestion for a company name was Micasa Fastigheter (mi casa = my home in Spanish). The name was accepted by the management team after some discussion.

The consultants suggested the following business concept: Micasa Fastigheter shall be the obvious choice for people in the City of Stockholm who are in need of support and security because we:

- Have a unique competence
- Have a deep understanding for and are sensitive to the needs of our customers
- Are the driving force in the development
- Stand behind a comprehensive view of the City of Stockholm

After a long discussion, the management team decided on a business concept with the following wording:

“Micasa Fastigheter shall offer attractive, adapted housing for people in Stockholm who need support and security.”

The suggestion for the vision was: To offer housing one looks forward to.

Again, hours later the vision was determined to: “A home to look forward to”

The management team also worked out the company’s strategic themes – what did the company need to do in order to achieve success?

The strategic themes of Micasa Fastigheter:
- Manage, adapt and develop the properties, short term and long term.
- Develop new offers to the customers with concepts, products and services – based on market need.
- Recruit and keep committed and competent employees.
• Cooperate with other actors in the market and be a driving force in the development of the trade.

Illustration 1. The work towards a brand was divided in three levels: The business concept and the vision on the first, the strategy on the second and success factors on the third. (Preera internal work papers)

When the vision, the business concept, the name and the strategic themes had been agreed upon in the management team it was presented to the Board and a decision was taken on the Board meeting of May 30, 2005.

The next step was the presentation to the rest of the personnel. The future of the company depended on that moment. Even though the personnel had been part of the process so far it was important to keep the focus on participation. Four design agencies were contacted to create the new logo. The winning agency would get the chance to create the profile. The idea was to let the personnel vote on the best logo.

The name was received extremely well, by the personnel. The suggested logos were not. There were approximately 15 logos to vote on and not one was up to par and not one got votes enough to be considered a winner. The agencies delivered surprisingly low quality. One agency, however, would not accept defeat and wanted to offer more suggestions. Their new suggestion was immediately accepted:
The new logo was presented to and accepted by the Board. This was the last part of the branding process that was approved by the Board, with the exception of the common value-system but at this point it was decided to wait with the work on the common value-system.

**5.7 The web service**

The future web service was considered so important for the image of the new company that the work started even before there was a profile. In fact the work had started almost a year earlier with a group of key personnel, who together with a consultant, produced a specification of requirements, a document which described desired functions and content.

The web address [www.micasa.se](http://www.micasa.se) was owned by someone else and had to be bought.

**5.8 The profile**

The work with the profile started immediately. The colors of the City of Stockholm are blue and yellow. Most municipal companies in Stockholm use versions of the City blue in their logo. The Managing Director of Micasa did not want the new company to deviate. The four secondary colors, who’s function really is only decorative, were a result of a compromise. The colors had to be coordinated with the web where a very much appreciated design suggestion had already been presented.
The typeface was set to Helvetica Neu and New Century Schoolbook.

5.9 The launch

On September 1, 2005, Micasa Fastigheter had become a subsidiary directly under the Stockholm City Group. The name Micasa Fastigheter AB took a long time to get registered with the Swedish Patent and Registration Office (Patent- och registreringsverket, PRV). The name was decided by the company board already in May 2005, but PRV had objections. The name was not accepted until mid October. However, the new name could not be taken in use until the City Council had made an official decision. Their meeting took place in the end of October. The City Council wanted “i Stockholm” to be added to the original suggestion and finally Micasa Fastigheter i Stockholm AB was born. The launch date of the web service and the new name was set to November 1, 2005.

A hectic time started. New logo signs for all 130 properties were ordered as well as the mounting. All signs were to be mounted on November 1. Re-striping of all cars and trucks had to be finished on that same day and new uniforms selected, printed and distributed to the personnel, as well as new identity cards.

5.10 A communications policy and strategy

With most of the basics in place, the Communications department started to look at the total communications picture and to write a communications policy and strategy. This included identifying target groups and their need for information.

