"Made in Sweden"

- a study of French consumers’ perception of Swedishness in Swedish companies, brands and products

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Acknowledgements

After spending years abroad and the past years in France and as a person with roots in Sweden, it became clear that there is a specific connection to what is Swedish and to what Swedish stands for. Something that is Swedish intrigues people outside Sweden. You would have an opinion of it, either as exotic or as one of those Scandinavian countries that are ranked as high quality life. Sweden might not be seen as a concept of its own, but Scandinavia is.

It was not until I spent a few hours sitting on a beach in Juan les Pins, that I realised the purpose of my research thoughts around this topic. A French couple was sitting in front of me talking and about to eat lunch. I was thinking about how good my French had become since I now could understand what people around me said without concentrating. When the man in front of me asked the woman whether she wanted some “petit pains suédois”, “c’est un truc qui vient de Suède, je ne sais pas si vous les aimez, mais goutez-les!” (Eng. small Swedish breads, it is a thing that comes from Sweden, I don’t know if you like them, but try!). I started to think about the origin of a product, what it meant and what the man had said. It also made me think of one of the most famous brands in Sweden, Absolut Vodka. However, nobody in France seemed to know that it was Made in Sweden. After examining the bottle, it had its origin marked six times and I was wondering what this meant as the focus of Absolut Vodka has been the bottle not the origin. I then summarised my thoughts in a few sentences: How do French consumers perceive products Made in Sweden? How do they perceive Sweden and the Swedishness in a Swedish company, brand or product? It could be extremely interesting to do a study of French quality perception as I daily encounter Swedish brands and products in the French everyday life...

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____________________________

Annika Persson, Antibes
“For the inspiration I found in the Absolut bottle and a packet of Krisprolls.”
- Annika
Abstract

This study will be beneficial for Swedish companies that wish to enter the French market and will also benefit companies in France that have something to do with Sweden or that are playing on the Swedish origin. The outcome of this study will give a perspective on Swedishness in Swedish companies, brands and products with French consumers.

References to places and countries such as French wine, Hollywood movies, and Russian roulette are examples of how the origin of countries can create associations influencing consumers’ product evaluation and buying behaviour. In the process of understanding French consumers’ product country image in relation to Sweden, it is important to map their buying behaviour and associations to Swedish companies, brands and products. The consumer perception of the country of origin can together with other attributes add brand equity to a company, brand or a product.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to understand how Swedishness in Swedish brands and products influences the perception of quality and to assist companies in their decision making on how to market in France.

Conclusion: French consumers are influenced by global and national perceptions of countries of origin. Swedishness and Scandinavia have a particularly good reputation with French consumers. This influence is high and influences the consumers’ quality-perception process through various influencers. Presentation of figures that can be used as generic figures when considering the influencers of your country’s image when marketing cross-nationally.

Keywords: International Marketing Strategy, Swedishness, Made in Sweden, Country of Origin (COO), Country of Origin Effect (COE), Product Country Image (PCI), Cross-national marketing, French consumer behaviour
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1 Introduction

This chapter is an introduction to the background of Swedish industry, companies, brands and products. It introduces the Product Country Image providing an essential background to the Country of Origin concept. A problem discussion then leads to the research questions and the purpose of this study.

On the 17th of April 2007, the Swedish ship Götheborg arrived in Nice paying France a friendly visit. The ship is a replica of an 18th century ship “that has become a Swedish national symbol for culture, trade and industry.” <www.soic.se>. The objectives of building and sailing Götheborg were to strengthen trade with the countries she visited while presenting Swedish business, technology and culture to the rest of the world. This was possible through the sponsorship of Swedish companies\textsuperscript{1}. The people of Nice could visit the ship, read about Swedish technology, business and inventions but also get acquainted with the Swedish companies sponsoring the ship.

Sweden is a country with a history full of quality industrial companies within a business-to-business context. Sweden and the Swedish industry imply quality for Swedish produced products for export such as steel and packaging and has always had a good reputation between businesses in a business-to-business context. It has had a quality perception that was not intended for the customer specific market but to a business-to-business market. During the past 30 years this has evolved to include a business-to-consumer industry. The perception of quality could originate from the previous quality that the business-to-business industries have had for some time.

The perception of Sweden as being a quality producer is deeply rooted in companies such as Sandvik, Alfa Laval, Volvo, SKF and Tetra Pak. Sandvik with their material technology in cemented-carbide, high-speed steel tools and machinery for rock-excavation. Alfa Laval with its continuous separators, heat transfer and fluid handling to expertise in separation. Volvo is producing high quality lorries, dumpers and cars widely across the world. Another company concentrating from the start on quality and technical development selling business-to-business with great importance is SKF with their rolling bearings, seals and mechatronics. Lastly Tetra Pak with laminated paperboard packaging material for the liquid food industry. All of these are Swedish companies with a history of producing quality products on a business-to-business market, something that has impacted a lot on the Swedish strive for quality and the perception of Sweden as a quality producing country. This has later led to business-to-customer targeting companies such as IKEA, H&M, V&S Absolut Spirits\textsuperscript{2} etcetera being able to expand within the past 30 years. This previous well-known and well-worked quality has influenced in a business-to-business context but later in a business-to-customer context.

IKEA is one of the best-known companies from Scandinavia. The company can be seen as an ambassador of Swedish culture, bringing Scandinavian design and low-priced furniture into homes all over the world (www.scandinavica.com/culture/famous/IKEA.htm, 2006-03-29). IKEA is a good example of a globalised Scandinavian company with Scandinavian values and work conditions. The company knew how to take advantage of its heritage and started slowly to spread all over the world developing its brand while playing on the country of origin.

\textsuperscript{1} Swedish companies such as SKF, Volvo, Swedbank, SAS, Stena, JM and Investor.
\textsuperscript{2} V&S Absolut Spirits is part of the V&S Group owned by the Swedish state (www.absolut.com/about, 2008-03-02)
Scandinavia comprises of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Scandinavia does not only share languages and history but also religion (Lutheranism) and a common culture. Among the countries, Denmark may be the most European while Sweden might be the most known Scandinavian country outside Scandinavia. (De Turckheim & Piaton, 2003: 153-167) This Scandinavian culture has influenced other European countries through strong companies, brands and products such as IKEA, Nokia, Ericsson, Lego, SAS, Volvo, Absolut Vodka, Carlsberg and Electrolux (De Turckheim & Piaton, 2003: 153-167). Laroche et al. (2005: 103) refer to Sweden’s image when it comes to consumers’ product evaluation as being “[...] less affect-based because of Sweden’s weaker historical and economic ties with North America, and because of the functional quality of their automobiles (Volvo) and their furniture (IKEA).”

The brand Sweden is worth 464 million dollars and is said to be the USA of Scandinavia with leading companies such as Ericsson, Absolut, Volvo and IKEA. Anholt (Carpman, TT 2007) bases this on Simon Anholt’s Brands Index where over 25 000 people all over the world have ranked their perception of 40 countries. Sweden holds 8th place while Denmark and Norway hold 13th and 14th place. USA is number one according to the index with 19 735 million dollars. Denmark and Norway might have large companies but they are rather seen by the consumers as Scandinavian brands. Their brands are not as strongly connected to the country itself as compared to their Scandinavian neighbour, Sweden. Sweden has been better on marketing itself as a country. However Anholt suggests that to increase the value of Sweden as a brand, there needs to be more marketing of the royal family. (Carpman, TT 2007)

Furthermore Sweden played a great roll in inventions with inventors such as Anders Celsius (Celsius thermometer) and Alfred Nobel (dynamite, Nobel Prize Awards). Whilst few people would know that an emigrated Swede designed the famous Coca cola bottle, those who look in their toolboxes might find another invention labelled Made in Sweden, a wrench. It is a perfect example of where the “Made in Sweden” label could appear confusing. This profile from Bacho is one of the do-it-yourself must have tools, named Swedish wrench in the US (Sw. skiftnyckel) but referred to as clef anglaise (English) in French. Then considering the fact that Bacho now is owned by American Snap-on, who is moving their production from Swedish Enköping to Spain, it does not make it easy for the consumers to define the origin of the product. What does then the “Made in” label stand for? The “Made in” label adds something extra to the brand, a leading edge that can become very important. Lindstrom (2005) argues that it involves much more than just “made in”. To be able to understand what the label stands for, it is essential to define areas of what it could include, something that is defined by Papadopolous and Heslop (1993). They explain that the “Made in” stands for different things such as “manufactured-in”, “assembled-“,”designed-“ or “invented-in”, “made by a producer whose domicile is in”, and “wanting to look like it was made-in [...].”