All external communication must support the vision and be based to the company’s core values. The communication must be adapted to the target groups and be consistent, both when it comes to content and to form.
The goal of the Micasa external information is to:

- Establish, develop and manage the brand Micasa Fastigheter
- Support the operation
- Create trust
- Handle the media

The communication and information shall help position the Micasa Fastigheter brand. Since a brand is the effect of all contacts with the market, i.e. the way the company delivers on its offer, the Micasa Fastigheter’s promise to the market must harmonize with the actual personality of the company. It is not until image and profile correspond with each other, that credibility in the communication can be achieved.  

At this point Micasa Fastigheter opted to put the Communications policy on hold, waiting for the City’s new communications policy. It was put before and accepted by the City Council in June 2006 but did not go into effect until October 2006. Micasa Fastigheter slightly adapted its policy according to the new City policy and presented it to the Board.

5.11 Target groups

The Communications dept. of Micasa identified the following external target groups:

Primary external target groups

- Older citizens in the City of Stockholm and other groups in need of support and security. The needs of the target group can be support, service, safety, activity, the possibility to stay in one’s own apartment, participation and fellowship and a good exterior and interior environment (tenants or future tenants).
- The City of Stockholm District Administrations and Councils.

Secondary external target groups

- Politicians, interest groups and other decision makers within the City of Stockholm.
- Suppliers and other partners of cooperation
- Other potential tenants outside the primary target group

37 Micasa Fastigheter communications policy and strategy, 2006
Micasa Fastigheter has three more important target groups that were not identified in the Communications policy. They are the building industry and potential personnel in the form of graduating students and the general public.

Each year Micasa Fastigheter makes a tour of universities with relevant study programs (engineers, architects, repairmen). All universities arrange days where employers and students can meet.

The most important target group is the building industry. In order to build and rebuild at low cost Micasa Fastigheter needs a lot of good bids when doing the public purchasing. It is very important that the industry has confidence in Micasa Fastigheter as a project partner.

The general public gets the picture of Micasa Fastigheter from press releases, banners on houses under reconstruction, signs on the houses and information signs around the properties. Another way to communicate with the public is through recruitment ads and advertising for available commercial space.

Micasa Fastigheter also communicates with the public is through exhibitions. For example during Christmas 2006–2007, Micasa Fastigheter displayed ten pieces of art by known and unknown artists in Kulturhuset.

In its mission from the City Micasa Fastigheter has been given a goal that is fairly unusual for a property company, to contribute to the development of the care and well-being of the tenants. Micasa has determined that one way of doing so is to contribute to activating the tenants. In 2005–2006 Micasa Fastigheter produced a musical theatre together with Stockholms Stadsteater, that toured the service houses and nursing homes. In 2006–2007 Micasa Fastigheter offered a photo exhibition by Sophie Calle that first was adopted by four tenants and displayed in their homes. Later the exhibition was showed in three more service houses.

5.12 A new office

On January 1, 2007, Micasa Fastigheter cut the last ties with its former owner and moved to new premises in its own property. Being a property company Micasa Fastigheter had “to live its own vision”. The new premises had to be as welcoming, accessible and handicap friendly as our

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38 Micasa Fastigheter communications policy and strategy, 2006
assisted living housing. “The new Micasa office must be designed so that communication and the feeling of togetherness is developed further. The Micasa brand must be strengthened in color, light, materials, measurements and in choice of products”\(^{39}\), was the statement from the architect in charge of the design.

### 5.13 Guide line galore

During 2006 and 2007 the Communications Department has set up design guide lines for every possible piece of external information: Information signs, property signs, banners, ads (different for different target groups), notes to tenants, stationary, folders, binders, postcards, invitations etc. The work took quite a bit of time since it was being produced for the first time and had to be aligned with the Micasa Fastigheter profile, its values and be suited for the target group. Accessibility, readability and safety are guiding words in the work with an older target group. See supplement 1.