1.1 Made in origin

The concept of country-of-origin is simply referred to as Country-of-Origin (COO) or furthermore as the Country-of-Origin Effect (COE). There is also the Country-of-Origin-Image (COI). COO is often used as a reference to Made in X-country. However the assumption can be made that COO and COE have got a similar semantic meaning.
“...any influence that the country of manufacture has on a consumer’s positive or negative perception of a product.” (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 314)

The deployment of the traditional concept Made in X-country or COO does not only comprise of the manufacturing country and product labels but also place associations. There has been an increase in using place branding to attract foreign buyers. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002)

The advantage of a “Made in X”-label has been known for a long time. A historian from the late 19th century, Ernest Williams considered the “Made in Germany” label to be a competitive advantage within marketing (Williams 1896, in O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000). Compared to a brand or a corporate image, places and nations are not directly under the marketer’s command. Every place has got an image and the power of place equity can be positive or negative, diffused or focused and determined or influenced by media, politics, education and business experiences. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002)

“The perceived value of a product is a weighted average of its perceived brand and made in country values.” (Nebenzahl & Jaffe 1996)

The country of origin can be seen as a competitive advantage and it seems to be one factor in the buying decision process (Baker & Ballington 2002). Images of origin are a way for consumers to diminish perceived risk when dealing with information overload on the market while purchasing. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002)

Choosing one brand over another because of its reputation as manufacturer can be easy, but it may not be a rational choice (Lindstrom 2005). Min Han (1990) writes that consumers’ perception of products made in different countries are generally different and defines country image as the general perception of consumers regarding the quality of products made in a given country. A country image will have an impact on the attitudes towards brands and consumers would also have a tendency to rate products from a country they know of rather than an unfamiliar country.

References to places and countries such as Hollywood movies, London fog, British rock and Russian roulette are used in everyday life, social interaction and in the work place to discuss social, political and historical matters. These references are examples of how country images can influence consumers and can make people relate a product to an image. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002) The country name has got associations for the consumer and is something that would influence the attitude towards the product in question. The country of origin can give positive marketing effects if the product is fitting to already existing country characteristics. (Kim 1995)

“...country image plays an important role in consumers’ market behaviour” (Laroche et al. 2005)

Min Han (1990) suggests that people might exclude a product just because they are not familiar with the country of origin or the products of that country. They might not have particular images about these products, but they might refer to other product categories with a different origin or with other product categories from that particular country. Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1996) argue that if there is not a made in country in particular, consumers are most likely to assume that the product or brand is made-in whatever country associated with the brand. Min Han (1990) discusses further that when the image of a country gets more positive and the consumer feels confident about the country or about a particular product category,
they might evaluate brands differently and perceive a higher quality. The consumers may have a general image of product categories from a specific country, which make them rely on products in general. In a study done by Bilkey and Nes (1982: 90) it is stated that country of origin influences product evaluation.

“…having the wrong ‘made in…’ label won’t destroy your brand, but having the right label will save you a substantial amount of marketing money.”

(Lindstrom, 2005)

There is an opportunity to enhance your international marketing strategy if using general images of a country if these perceptions are in favour. Managers should promote the country of origin if there is a positive perception of the country. As Laroche et al. (2005) mention if the image of the country in question is poor, emphasis should be put on quality and price or by using parts from different countries. Although Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1996) stressed that a producer needs to be careful if he is outsourcing his production to another country if he is dependant on the perception of his product’s origin. Emphasis needs to be put on the products original country-of-origin and strategies have to be developed around this.

A negative influence on the country image and animosity against foreign products could lead to for instance boycotting. An example of this is the boycott by Australia and New Zealand of French products when France performed nuclear tests in the South Pacific (Klein, Ettenson & Morris 1998).

Products and services from a more economically developed country are often perceived as if they are of higher value to import. This resistance tends to decrease when income, education and travel experience increase. (McAuley 2001: 60) The country of origin cue has previously been used as a tool to promote products produced domestically. This could be criticised as harming exports since they could be perceived as being even jingoistic if marketed strongly in the domestic market. (Baker & Ballington 2002) Consumers may have stereotypes formed by previous experiences and myths, for instance French fashion and perfumes, English tea, Italian leather and Japanese technology (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 314-315; Lampert & Jaffe 1998; Kim 1995; O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000). Not only countries but also products are stereotyped (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 314-315). Consumers will put emphasis on a product with exceptional attributes, something that a positive country image could help to enhance (Kim 1995). Often if the country is developed or less economically developed, this refers to products in general and not a specific product. A more technical product tends to have a more positive image if from a more economically developed country. (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 314-315)

“Any nation can be viewed as a brand as it can be viewed as a compound of contemporary and historical associations that have relevance for marketing.”

(O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000)

Lindstrom (2005) also says that a positive preconception about a country of origin can add a valuable attribute to a brand. This can be further developed if following Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) early statement. Appealing to a patriotic side can influence the consumer to consider buying a certain country’s product although it may not lead to a purchase since there might be a product whose attributes are more valued. Furthermore they point out that the manufacturer should think of the impact and those images associated with countries that they consider placing their production in. This can be explained further with the example of Germany and German cars. If you hear about someone manufacturing a new car in Germany,
you might not be so surprised but curious and if you then exchange Germany to another country this will differ. Lindstrom (2005) made a comparison and suggested for instance Greece, which would have very different implications in regards to technology and style.

The image of a product’s origin plays a role in pricing internationally. The consumer can expect some countries to have a certain price discount, while they perceive some countries to produce more expensive goods. For instance an example made by Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) who argued that Volkswagen sells “German-engineered cars” may camouflage the fact that the cars are manufactured in a country with low price perceptions. Furthermore Kim (1995) had earlier stated that marketing a brand with a high country image will be more effective than marketing a product with low image. Studies had also show that products can benefit from taking a premium price if they have a high country image. This means that the perception about the country plays a role when pricing and when purchasing.

Brands such as Reebok, Sony and Yves Saint Laurent are being produced in several different countries. Lampert and Jaffe (1998) argued that the consumers perceive them to be from the original country of origin and consequently associate them to it. This is also something that applies for the Swedish company IKEA. Their products are manufactured in different countries, often due to transport and manufacturing not being too expensive, but their design is made in Sweden (Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11). This type of consumption stereotyping might be more of a judgement factor for purchase amongst younger consumers. Where an advertising message could mean that a brand implies a social identity through for instance clothing. (Auty & Elliott 1998)

Furthermore consumers can be more or less sensitive to social cues and an example is brought up in Snyder and Gangestad (1986, in Auty & Elliott, 1998). Some people are more likely to act as “chameleons”, constantly changing their outfit to go with the surroundings whilst others are more like “leopards”, never changing their spots. How do people create a meaning around brands? Is national identity playing a role in the perception of companies, brands and products?

1.2 Problem discussion

There are various ways for consumers to create meaning in association with brands except for the culture of the country of origin. It is down to perception and the meaning of perception. Perception is created with the consumer in layers where it gradually builds up with factors such as age, level of education, profession, family structure and where access to various medias and Internet access play an essential part. In addition also other inherent factors such as the individual’s background, nationality, country of origin and political views. It is important to realise how and where perception can originate and how it can be projected onto companies, brands and products. Professionals can then use this in their marketing strategy for branding and marketing campaigns.

The previously mentioned fashion involvement and level of devotion plays one role as well as self-awareness and can impact an individual’s attitude towards a brand or a product. People might have a certain awareness of issues and conflicts and might disagree with a company operating in a specific country, inflicting on its products and brands.