### 5.14 The common value-system

In the spring of 2006, one year after the vision and business concept was determined, it was time for the common value-system and core values again. Parallel to the work with the brand the internal work continued with seminars and discussions and work groups, in order to unite the personnel and get everyone to feel like one company. Quite a substantial amount of time, money and effort was spent on these seminars.

The Managing Director felt that it was time to join these two tracks to one. The management consultants and the consultant that led the organizational change cooperated in something they called café dialogues. The process of creating a common value-system included a full day with all personnel engaged in dialogues.

A new time frame was set and the dead line was again the company kick-off in early June.

The result of the dialogues/workshop with all the personnel was discussed in the management team together with the consultants and four words surfaced as a common value-system:

- Commitment (Engagemang)
- Openness to new ideas (Nytänkande)
- Consideration (Omtanke)

\(^{39}\) Internal working material from White Arkitekter.
Knowledge (Kunskap)

The new core values were presented on the kick off and received favourably.

In Swedish the acronym of the four words reads ENOK. That later became the name of the intranet which was launched in the summer of 2006. It is an intranet in the technical forefront. The functions are extremely advanced and easy to use. It is an intranet to be proud of. During my study I have realized that internal communication is almost more important for the branding process than external information but I will leave the intranet out of the study since that particular function in and of itself has had a minimal impact on the branding process.

6. Survey on municipal communications/branding

The survey part of this thesis consists of five interviews with key people in the making of the City of Stockholm brand and/or the Micasa Fastigheter brand. (See questionnaire supplement 2)

Py Börjesson (s), former President of the Micasa Board and Stockholm Visitors Board
Irene Lundquist Svenonius (m), Managing Director & CEO, Stockholm Stadshus AB
Anders Nordstrand, Managing Director, Micasa Fastigheter and former MD of Stockholm Visitors Board
Annette Norberg Sandström, Director of Communications, City Hall (responsible for the City of Stockholm Communications Policy)
Sara Blücher, Communications Consultant, Gullers, involved in the Communications Policy.

All in all, the interviews support the findings in the literature search and the case study – i.e. that municipalities and PSOs have opened themselves up for branding ideas originating in the private sector, that branding in the public sector is to a large extent a budget question and that the degree of success in the implementation of a brand hinges on the personnel taking part in the process. However, there is a certain difference between the answers of the two politicians who make final decisions and the professionals who are involved in the actual communications work. The politicians define brand more like a “pay off” or slogan. They both refer to “Stockholm – Capital of Scandinavia” as a brand under which all City of Stockholm organizations must unite and use in their external communication. They also believe that now that the City Council has
passed a decision on that particular pay off the City has a brand. They both feel that is the reason why the 2006 Stockholm City Communications Policy is saturated with the word brand while the policy of 2002 doesn’t talk about it at all. Interestingly, the Communications Policy of 2006 doesn’t even mention “Capital of Scandinavia”.

The other three believe that the time is right for branding. The municipality has reached a certain level of maturity and the attitude is more positive towards branding methods. There is suddenly an awareness that the “soft values” are part of a city image. Some of the respondents feel that they have been thinking in branding like terms before, they just used a different vocabulary.

The highest official in the City, Irene Svenonius, does not believe the different companies of the City should do any brand work, with the exception of the property companies who work on a competitive market. The others respondents do. They all agree that it is part of a PSO’s mission to inform its interest groups of what it does for the tax payers money. None of the respondents want aggressive marketing. The Director of Communications claims that “a municipality does not market, it informs and profiles” but in the same breath says that it really depends on what accounting code you use. She is mostly upset that the public sector has adopted the marketing nomenclature of the private sector. It should have created its own, more relevant, set of expressions, she feels.

The consultant thinks that not only can municipalities work with branding, they must. She thinks it is a matter of credibility. It is important that the citizens understand what the city does. If every unit communicates differently the city mission becomes unclear and that is expensive. The municipality must show that they are using the resources effectively. If a municipality doesn’t explain what it stands for it can’t attract good employees, and it is harder to get forgiveness for made mistakes.