Country-based affect could in this study be translated to what could be referred to as the Swedishness in a product and/or a brand from Sweden. The Swedishness can be both linked

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4 Swedishness = for all intent purposes, Swedishness can be used to describe the collective attributes associated to Sweden.
to an image of Sweden but also to how Sweden is being perceived by Swedes and people from other countries. It can be the typical characteristics of and/or a certain type of mentality adhering to Sweden and Swedish origin. This means that what can be associated to Sweden as well as what a marketer is using when playing on the Swedish origin and image to market it, together with a product or brand to gain market shares and the consumer’s interest.

How can then Swedishness exist and mean various things for Swedes and different nationalities? How does Swedishness work? All people have some sort of simple stereotypes of other people, countries and cultures. This is something that influences perception of companies, brands and products. A degree of reason and affect with personal experiences but then there could be cases where perception is not inherent and is not based on anything at all. There are different levels of Swedishness depending on individual layers of perception and it exists and means numerous things for different people.

People’s perception of a country for instance can help sell and promote a brand or a specific product. Playing on the country of origin would bring out perception of quality, price, design or sentiments. The perception of quality can be strongly related to other types of products associated to or produced in a specific country. Price on the other hand could be perceived to link to quality, but it could also be linked to a specific country, a company culture or in comparison with other brands.

The meaning of perception can also come from our own national identity but also from any relations to the country of origin. Here history and background play a role and can impact perception. French consumers might at any given time in history have been exposed to Sweden influencing them to think or create a meaning of perception that is later inherit with generations. Exposure of Swedish history with Vikings and kings, culture, literature or a stray 17th century Swedish king battling in Europe might have left their Swedish mark on history. Another example can be something read in a book as a child. If all French children at one point in their childhood were exposed to Pippi Longstocking, written by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren, knowing that it is Swedish might develop a subconscious perception of Swedish girls as incredible strong and independent with ginger coloured hair carrying horses instead of riding them.

The perception of consumers can also derive from an affective link built up by brands or TV and celebrities. Favourite football team, actors and pop idols might wear or use specific brands or is sponsored by one. They might promote and figure in advertisements but also their country of origin. Knowing that Britney Spears is American, Arnold Schwarzenegger is Austrian or Victoria Silvstedt is Swedish might confirm or add on to stereotypes and country-images based perception with certain nationalities and groups of people. Something that perhaps at one point in time was initiated by watching ‘La dolce vita’ with Anita Ekberg in 1960, ABBA winning the ‘Eurovision Song contest’ in 1974 or perhaps a James Bond movie with Maud Adams, Ursula Andres or Britt Ekland. All examples of what once might have contributed to a certain nationally wide image of Scandinavia and Sweden, where French might be imagining a country full of blond Birgitte Bardots. So then if you already have a perceived image or inherit perception of Swedes as being tall sexually liberated beautiful blonds with blue eyes, then celebrities like Victoria Silvstedt, currently in a French version of the Wheel of fortune, or the football player Fredrik Ljungberg, subconsciously would add on to these stereotypes and prejudices.

* Former playmate and model, turning letters in the French version of the Wheel of fortune, ‘La roue de la Fortune’
There are several examples of Swedish made or branded products exported globally. They have written or shown that they are Swedish or have got a Swedish origin. For instance Wasa, a Swedish brand now owned by Italian Barilla, has their production in Sweden and Germany. Their packaging can be associated to Sweden through its colours and yellow cross. The product itself, *crispbread*, is often associated to Sweden, something that Wasa seem to use in their packaging and advertised serving suggestions. Pågen has labelled their product, KRISPROLLS as *origine suédoise* and they have also played on their Swedish origin on their packaging and in their advertisements. They have stated on the backside of the packaging the words *good morning* or *hello* in Swedish with phonetics for how to pronounce it. Scandinavian people often refer to Absolut Vodka as being significant for being Swedish. However this is not clear to people outside of Sweden as the publicity of Absolut put little emphasis on its Swedish origin. The focus is on the bottle instead. The advertisements use the focus on the bottle and picture the bottle as if it is filled with anything and not necessarily vodka. The Swedish origin is not marketed but it is marked on the bottle in six different places. Yet the Swedishness and it being from Sweden is not the focus in the advertisements.

Another international company that plays a lot with its Swedish origin is IKEA. It has become the best-known product exported worldwide from Sweden and this helps to promote Scandinavian culture. As a brand, IKEA can be seen as an influencer on people, with its Swedish origin; both with their Scandinavian company culture and with the lifestyle that they are promoting. They are persuading people to buy into simplicity and equality through their concept. IKEA may be a producer of cheap furniture, but it is a great influencer on people’s life. *IKEA is a way of life – living.*

Products sold by IKEA are being perceived as both of good quality and of bad quality. Either you perceive the value and quality, as being good and that would be a reason for a purchase or you perceive it as bad but cheap and that would also be a reason for purchase. Is perceived quality a reason for buying Swedish products? Is Swedishness a reason to make a purchase?

If a company decides to take their product to France, they ought to know something about the French’ perception and how they would perceive brands, products and concepts. There be an advantage in deploying a marketing strategy that markets products as being Swedish? Marketing its Swedishness rather than just the product itself? Does the role of country image in customer choice behaviour vary across product categories?

It is interesting to understand what brands and products French consumers recognise as being Swedish. To see how Swedishness impact brands and how consumers perceive the Swedish culture to have an impact on them and their perception of brands and decision making process of buying. Is it the Swedishness that influences? What is the perception in France of companies, products and brands from Sweden? What does the Swedish Made in Sweden label imply? This leads to my research questions.

### 1.3 Research Questions

- Is French consumers’ product evaluation dependent on their perception of the country of origin and is it influenced by Swedishness?
- Is there a perception of Swedishness that reflects how French consumers perceive Sweden and Scandinavia?
- How does Swedishness affect the minds and attitudes of French consumers?

*origin suédois = Swedish origin*
1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Swedishness in Swedish companies, brands and products influences the perception of quality.

The second purpose of this study is to assist Swedish companies in their decision-making on how to market in France.

1.5 Delimitations

The focus of this study is on Swedish products and brands referred to as being Made in Sweden currently being sold in France. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the “Made in” label treated in this research can mean different things, depending on the consumers’ perception of the product country image. This study will focus on what the French consumer perceive as Swedishness. Besides origin Swedishness could imply associations to culture, landscape/nature, people, equality and democratic systems, quality and also brands such as IKEA, Volvo, KRISPROLLS, Absolut and Wasa.

Investigations will be conducted to understand French consumers’ perception of Sweden as a brand and if their product evaluations of Swedish made products and brands depend on the perception of the country of origin. That is to say whether products are being preferred because of their origin and if that origin implies certain perceived value and quality.

This study will concentrate on the role of country-based affect in product evaluations but also measure the image of products and brands from Sweden, as well as their influence on French consumers.

1.6 Relevance

This study will be beneficial for Swedish companies that wish to enter the French market and will also benefit companies in France that have something to do with Sweden or that are playing on the Swedish origin. The outcome of this study will give the reader a perspective on the Swedishness in Swedish brands and products so as to be able to interpret the French consumer and find a tendency of his or her immediate reaction to Swedishness in product and brand related matters.

1.7 Outline / structure

Chapter 1 – This first chapter gives an introduction to the field of research as well as describing the purpose and objectives of this study.

Chapter 2 – This chapter deals with my scientific approach, beliefs and methodological choices in relation to designing and conducting the research.

Chapter 3 – This chapter accounts for a review of relevant theory aiming to give a theoretical background of three keywords in the study: consumers, perception, brands and country of origin. This pre-understanding of theories are essential for the background and also used to discuss ideas in the interpretation sections in chapter 4-6 together with new theories presented in chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 4-6 – These chapters present the empirical research divided into three phases where each chapter accounts for research, interpretation and next steps. Chapter 4 conveys the
initial phase comprising of two interviews where a structure of established questions were used. The secondary phase is presented in chapter 5 with the main customer survey together with two expert interviews with representatives from companies that produce “Made in Sweden” classified products on the French market. The sixth chapter comprises an individual customer interview to validate the study. Next steps of this phase are chapter 7.

**Chapter 7** – This chapter is the conclusion that will answer the research questions and respond to the purpose of them as well as present the conclusions made throughout the study and its interpretation parts.

**Chapter 8** – This final discussion arose from the conclusions providing figures to structure the outcome of the study and relate it to the purpose. Finally it lists areas of further research that have arisen during the research and criticisms to the study.

*Figure 1.1 Outline & Structure of the Scientific Study (own)*
2 Methodology

This chapter commences with an explanation of the scientific approach that lies in the background of carrying out this study. The scientific approach will impact on the interpretation and methodological choices.

2.1 Scientific Approach

This social science study is based on a research methodology philosophy that builds a framework from which the research will be conducted. It lays a foundation of how this study will be interpreted. This methodological framework will filter the knowledge and hypotheses derived from the research and affect the outcome and results.

“Cogito ergo sum - I Think, Therefore I am” (René Descartes)

Reality is a consequence of thoughts, actions and existence. Everything is a consequence of someone’s reality, it may be the laws of nature, chemical reactions and previous research but it could also be the cause of action that generates consequences, which result in a reality. What you want to choose to believe is part of your reality. Therefore my reality will differ from what other people see as their reality, hence in order to carry out this study, I will have to define and position myself within the existing social science theories and epistemology philosophy, “general set of assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world”(Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 31), to explain what my perception of science is, how I define reality and where I stand in a social science point of view but also what methodological frame I will use.

Social scientists are considered to have a broader spectrum to philosophy within themselves then the scientists. The starting point of these types of philosophies is often ontology, “assumptions that we make about the nature of reality” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 31)

Methodology can be seen as a set of techniques and tools that are used to research and find the meaning of something (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 31). There is a methodological research, where research is a method of finding and answering questions. It can be questions in the everyday life, but in this case most of them might have answers and it would be possible to find them in a book or by asking someone. Some questions are more advanced and treat an area that needs to be investigated further. Scientific researchers are obliged to validate knowledge, to create knowledge and sometimes to replace existing knowledge that is considered non-valid or even non-existing.

2.1.1 Objectivity versus Subjectivity

Significance and understanding are separate elements that can be reached and merged with knowledge. This can be done through reading about how knowledge is achieved and understanding the epistemological discussion. In order to develop this further it is necessary to ask oneself what is knowledge and how do we obtain knowledge (Norén 1995: 41). It is also important to understand the meaning of interpretation and the ability to interpret and through this find knowledge. Norén (1995: 27) refers to Burrell and Morgan, two well-known
scientists, and their definition of interpretation and that it is the ability of interpretation of the researcher and the stakeholders that counts. A few of their ideas will be investigated later on in this chapter. Furthermore this mapping of knowledge could be seen as a knowledge base from which the researcher could strive for objectivity in his/her research and it will enable him or her to validate the study. It ought to be mentioned that subjectivity should be avoided as only a well-established point of view through years of validated research can birth a valid motivation, which is needed.

A knowledge or strive for knowledge circulates around an object, which could be defined as theories, philosophies, abstract and/or physical objects. Some might claim that an observer is subjective in his observation whilst others believe in the objectivity of the observer.

"The object gains its objectivity only by being observed, and that objectivity must thus be a property that stems from the observer."

(Berkeley 1910, in Morgan 1983: 12)

The same object could generate many different kinds of knowledge and as Morgan (1983: 13) defines it, science is the realisation of possible knowledge. Whatever the viewer perceives as an object, what it feels like, tastes like etcetera will influence the research and the methods used in conducting it. The course of the study is all down to the researcher and the outcome and/or knowledge deriving from it depends on his or her frame of reference and defined purpose of the study. It is therefore important to clearly identify a purpose from the proposed research questions deriving from the problematic. Whilst an object might gain its objectivity by being observed, it can also be claimed that this observation, if made by one researcher, can be subjective. Thus would the objectivity of an object depend on the observer himself or the number of observers observing the same object? In this case the subjectivity of each observer will make the object objective.

2.1.2 Reality versus truth

A definition must be made between reality and truth. Reality can have several meanings for different viewers and when viewers share the same version of reality it could be referred to as a universal reality. Moreover this universal reality can be referred to as the truth. How do we then measure truth? It can be measured through generalising other people’s reality. The truth measured is the truth through the respondents’ eyes. Research is done to try and make an attempt to grasp reality, the universal reality. The researcher’s goal is to find the universal ultimate reality and to do so he/she needs to measure the truth of a certain number of realities that could be said to make up the truth.

Does the truth exist and is reality just an illusion? The perception of truth is based on what can be found and then compared with theoretical backgrounds and hypotheses can be tried against existing theoretical references and other research questions. Scientifically truth can be seen as a concept, used to define the ultimate reality as the truth in the eye of the beholder. There is a need to test the scientific value of the research and to investigate the applicability of the hypotheses and thoroughly balance the probability of them. For the researcher, the truth is out there…

Someone might live someone else’s reality, but whose reality is more valuable and can it be measured? Thinking that you are right and that your answer is the right option may not be a valid standpoint because how do you know that you are right within a universal reality and not just within your own reality? How can we define an answer to be an answer? This leads us back to the frame of reference, where a clear definition of it and where one stands can validate the answer and legitimate the study.
No matter what you write it will not mean the same thing to others as it does to you, due to social phenomena such as the same meaning of a word might not be translated or is lost in the communication barriers. If you read something, your experience, past, thoughts etcetera will determine your interpretation and therefore your perception. Therefore it is very important to explain and motivate your standpoint before acting. An example of someone who did not anchor his dreams and illusions in the universal reality was Prince Ludwig II king of Bavaria also called the Fairytale king <www.neuschwanstein.com>. He lived in his own reality and in the reality of fairytales and created his reality as such through fiction. As a direct consequence of his reality and thoughts for example spending vast amounts of money on new castles with fairytale like features, affected people negatively as they did not live in the same reality as the prince and his reality had not merged with the universal reality.

What is then the ultimate truth? Can it be found and measured? The truth is the generalised reality of the many people. Stuck in the web of reality where the truth is the spider weaving people’s realities into the web of truth. If enough people share a perception, it could be seen as a relative truth. The truth is interpreted from what the researcher believes that the respondents and the consumers experience. It also depends on the collected experiences that the researcher has and uses.

2.1.3 Directions within Social Sciences

To be able to understand research problems it is important to understand different directions within the social sciences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 27). Only when starting to understand the different directions would I be able to realise where I stand and in what direction my research is going, what ideas and views I should follow and bear in mind while I am conducting my research.

Popper (1958, 1968 in Morgan 1983: 384) argues that all scientific knowledge cannot be considered fully accurate, as it will be replaced in the future by better explanations. This I agree on, we can research to find a more accurate truth and we will keep searching until we find a better and more plausible truth. Hence social science is expandable and should be questioned rather than just validated.

There is a research border dividing what we know already and the unknown. (Rosengren & Arvidson 2002: 13) This is where the scientists are researching to replace the unknown and enhance already existing knowledge to make it more valid. In a scientific approach, it is important to define a research question and from there decide on how to proceed. An structuring model could become useful and make it easier to structure and define the methods of research (Rosengren & Arvidson 2002: 17). The researcher is speculating over different questions as to try and define an area of research to define the problematic that needs to be further investigated which will be done with an empirical approach with chosen methods to collect data. The result is then presented in diagrams, tables and text in order to be analysed in accordance with the purpose and research question.

The following process model of the research cycle (see fig. 2.1) was inspired by a figure from Rosengren and Arvidson (2002: 15) describing the four phases of the research process; the empirical phase, the empirical result, the interpretation phase and the mind map. I have used the first phase and named it the Structural model, here the research area is defined, questions
are asked, hypotheses are defined and it is decided proceed. Following is phase two renamed to the *Empirical approach* where the chosen methods are used to collect data and the data is collected. Phase three is renamed to *Results* and stands for the outcome of the data collection and diagrams. The last step is called *Interpretation*, where the results are verified with theories before a new theory is created.