Most respondents, except Irene Svenonius, mention budget as a restraint. It is not OK to spend tax money on aggressive marketing particularly not if it competes with a commercial market. The consultant expresses an interesting point of view: “Politics is a problem for the brand. Half the politicians say that what the City is doing is good and half of them say its bad. The next political term it switches. It is hard to work with long term plans that way. It is a huge job to get everyone to have the same attitude.”

However, says the consultant, the City has a unique possibility to spread its brand with so many employees (47,000). If it is done right there is no need to spend money on advertising.
Most respondents also agree that everyone and nobody affect the branding process. The Board is important, the politicians are important but if the personnel is not involved it will be impossible to succeed with the branding and/or building a company. The implementation is everything. “You can push a decision through without the personnel but you will never have a successful implementation”.

Finally, all respondents agree that the municipal organizations in their internal and external communication must support the City of Stockholm goals and mission.

7. The performance of Micasa Fastigheter

7.1 External surveys

For a company to find out how it is doing on the market it needs to ask the market. Micasa Fastigheter has asked its market in a number of surveys and Micasa Fastigheter has generally scored high. The figures themselves are positive, compared to the market.

7.1.1 Tenants’ survey

The first survey was done in the summer of 2006, when the company had been on its own for ten months and the new name was eight months old, and the second survey was done during the summer of 2007.

The survey was carried out by AktivBo both times. It is a very extensive survey. It measures the service quality – if the customers feel like they are taken seriously, if it is safe, clean and if they get the service with correcting problems that they ask for. The survey also measures product quality, which is the quality of the property, inside and outside.

In 2006 the response rate was 69.5 percent and in 2007 it was 66.9. Basically Micasa Fastigheter has preformed well. The scores have been compared by ActiveBo to 50 other property companies in Sweden who have performed similar surveys.

In general the scores are high, even if the changes are the most interesting to look at. The customers (all groups) are happy with the Micasa personnel, the information from the company and accessibility. They are less happy with the state of the properties and the external environment. Micasa Fastigheter scored over 80 percent when the tenants were asked if they were happy with their apartments, the safety and public areas. Those figures put Micasa Fastigheter among the 25 percent top scoring property companies.

As many as 84 percent of the tenants feel their apartment gives value for money.

(See supplement 3)
7.1.2 Brand recognition survey – USK

In the fall of 2006 Micasa Fastigheter carried out a brand recognition survey with the help of USK (Utrednings- och statistikkontoret). They sent out 600 surveys to randomly selected Stockholm citizens at the age of 18 and older. The response rate was 71%. The respondents were asked the following questions:

- Do you recognize the logo of Micasa Fastigheter?
- Would you consider moving to a senior living property when you turn 65?
- (If yes) Why would you consider moving to a senior living property?
- Do you know that Micasa also offers service housing, nursing homes and sheltered accommodations?

Nine percent of the respondents recognized the logo, 90 percent did not. More women than men recognized the logo (11 vs. 9 percent). In the age group 35-64 years 11 percent recognized the logo, the age group 18-34 and over 65 the knowledge was 8 and 7 percent respectively. The results of 2007 show that, since last year, the total number of Stockholm inhabitants who recognize the logo is up from nine to 14 percent. The increase is most obvious amongst men where the increase in brand recognition is 13 percent (from 7 to 20). The results also show a higher increase amongst older people which shows that Micasa Fastigheter reaches its target group better.

7.1.3 Brand recognition survey – SweMa

In October Micasa Fastigheter also took part in a brand recognition survey by SweMa AB, VarumärkesBarometern. The purpose of the study was to determined how well known the company brand was in Stockholm. Out of 1,306 respondents, 16.2 percent recognized the Micasa brand. More women (17.3) than men (14.9) recognized Micasa Fastigheter. The recognition rate got higher with the age of the respondents. This was a first study that is only interesting as a starting point, the figures will only really be interesting when the results of the 2007 survey are in.