![Research Cycle](image)

*Figure 2.1 Research Cycle (own adapted from Rosengren & Arvidson, 2002: 15)*

Burrell and Morgan (1979) discuss social theory placing it in four broad paradigms in the aspect of understanding sociology, standpoints in social science and the nature of society (see figure 2:2 adapted from Burrell & Morgan 1979: 22). The four paradigms: Functionalist, Interpretive, Radical Humanist and Radical Structuralist are a contribution to our understanding of sociology and address different views of analysing the social life. It shows a framework of what these paradigms are likely to take when evolving a study within one of them. Each paradigm comprises full discussions on methodology, ontological and epistemological assumptions amongst several researchers and classic philosophers.

![Four Paradigms for the Analysis of Social Theory](image)

*Figure 2:2, Four paradigms for the analysis of social theory (Burell & Morgan 1979: 22)*

The interpretative paradigm lies closest to my view of social science. It addresses a more subjective interpretation from the understanding of the social world as it is and accounts for the reference frame of the participant rather than the observer of action (Burrell & Morgan 1979: 28), which would be closer to the Functionalist paradigm, leaning towards the positivist view of social science with an objective approach to research (Burrell & Morgan 1979: 25-27). The radical humanist paradigm is overthrowing existing social arrangements and...
emphasis on human consciousness developing “a sociology of radical change from a subjectivist standpoint” (Burrell & Morgan 1979: 32). Finally the radical structuralist paradigm “advocate a sociology of radical change from an objectivist standpoint.” influenced by the Marxists and within a realist view of the social world. (Burrell & Morgan 1979: 33-35)

Max Weber (1864-1920) elaborate on a method originally brought into focus by Wilhelm Dilthey, the method of verstehen or interpretive understanding, a type of analysis and investigation of social affairs.

“The method of verstehen – of placing oneself in the role of the actor – was seen as a means of relating inner experience to outward actions.”

(Burrell & Morgan 1979: 83)

Different approaches to social analysis are built on sets of assumptions that are rarely made explicit. These assumptions decide the nature of the theory and research. (Morgan 1983: 13) An empirical research originates from the testing of assumptions, it is based on conducting research and then securing theories to be able to create hypotheses and to develop new theories. It does not originate from theories and it does not support an existing theory as such.

2.1.4 Positivism versus Hermeneutics

Two research traditions between which you would be able to place several others are positivism and hermeneutic. The word hermeneutic comes from Greek and stands for interpretation of biblical texts and is one stream of research tradition that was retrieved from the historian school. Positivism is related to science and used to form laws for physical phenomenon and strives to find similar structure and laws for social science. (Andersson 1979: 12-15)

The Hermeneutic approach is a subjective approach that accounts for the problem in its entity. It lets the researcher gain knowledge through own experiences, values and understanding of the problem. (Patel & Tebelius 1987) If data is presumed to be between the lines in the collected information, it is important to see people as people. An emphasis should be on what something means instead of what something is (www.infovoice.se, 2007-03-19). This approach claims that goals and methods are different to the positivistic research tradition and it attempts to separate science from social science (Andersson 1979: 17). A hermeneutic research question aims to find out what something would mean to someone. When collecting data, it is important to investigate why something means what it appears to stand for. The interpretation starts by getting to know the collected data to get an understanding of the whole picture, from which it is then possible to interpret with data as a valid foundation of the interpretation. <www.infovoice.se> This approach also separates physical and social phenomena so as to see to their single importance and significance and to interpret (Andersson 1979: 104). Hermeneutic develops patterns and structures that are not visible with an artistic touch. This results in suggestions of explanations of how things are linked and forms the explanation with data as the foundation. <www.infovoice.se> It is a concretion of reality meaning that the entirety as a hole should be researched and the phenomena are abstract unless this is taken into consideration. In positivism this would be the opposite and phenomena needs to be made abstract and less concrete. (Andersson 1979: 46)

Positivism says that concepts should be operationalised so that they can be measured. It is often an experiment is commenced with a pilot study and then followed by a control group or study. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 30) Schleiermacher (1768-1834) tried to find the true meaning and according to him, different researchers should be able to get exactly the
same truth. This gave him a stroke of positivism. The positivistic approach strives for a true reality and believes that it is possible to gain knowledge about it through observations. It is feasible to estimate how reliable a statement is if something is objectively observable. This could be for instance human behaviours and physical objects. It is impossible to decide if a statement is valid or not as the empirical knowledge is uncertain. (Patel & Tebelius 1987)

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002: 30) discuss another epistemology, a social constructionism which promotes that reality is not based on objectivity and external factors but rather on decisions by people. It is about the thoughts and feelings of people as individuals or in a group. Focus should rather be on the communication and how it is transmitted. The social scientist should explain and understand why people have separate experiences and not see to external factors. This should be operationalised to facilitate measurement according to positivism but be seen according to social constructionism for instance the different stakeholders’ perspectives.

While the positivism argues that the researcher should be outside of the actual research and gathers a significant number of random samples, this is seen different in the social constructionist approach. Here the observer should be a part of the observation and that a small number of samples are adequate. (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 30) The hermeneutic approach demands the researcher to have personal experiences of the topic of study or to be a part of it, hence it is a foundational necessity unless prevails positivism which wants an external spectator to conduct the research (Andersson 1979: 95).

“In order to be able to generalise about regularities in human and social behaviour it is necessary to select samples of sufficient size, from which inferences may be drawn about the wider population.” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe 2002: 29)

If several attempts of researching a population where the result is the same, then this must be evidence of a selected sample of sufficient size. If the probability of doing a similar study elsewhere with the same methods is high then the sample size must be of sufficient size.

With this in mind, my perception of research is that my previous experiences and knowledge will no-doubt inflict on my work and research as this background and pre-understanding has helped me to build up an analytic and constructive ability to question and criticise. This background should be used to provide knowledge through researching and searching for new knowledge.

When measuring chosen aspects connected to the research purpose, a generalising and analytic approach should be considered. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002: 53) state that a generalisation could occur when a general view of the problematic could be seen in the sample and the conclusion could be drawn that it is a general view. They state that the probability of what has been observed in the sample will be repeated, hence it can be generalised. In addition the generalisation must consider all answers and summarise a concept with a red thread that should be drawn through the findings. This will provide knowledge to understand and explain where the knowledge derives from.

Within the hermeneutic research methodology, there is a path of research that leads me from investigating the research questions in line with the purpose. One way of doing the research is according to the hermeneutic spiral to split the study in several blocks considering empirical research, theories and interpretation (Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson 1991: 152). The idea is to evolve the study through learning from one study before conducting the next study.
2.1.5 My research

I will perform my study of French consumers in three phases using the structure of the hermeneutic spiral. Figure 2.3 shows my own model deriving from an interpretation of the hermeneutic spiral adapted from Wiedersheim-Paul & Ericsson (1991: 152) description, and from which I will build my empirical research chapters. Each phase will commence with an empirical study, then an interpretation part divided in concepts deriving from the findings in the empirical study. The empirical study will also be strained through relevant theory from chapter four as it is interpreted. Lastly there is a concluding part in each phase in the form of next steps where assumptions and conclusions of each study are presented.

Figure 2.3 Hermeneutic Spiral (own adapted from Wiedersheim-Paul & Ericsson, 1991: 152)

The theoretical review is summarised with a figure created as part of the summary of the theory chapter and from which I can use the methodology frame and empirical discussion to strain it through the model. The model is more of a structural purpose and less of an analytic function. The aim is to create a new model through a discussion part that will follow the conclusions. This model will point out the Swedishness and the perception deriving from the research questions and the purpose of the study.

In order to execute the empirical study you need to identify a few keywords to build the study, to structure thought and to structure the questionnaire. The operational measures that connect the empirical data collected with the theoretical references are presented in a structural keywords’ figure (see figure 2.4). The model has been constructed to derive three keywords from the purpose and from them, define and concentrate relevant theory that can then be split into categories of which the empirical data is gathered. The keywords are useful steppingstones in structuring this study and questionnaires in the consumer survey. In the keyword figure, there are several components that cannot only be derived from the purpose but also developed in the theory chapter and summarised in the Perception Chain figure (see fig 3.7). The questionnaire (see appendix 2) for the survey is linked to the three categories and a further linkage is then made through connecting each question to a descriptive motivation and aim as well as to related theory. These measurements can be viewed in appendix 3.