7.1.4 Web survey – E-space

Compared to profit seeking companies Micasa Fastigheter has a fairly low amount of visitors – approximately 240 unique visitors/day. It is still important to know who the visitors are and if they find the information they are looking for. During a six month period, starting March 26,
2007, randomly selected visitors were asked to give their opinion. By Sept 1, 2007 103 people had answered the survey. The survey compared the Micasa results with the results of other property companies. When it comes to graphics, structure and user friendliness Micasa Fastigheter scores higher than the other companies, when it comes to content the scores are even.

Illustration 5. **www.micasa.se**

 got higher grades than the other property companies when it came to graphics and user friendliness.

G=graphics
S=structure
I=Information
A=User friendliness
F=Expectation

(E-space report)

### 7.2 Internal surveys

Internal surveys can tell a great deal, not only about the atmosphere in the company but also about the company image. If the front line personnel get good feedback when they are out, it will be reflected in the answers to the questionnaire.

During the spring of 2006 Micasa did a personnel survey with the help of USK. The questionnaire included questions on organization & work, leadership & managers, evaluation meetings/salary discussions, participation & contributory influence, development & competence, well-being & working climate, health, equality & discrimination, total assessment. A total of 48 employees answered the questionnaire which gave a response rate of 86 percent.

Compared to the same survey in 2005 the average result increased from 3.5 to 4.0 (out of 5). That means that 50 percent of the respondents were more positive 2006 compared to 2005. The comparison shows a positive trend in all areas.
8. Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Branding

Branding as a concept has a long history but it is only for the past 20–30 years it has been used in terms of corporate image. The main asset of many companies is not its produced goods but its image.

As the awareness of branding and brands has increased one could say that there is consensus amongst researchers and practitioners alike that successful companies are those where the focus is on the customer and where every single person in the company is responsible for how the brand is perceived. Some of the world’s strongest brands excel at delivering the benefits consumers desire. Customers also have greater emotional ties to strong brands. The power of a brand lies in what customers have seen, read, heard, learned, thought and felt about the brand over time\footnote{Holt, B., Douglas, 2002, Brands and Branding, Harvard Business School Publishing}. Still, creating a brand is not easy.

There is most likely a best way to launch a brand. I have made an attempt to summarize my findings in a sort of “to do-list”. The following is general enough to cover all kinds of companies, products and services:

1. Define customer needs and analyze the market.
2. Give the new product/company/service a name – distinct and differentiated, easy to remember.
3. Create a logo – distinct and easily identifiable.
4. Turn the logo into a trademark – all legal protection measures have to be taken care of.
5. Create a profile – a communications platform that can be a clear sender of the company offer.
6. Create a brand – give the trademark content, a message, a promise to the customers.
7. Ask the customers how you are doing, again and again, and adapt to their needs.

The first (5) steps of a branding process (name>logo>trademark>profile) are well documented and researchers and consultants seem to be in agreement how this is done. It is the same with evaluation methods – they are many, they have been tried out during some time and they measure what you want to know, but they are often costly.

It is the sixth step of the branding process that is hard – creating the actual brand. But what it comes down to is the relationship with the customers. Håkansson, Aaker, Kotler and Interbrand all agree that the only road to success is to know the customers, understanding their needs and desires, be aware of when they change, and maybe more than anything – to deliver. The difficult part is of course how to do that.

The purpose of this study was to find out what methods are used today to create successful brands, how the branding processes used in a private company can be used in a public sector company and how have these factors affected the branding process of Micasa Fastigheter.

Can public sector organizations use the above knowledge and methods in their work of creating a brand of their city, their company, their service, despite the many rules and regulations that (mostly) limit their course of action?

In order to ascertain that, one has to understand what special conditions separate a municipal/public sector organization from a private:

1. A PSO is more or less funded by tax money.
2. A PSO is a politically governed body
3. The PSO’s target group is generally “everybody”
4. The success of the PSO cannot be measured in financial terms
5. Strict governmental rules, regulations and laws apply
6. PSO’s must uphold democracy.
According to Robert Kaplan a PSO has three objectives that it must satisfy to accomplish its mission: create value (for the taxpayers), at minimal cost and to develop support from its funding authority.

### 8.2 City branding

It appears that PSO/municipal communication historically has followed two very distinct tracks for at least most of the 1900’s and now these tracks are partly beginning to merge. The first track is general city marketing. The target groups have been and are tourists and possibly investors. In the bigger cities there are inward investment companies and tourist organizations to handle these issues.

The second track is civic information, mostly handled by the information department. Civic information is information from the public sector with two main tasks:

A. Information that alert the citizens to their rights and responsibilities.

B. Information that makes it possible for the citizen to assert his/her ideas and interests in the democratic process.

Contrary to the communication work in the private sector the framework is relatively narrow for which core values are communicable with the help of the brand. The same thing goes for the work with the vision.

Information departments have generally very small budgets and are restrained by laws, rules and regulations. The information budget is always put in relation to the core business of the municipalities.

Now the two tracks are beginning to merge and branding is the “in” word. The thing that has paved way for this new development is, according to Michalis Kavaratzis, the development of marketing in non-profit organizations, social marketing and image marketing. The concept of non-profit marketing has freed the application of marketing from its connection to direct profit making. In my opinion there are three more major reasons:

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1. The concept of image has reached PSOs/municipal organizations. The realization that image is an incredibly important part of being successful on the market and in the eyes of one’s owners – the taxpayers.

2. The city employees. Earlier a forgotten group. There seems to be an understanding now that every single person in an organization is responsible for and a carrier of the brand. Every meeting is a branding experience.

3. Internet and the globalization. Your organization is right there, there is no way to hide. Comparisons are easy to make. Your customers will grade you, the taxpayers will speak their mind. If you don’t communicate with them, they will communicate with you and about you.

The complexity of the world today, the realization that everything counts and that PSOs and municipalities have the total good of their constituencies/taxpayers as a goal, has opened up for PSOs to work with image. A good city image, a city that “shall be experienced as one of Northern Europe’s most attractive places for living, visiting and doing business”, and the work towards it, has to sometimes involve efforts and measurements that can’t always be put against school lunches or care for the elderly.

It is very interesting that research shows that city campaigns where the aim is to attract new inhabitants fail. It is even more interesting that the cities in questions are happy with their campaigns! One interpretation is that the goal was never to attract new inhabitants, it was to make the people already living there stay and be happy with their city, a kind of internal information in an external forum.

Kraft & Strandberg claims that in the modern communication society the indirect channels between state/municipality and the voters have a great importance for the voters’ conception of the world. For the majority of people the media is the main source of information. In the 70’s when the public sector prospered, simple information was enough for the public to have high trust. Today the demands on the public sector’s information efforts are higher. The communication strategy for the public sector or administration is as much a survival strategy as the financial strategy is for a profit-seeking company. This explains the sudden focus on a communications policy in the City of Stockholm.

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42 Ibid, p.30-31
Well then, can the rules for branding that apply to profit-seeking companies be translated into a best branding process for PSOs and municipalities?

The answer is both yes and no. PSOs and municipalities will never have the budgets needed for a full fledged branding effort. There will still be restraints from laws and regulations. There will always be voices opposing spending money on marketing/branding instead of good schools, and politicians will always have their agenda. However, I believe that there is more understanding now that one thing doesn’t necessarily exclude the other. In the end it is the total good of the city’s customers, the tax payers, that count.

The Micasa branding survey shows that it is not even a question if the municipalities should or should not work with their brands – they must. The City must communicate its responsibilities and services, it has to be clear what the municipality is responsible for, in order to have credibility.