The overall perception is essential when generalising the respondents’ answers through reading and going indept into the material from the survey. Buying behaviour and preferences relate to the attitudes, needs and demands that impact the consumer when making a purchase decision. The consumers also associate different attributes to brands and have a perception of it which would influence behaviour.
To structure my study, I will conduct a survey with questionnaires in order to get an understanding of what French consumers associate to Sweden, Swedish companies, brands and products. After analysing the results from the survey, I will have to do an in-depth interview with a French consumer in order to test the results and to get a bigger understanding for what is in the mind of a consumer. I will also then be able to test any theory that could derive from my conclusions and final discussion.

Figure 2.4 Keywords (own)

2.2 Research Approach

2.2.1 Empirical Approach

In the beginning of my research I started with talking to Swedish people in my surroundings to get a picture of what Swedish brands are commonly known amongst Swedes. As the initial idea for this study derived from Pågen’s KRISPROLLS being eaten by French consumers, I visited a French supermarket to ask a few random consumers that approached KRISPROLLS or Wasa crispbread on the shelves. This was to get a picture of the possibility this study could have. I presented myself as a student doing a study on brands, without mentioning that it had to do with Swedish brands, and then posed two questions:

- Why do you buy / like this product?
- Do you know from which country the product comes from?

There are two research methods, qualitative and quantitative for collecting primary data (Halvorsen 1992: 78). In this study, a method combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods was used when collecting primary data (Easterby-Smith 2002: 144). First a trial study was made to approach a reality without precise hypotheses. This was made with a qualitative method; free discussions conducted as a first study (Patel & Davidson 1994: 44), consisting of two open interviews with French consumers that were conducted to help to develop hypotheses before starting the quantitative data collection. Ideas were also obtained via a mini questionnaire and the outcome used to develop questions for the interview guide and the main questionnaire. This was a good way of trying out several questions and ideas in what order the questions should be asked and what follow-up questions should be included. After these primary conversations, a deductive method associated with quantitative studies such as a survey with a questionnaire was chosen.

2.2.2 Theoretical Approach

After having tested the initial idea on consumers in a supermarket, I continued by doing a

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7 French consumers, men and women of any age.
theory review producing a theoretical paper. Within this I analysed theories concerning perception, branding and country of origin so as to get a more in-depth picture of what has been done already. This theoretical study resulted in a model that summarised the theory from the international market down to the consumers and brands and how they are influenced and how this leads to a perception of quality. This model is called the perception chain (see figure 3:7). This structural model refers to previous theories but nothing that really maps out the country-based effect in product evaluations. If something similar had been found, this could have been a basis of assumptions that could have been tested in a study. As this was not the case, this theoretical model will provide a structural base of theories of how perception is constructed and clarify French consumers’ perception of Sweden as a brand. It was important to decide on what method to use since the outcome and data will depends on the chosen method (Halvorsen 1992: 78).

The theoretical references created a background which made it possible to define the research area and narrow it down to a few research questions. The chosen literature and peer reviewed articles have given a theoretical background relevant to the discussion. Articles have been found through the database ELIN consisting of major databases such as Emerald, EBSCO etcetera. Literature was found at CERAM, Lund University and Växjö University. From this substantial background investigation, it was possible to choose suitable methods. References and bibliography are used according to Harvard system. Guide online from the Borås University College <<http://www.hb.se/bib/harvard/har.asp>>

2.2.3 Sample selection

To be able to explain how the Swedishness in Swedish brands and products influence the perception of quality, I needed to understand what French consumers associate with Sweden, Swedish companies, brands and products. Hence the target group of the study derives from French consumers where the respondents were anonomus and their names have not been disclosed in the study with the exception of my final study. To limit my samble I chose to investigate the perception of French consumers in an information technology world, where the Internet as a distribution method could impact. Segmentations can further be made to comprise students and professionals giving an indication of a certain level of education and age, roughly 20-55. A quantitative research would study the sample’s impact of age, sex and academic background and require further segmentation to limit the study, whereas a qualitative study would give an indication of the nature of the sample. Attention has been given to the method of distribution but as for age, sex and academic background it gives more of a signal of people who answered the questionnaires.

When choosing respondents, a number of 30 participants are advisedly enough for an explorative research method (Rosengren & Arvidsson, 2002: 26). In the case where the results were not unanimous, more questionnaires were distributed and supplementary interviews were conducted. The questionnaires were distributed to French consumers who were also asked to forward the questionnaires to French people they knew, this increased the distribution. This is also in line with the snowball sampling, where process of selecting consumers is done through networks and consumers are asked to identify further individuals (Kumar 2005: 179). The sample was also selected through company notice boards and student e-mailing lists through universities.

Several interviews were conducted, two trial interviews, two interviews with experts and one end-interview. A number of 69 questionnaires were completed and received out of an estimated possibility of reaching approximately 2000 consumers through various distribution methods. The lack of returned questionnaires in comparison to the estimated consumers it
could have reached, could be due to the length of the questionnaire or lack of interest in spending time on it.

2.2.4 Initial Phase – First Interviews

The initial phase of the empirical study continued on the initial testing of the two earlier mentioned questions asked in a French supermarket. This was a base from which I continued to work with through two initial interviews. These interviews took place over the Internet, through an instant messenger application, MSN. This was a very useful step to test questions and to build the interview questions for the survey, through explaining and writing the questions online. I was then able to see directly what questions could be understood directly without further explanations and if needed, I could change the wordings so that the consumers would understand them better. This was to first test basic questions on consumers but also to be able to learn what Swedish brands would first emerge in the minds of the consumers. A few Swedish brands that are commonly known by Swedes as being Swedish were then tested against the consumers’ knowledge. The questions were also used as a base to build an interview guide for the later expert interviews.

After the interviews I tested the questionnaire on five students at one university in Paris. After receiving the answered questionnaires I realised that the questions needed to be reengineered further and made shorter with more multiple answers and less open questions. This method of distributing the questionnaire and then changing it is a way of supplementing the answers from the questionnaires if there are any misunderstandings or clarifications needed. Halvarosen (1992: 78-90) mention that it is important to choose a method that will make it possible to collect the most relevant data to correspond to the problem statement.

A questionnaire that is being distributed is self-administrative when the respondents are reading the questions and then answering them. Value and perceived value is abstract, something that could lead to difficulties for the respondents in understanding the purpose of the study. It is therefore essential to use well-written and tested questions and hypotheses in the interview guide and/or questionnaire to give the interviewer the possibility to follow-up the respondents’ answers with open questions. (Halvorsen 1992: 78-90) It was also possible to change the order of the questions depending on the respondent’s answers. During a personal interview or conversation, the structure is freer, the same person conducts the interviews and all respondents are asked the same questions. The interviews began with a presentation of the interviewer, the purpose of the project and how the answers will be used, the same information commences the questionnaire.
There are different types of interviewer effects during a personal interview. In a face-to-face interview, an interviewer can influence the interviewee through clothes, appearance and body language. In this type of interview it is easier to interpret the body language of the interviewee as well as the connection between the interviewer and the interviewee is strong. An interview over the Internet, on the telephone or through questionnaires will not let any eye contact or any possibility to interpret body language. This decreased the interviewer effect. These different methods of personal interviews should be used according to a specific situation but also the respondents. If it is not possible to meet face-to-face, interviews can be carried out through telephone or online conversations (Halvorsen 1992: 78-90).

2.2.5 Secondary Phase – Expert Interviews

While the trial interviews were being conducted and the first questionnaires had been distributed, I chose to interview experts in branding and communication of a Made in Sweden product to French consumers. After contacting representatives from the Swedish brands shown further down (see figure 2.7), I was able to interview two experts. The PR manager for IKEA in Sweden and Information Manager for Pågen in Sweden, former brand manager of KRISPROLLS. The interviewees were both professionals who work in companies that act in an international market with products and brands originating in Sweden and that could be considered “Made in Sweden”. Following the questionnaire as an interview guide, questions were asked and continued with follow-up questions when possible.