Besides, city branding (in the widest interpretation of the word) is already being done. With many of the old objections pushed a bit in the background and with the new development of slimmed down organizations, PSOs get more influenced by external design and management agencies who are all trained in the commercial way of looking at a brand.

8.3 Micasa Fastigheter

Micasa Fastigheter, like most municipal companies, have a very special situation in that it is owned by the City of Stockholm and governed by politicians – the company instructions can (and do) change with every election. It is an opportunity to be owned by the City but a threat to be in the hands of politicians. Since the 1970’s the political majority of Stockholm has changed every four years. As a consequence the Micasa Board changes (since they are politically appointed). Micasa Fastigheter then gets very dependant on professional employees, who know what they are doing and why, who focus on customers and are clear over the company mission.

The Stockholm City Executive Office has recently conducted an “investigation of the future”, Framtidsutredningen 2007. They have yet other aspects on the future that might affect Micasa Fastigheter. At this moment they are nor threats nor opportunities but something to keep in the back of the head: The number of older people will increase.
The next 30 years in Sweden will see a change to a much older and healthier population. Except in Stockholm, where there will be less older people for the next 15-20 years, then the number will increase again.\textsuperscript{43} So the question is what to do with the City’s (Micasa’s) prime property during the 15-20 years that the older population is decreasing. Should it be sold out or maybe rented out to private care givers? In that case Micasa Fastigheter’s need to brand itself more aggressively increases.

The actual branding process of Micasa Fastigheter has been extremely fast to date. The personnel has been involved in every part of the branding process. Because there was no history to hold the company back Micasa Fastigheter has been able to write its own future. The vision is easy to write and the profile easy to enforce if one is not tide down to previous associations linked to the company. It has made the branding easier but it has been harder to create stability in the work processes.

Without actually being aware of the fact that there is a kind of “best practice in branding” Micasa Fastigheter has followed it. It is the result of the clear vision of the Managing Director, a knowledgeable management group, enthusiastic employees and guidance from experienced consultants that are in contact with the market outside the PSO arena.

During the slightly more than two years the profile has existed and slightly less than two years that the Micasa brand has been in existence, both have been emphatically enforced. Every single sign and product with the company logo has passed the desk of the Communications dept. But not only the profile, the content as well. Every “mass” distributed letter or message has been scrutinized. The result has been that the organization has discovered the advantages of talking with “one voice” and appearing with “one look” and has moved from surface issues to processes.

Branding is very costly and takes a long time. A timeframe of 2–3 years is not unlikely for a new name/logo/profile to be completely implemented. If the positioning also includes the business idea and vision it might take even longer. Micasa Fastigheter has done an extremely fast job.

\textsuperscript{43} Framtidsutredningen 2007, Vad kostar det tillgängliga och trygga Stockholm? Stockholms stads stadsledningskontor.
But why would Micasa Fastigheter spend any resources at all on branding/marketing when it really has no competitors, its owner is its biggest customer, and the senior living housing (and the “normal” apartments) are marketed and rented out by the local housing authority? The answer might be what research by AC Nielsen indicates – people feel good about brands they know. If people have heard about Micasa Fastigheter they feel good about having their older relatives live on its properties. In a wider perspective it is all about living up to the mission of the City of Stockholm.

Micasa Fastigheter has very aggressively enforced its brand and profile in all its communication but very little of it has been commercial. The only time Micasa advertises is in connection with hiring, when there is available commercial space to rent and, very sparingly, image advertising in magazines or newspaper sections dealing with retirement. There has been quite a bit of PR in the form of exhibitions, seminars and press releases to newsletters and trade magazines. Micasa Fastigheter has also agreed to be interviewed and appear in other companies’ customer magazines.

Being a municipal company Micasa Fastigheter’s best chance to create a brand is still by “living” the brand. The actual actions of the company will create its reputation, as well as small, fairly inexpensive and indirect efforts like seminars, cultural events, exhibitions, taking part in competitions, billboards and different types of co-operations (like universities and Stockholms Stads Bostadsförmedling). It is a slow process, but it is controllable.

It is obvious that the outcome of a branding process is in the hands of those who lead it. This can be a horror situation for PSOs who usually lack own competence and need help from consultants but are restricted by the Civic Purchasing Law. PSOs can only use the consultant that wins the bid according to the specifications.

On a practical level it is also in the hands of the enthusiast leading the branding project, anyone in the chain from employees to the President of the Board can affect the outcome by pushing his or her ideas.

The public sector has a lot to learn from marketing and branding methods in the private sector. The method or process for building a brand is fairly well researched and tried empirically. There is a “natural course of events” that Micasa Fastigheter followed without really knowing about it.
In the end, how it turns out depend on the soft values, the people involved, the managers energy and enthusiasm, the company culture and attitudes. Therefore many of the valuable lessons learned in this paper deal (mostly) with the soft values:

To build a new (municipal) company and for branding work/communication work to be successful the following is needed:

1. A Managing Director with clear directives from the politicians.
2. A Managing Director with a clear vision of what type of company/brand he wants to create.
3. Involvement from the personnel
4. A General Manager that understands the importance of communication.
5. An enthusiastic management team.
6. Total openness about the project.
7. It is necessary to make the branding process an ongoing one. New employees must be trained in the thoughts and philosophy of the company.
8. Empowered personnel that are allowed to make mistakes.
9. Good consultants. An impossible situation for PSOs who can only follow the purchasing law and does not have the possibility to choose consultants according to quality. A lucky fall out, however, can be very advantageous for the PSO.
10. A very different name and logo that sticks out. It gives the employees the opportunity to explain the company vision and business concept every time the name is mentioned. Strictly enforced rules for the profile, are important.

The above conclusions really apply to all company and brand building projects. There is one more prerequisite that only applies to PSOs and municipal companies.

11. The company has to understand the political and democratic processes. A Managing Director that does not know the decision process of the City will have great problems.
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Anders Nordstrand, Managing Director, Micasa Fastigheter and former MD of Stockholm Visitors Board
Annette Norberg Sandström, Director of Communications, City Hall (responsible for the City of Stockholm Communications Policy)
Sara Blücher, Communications Consultant, Gullers, works with the City communication.

Several internal working documents from consultants involved have been used as sources. The companies involved have asked that those will not be specifically mentioned as they might give away important parts of their business model.
Recipes, both on how to use the Micasa profile and Christmas munchies.
Supplement 2 – Survey questions

1. In the City of Stockholm communications plan that was written in 2002 there is nothing mentioned about the brand Stockholm (i.e. the word). In the communications plan that was taken in June 2006 (and went into effect in October) the entire document is saturated with the brand idea. The word is repeated over and over. What do you think could have cause the change?

2. Can/shall municipalities/municipal companies work actively with their brand (the same way private companies do?

3. If yes, how?

4. If, no or both yes and no, which are the limitations that are keeping the municipality from working actively with their brand?

5. Who affects the branding process`?

6. Which processes affect the branding work?

The last question is not part of the survey but if you have a minute more, would you consider answering it?

7. Micasa Fastigheter has done a very fast branding process, would you consider grading/evaluating according to the City goals?
Supplement 3 – Results from USK survey

The trend for customers (the City) shows that they will be unhappier with the Micasa operation unless the company improves communication.
Source: USK

Fewer customers than last year are happy with Micasa as a company but more have said nice things about the company. Source: USK

The trend among tenants is going up. They are happier with service, maintenance and information this year, amongst other things.
Source: USK
The tenants are happier in real terms too, than last year. As much as 89.9 percent would recommend Micasa. Source: USK

The trend amongst commercial tenants show generally high scores for Micasa. Source: USK

The tenants would recommend Micasa and speak well about it but do not recognize its personnel. Source: USK