The interview with Eva Stål at IKEA was conducted through a telephone interview. The interview guide was sent beforehand, an interview was booked and follow-up questions were possible during the interview, which lasted about 30 minutes. Following that I wrote down the interview from my notes and sent it to Stål for her to comment on in case I had misunderstood her (see appendix 4). As I did not receive any negative feedback, I could use the information in my study. The interview with Georg Kittel at Pågens was carried out with the same interview guide sent by e-mail where it was possible to ask follow-up questions via e-mails. Kittel provided me with lots of useful information and background and answered in depth to my questions (see appendix 7) providing helpful text I then used to summarise and translated to English (see appendix 6).

2.2.6 Secondary Phase – Survey with Questionnaire

Next steps and conclusions of the interpretation section aiming to see the grounds for the next block of study.

Interpretation of the collected results so as to reach an understanding of French consumers and to filter the findings through relevant theories.

Expert interviews and a consumer survey with questionnaires. Enables an understanding of the French consumers’ perception according to the interpretation of previous study.

Figure 2.6 Secondary Phase

With the post-work and outcome of the first survey, the second questionnaire sent out was easier to fill in, to understand and it took a shorter time period to complete. This led to a higher number of returned questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed and forwarded
randomly to students at universities and to employees at one company through online notice boards but it was also personally forwarded to distribution e-mail lists etcetera.

The questionnaire was created with open questions and multiple-choice questions with given answers. Using an open-ended question has the possibility to trigger the respondent’s memory while a closed question could help to recognise something. (Halvorsen 1992: 87-90) Questions with given answers are easier to measure in a diagram and to make comparisons with other questions. The main part of the data collection is conducted through questionnaires.

The questionnaire (see appendix 2) had a short introduction with a presentation of the author, about the study and its purpose of research in French. It then stated how the answers would be used in the study. Questions about age, sex, occupation and city followed. The respondents were first asked four questions about Absolut Vodka as an introduction part (see appendix 2, questions 1-3). This is partly to interest the respondent in answering the questionnaire, but also to test the statement that it is popular because of marketing strategy with the shape of the bottle and not their origin itself. This will also test if anyone outside Sweden sees Absolut as a Swedish symbol. Next section in the questionnaire handles buying behaviour with six questions (see appendix 2, questions 4-9) where five concerns the COE (see appendix 2, questions 7-11). This was to test theory and see what the French consumers perceptions are of COE and their behaviour. Then followed the section Sweden as a brand with nine questions (see appendix 2 questions 10-17). These questions aim to find out more about COE when it comes to the chosen country, Sweden. The last part of the questions was regarding Swedish brands with seven questions (see appendix 2, questions 18-24). The consumers could here relate to Swedish brands and they were also given the opportunity to explain what they thought about a couple of well-known brands that they can purchase in France. Lastly there was an opportunity for the respondent to add comments. The respondents were then thanked one more time for participating and given the possibility to receive a copy of the study if they would like to when it had been written and approved. If there was something unclear in the response, the participant was asked to explain further and to try and define the answer. Furthermore all quotes taken from the filled in questionnaires or from the interviews and presented in this study are reproduced in their original shape including spelling and wording.

The Swedish brands mentioned in the questionnaire derived from information that had emerged from the early conversations with French consumers it was possible to create a questionnaire that worked. The interviewees were asked to list Swedish brands. They were then disposed to strong Swedish company names, brands and products and they were then given then asked to freely associate feelings, words etcetera to the Swedish brands. The Swedish brands and Swedish products that came up during the interviews can be viewed in the figure 2.7 Swedish brands & Swedish products below.
There are two types of data, primary data and secondary data. Primary data is new data collected by the researcher while secondary data has been collected by someone else and has already been presented. It is important to relate the research to previously conducted research and to compare results and analyses to this. (Halvorsen 1992: 72) The primary data was carried out by qualitative interviews as well as quantitative questionnaires.

Quantitative methods were chosen in the form of standardised interviews with interview guides to collect data from verbal statements and a questionnaire (Halvorsen 1992: 78). The responses from the questionnaires and interviews measure attitudes and perception and they were used as a source of primary data in this study. The primary data was then compared with theory and interpreted in the interpretation part.

2.2.7 Final Phase - End Interviews

After interpreting the returned questionnaires, I wanted to investigate more in-depth to verify my findings and to understand what the consumers think. In order to do this, it was necessary to make an additional study. This study helped to verify and structure theories retrieved from the initial and secondary phase. When I was interpreting the outcomes of the empirical data collected and theories further questions emerged, I decided to verify them by doing one final interview to verify the concluding assumptions deriving from the survey that will be the basis of establishing a theory.
personal face-to-face interview. This was recorded on tape so that I could listen to the interview again if needed. In this interview, new questions were asked to clarify statements made by the consumers in the questionnaires and to address new questions that had emerged during the interpretation. Responses in the interview verified the earlier raised questions and statements, there was no need to continue with the research and this third study became an end interview and represents the final phase.

2.3 Validity & Reliability

Validity and reliability are used to validate the research. To increase the validity of the collected primary data, there need to be a clear definition and connection with the theoretical references and the empirical collected data. The data needs to be relevant to the research, valid and it has to be reliable. (Halvorsen 1992: 41-43) I have used figure 2:4 to connect the purpose to keywords that stream down the empirical research and then form the core parts of the theoretical review. The survey questions derived as well from the keywords.

There is a need for an operationalisation connection to see if the empirical phenomenon falls under a specific concept (Halvorsen 1992: 41-43). The Research Cycle figure 2:1 shows the cycle of how the study was structured: the empirical approach, the results and then the interpretation. This model together with the keyword figure 2.4 shows how there was a plan for the structuring.

An inductive study means that a reality is approached without precise hypotheses. This is done to learn more about the general picture of a phenomenon and not to try the validity of chosen theories. In order to try the validity of chosen theories a precise problem statement is needed. (Halvorsen 1992: 41-43) In the process of understanding the quality-perception process of French consumers the understanding was built on phases responding to a hermeneutic spiral. Each phase validated the previous one and further study phases would have continued if the third study had not verified the previous ones and validated them. If new and considerable different information had emerged in the now final phase, a continued study would have had to be carried out.

If there is a high reliability in a study, it means that someone else could make similar measurements of data and the same results would be found. It is important that the collected data is relevant for the posed research questions. This is also why it could be difficult to use secondary data collected by other researchers. To try the reliability, data could be collected at different occasions; this means that the outcome of the initial phase and the secondary phase should be similar and validated through the end-interview. It should also be possible to conduct the same study in a similar cross-national way with another nationality of the consumers. This would increase the reliability of the study and its process of understanding.

The interviews made via telephone were verified through letting the interviewee get a chance to review the summarised interview.
3 Theoretical Review

This chapter is a review of relevant and existing theory aiming to give a theoretical
background of three keywords: consumers, perception, brands and country of origin. The
chapter ends with a summary of the theory followed by a discussion which leads to a model
that provides an overview of theories and it can help to filter through existing theories.

3.1 Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups
select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs
and desires.” (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard 1999: 8) Values, beliefs and customs are
established through social and cultural influences. These essential factors are influencing a
consumer’s purchasing decision and the impact has to be considered and understood in every
international market. (Doole & Lowe 2000: 91-95) There is a risk that what a consumer does
will inflict on his or her behaviour and generate consequences. (Snoj, Pisnik Koda & Mumel,
2004) We learn by the flow of information that reaches our five senses: sight, hearing, smell,
touch and taste. The same stimulus could lead to people forming different perceptions. There
are three perceptual processes: selective attention, a tendency to screen out information;
selective distortion, the marketers need to understand the consumers’ mind-sets; selective
retention, people forget things and recall those things that support their attitudes and beliefs.
(Kotler & Armstrong 2001: 186-189)

A widely recognised model describing how people in general prioritise their needs that are
leading to their behaviour is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (see figure 3.1 adapted from
Maslow 1954). Maslow suggested that a human has five levels of needs: 1) Physiological
needs, 2) Safety needs, 3) Social needs, 4) Self-esteem and 5) Self-actualisation. When the
needs are being satisfied on one level, the next one becomes important. (Maslow 1954)

![Figure 3.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1954)]
According to Doole & Lowe (2000: 91) Maslow’s pyramid of needs can be influenced on two levels. On one level, one need does not have to be assured before the next step in the pyramid and on another level diverse products can satisfy related needs. For instance one person in one country may starve himself or save up on food so that he/she can by his/her family a refrigerator and by that assure one need instead of the next step. Another example given is that a Hindu might have a need for self-realisation meaning abandoning all worldly belongings.

### 3.1.1 Attitudes

A consumer’s attitudes would make him/her less open towards new information if it does not correspond to them. Hoyer & McInnis (2001: 71) described that it will then be possible for the consumer to process the new information and reflect over the difference, similarities, features and advantages. Furthermore Hoyer and McInnis (2001: 92-95) define perception as a process where the incoming stimuli activate the five senses. In a cross-cultural perspective, vision and taste can have a large effect on consumers’ taste for a product (Hoyer & McInnis 2001: 92-95). Taste is also important in this perspective, and it is important to when consider marketing food or beverages (Hoyer & McInnis 2001: 92-95). An example of this is that coke tastes different depending on the country/region it is being sold in. This is to adapt it to the particular taste of the target group.

Values can be shared within one generation while another generation has got different values. Hoyer & McInnis (2001: 426) highlight that it is essential to recognise and understand consumer values since it affects consumption patterns, marketing segmentation and product development are important factors in understanding the consumer.

### 3.1.2 Buying behaviour

The activity of buying depends on the individual. In some cultures, consumers might have to consider their families and not only themselves before making any decisions. Doole & Lowe (2000: 91) describes the buying behaviour of a family in the Western world differs from an Asian family. However, consumer’s behaviour can be influenced by institutions e.g the government, charities, religions, trade unions and educational establishments which may be similar in different countries and cultures but differ regarding the level of influence. Linn (2002: 141-152) argues that rational values and thoughts seldom would dominate an individuals buying behaviour.

There are some undependable differences to consider, such as the consumer involvement, the perceived risk and cognitive style. Doole and Lowe (2000: 91-95) write that consumer involvement comprises of consumption for social or symbolic value and status. Perceived risk can be connected to buying a product and the consumers are likely to try new products and services. There may be a physical, social or financial risk. The attitude towards brand loyalty also affects the perceived risk. A consumer in the US would most likely shift from one brand to another since the standard buyer behaviour is disloyalty to brands, making it easy for new entrants. However in Australia and South East Asia, there is a larger need for brand security and consumers are more loyal to brands not willing to take any risks. There are different types of buying behaviour, something that Assael (1987 in Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong 2002:212) shows in his diagram where they depends on the level of involvement from the consumer and how it relates to differences between brands (see figure 3.2 below adapted from Assael 1987 in Kotler et al. 2002: 212).
A person’s knowledge of a brand’s functions, performance and price together with the person’s awareness is cognitive. (Ambler 1997) Western consumer behaviour models assume a logical buying process with rational steps including, the formation of awareness, the searching for information, reviewing the information, evaluating alternatives and finally making a choice. Asian consumers tend to have a quite different cognitive style to Western consumers. The Chinese as well as the Japanese have a more synthetic, concrete and contextual orientation in their thought patterns, as opposed to the Americans who tend to have a more analytical and abstract decision-making process. Thus culture not only impacts on how we behave as consumers but on the whole decision-making process. (Doole & Lowe 2000: 91-95)

Usunier (1996) argues that international marketers should question if the consumer buying process is consistent across cultures and if the buying process is an individualistic activity in all countries. Religion, history, education and language are cultural forces sending indirect and direct cultural messages to consumers regarding choosing products and services and it affects the decision process (Doole & Lowe 2000: 90). Usunier (1993: 47) lists different sources of culture in his model ‘Sources of culture’ (see figure 3.3 adapted from Usunier 1993: 47). Culture as an influencer should be taken under consideration. The model not only considers sources of culture but also influencers on purchase and behaviour.
Different processes in making a choice are likely to take account of country of origin. Classification can be made as to how consumers reason before buying, during buying and after buying. (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy 2000) A purchase could depend on different reasons for choices as O’Shaughnessy (1987) suggests:

1. picking, e.g. a cigarette from a cigarette pack  
2. affect-driven choice, connected to what you like, feel, smell or sound  
3. habit, keep buying the same thing, the COO could have influenced the initial purchase  
4. choices based on singular evaluation  
5. decisions involving trade-offs

### 3.2 Perception

Perception is described as “the process by which people select, organize and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world”. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001: 186)

A perceived value or quality is an aspect of brand value and it may influence a consumer in choosing a certain brand. One way of enhancing a brand could be through using design as a competitive advantage in parallel to market and claim quality and value in a product. (Baldauf, A., Cravens, K.S., & Binder, G., 2003) Preferences in a brand and its benefits, is important for a consumer and his or her choice. This could also be connected to a certain lifestyle and therefore knowledge about this can be used according to Orth, McDaniel, Shellhammer and Lopetcharat (2004) in addressing and persuading consumers to act in a certain way. Customer perceived value is a concept that is important in marketing and it has sometimes been neglected. (Snoj, B., Pisnik Korda, A. & Mumel, D., 2004)

#### 3.2.1 Perceived Value

A value is what a consumer obtains through a purchase of a product, while it can also be the leverage between the consumer’s perceived advantages and sacrifices. (Ravald & Grönroos 1996 referring to Monroe 1991 and Engel & Blackwell 1992). Value can also be seen as what consumers are willing to pay for something (Linn 2002).

There are a few factors that together would create value which would lead to consumption. The value for a consumer is related to the perception of the consumer and it is also a balance between perceived advantages and sacrifices that would lead to a purchase. Consumers have the tendancy to concentrate the value of a product to quality and price. Price is also a part of the sacrifices that a consumer make in a purchase, which could have a negative influence. (Snoj, Pisnik Korda & Mumel 2004)

Perceived value can be connected to a certain situation. Ravald and Grönroos (1996) mention an example where a car breaks down and the only alternative is an expensive garage. The car drives from A to B and breaks down on arrival. This can be perceived as either a car of low quality value, but it could also be seen as a situation of high value since the car’s mission is accomplished.

Some products and brands are manufactured by the same producer and it might not be clear who owns the product. One good example of this is the one of Maybeline with a ‘New York’ profile but French L’Oréal owns it. If a consumer finds out that a product/brand is made by the same producer as a competing product and/or brand, or in fact a whole product category, they may play a role for the products value. The only difference between the products could be the product name/brand to create competitive advantages. This is something that could be
seen as devastating if consumers realise it. (Schultz 2004) There is investment in design made today to compete on the market and to build competitive advantage (Saab in Kotler et al. 2002: 468).

Value is divided into functional and emotional value. Performance, lifestyle, celebrity and geographical origin are phenomena related to values associated to a brand. The functional value is not as important as it used to be, it is rather emotions for a certain brand as well as the belief and admiration surrounding a brand. Lindstrom (2003: 81) discussed this and holds that the emotional value plays just as big part when it comes to a brand. Linked to this is also the perceived admiration that emerges if wearing a certain brand as people strive for status in the society.

Ambler (1997) describes influencers as people with an attitude to brands that affect other people; this is without buying or selling brands and products. Good examples of influencers are famous people such as Sienna Miller (in movies such as Alfie) and Kate Moss (supermodel) are fashionistas that are influencing people with their sense of fashion and ability to create trends out of expensive brands or less expensive high street fashion labels. It should be kept in mind that a product offer with low perceived value, sold in a growing market, offers high potential (Evans 2002).

3.2.2 Perceived Risk

Kapferer (2004: 20) said that brands exist as soon as there is perceived risk, they can also reduce perceived risk. Perceived risk can be defined as the extent of uncertainty a consumer has about the consequences of an action for example buying, using and/or disposal of a product. There are high and low involvement products; high involvement products are for instance cars, homes and computers, while cookies and coffee stands for low involvement products. Hoyer and McInnis (2001: 67-71) develop the perception of risk so as to convince the consumer with for example pointing out good aspects about taking a risk that might be a good choice on a long-term basis. Furthermore the perceived risk differs within a culture and across cultural groups. The authors describe this, as it can be high if the offer has got little information and is new or expensive. Risks are perceived differently by consumers: performance, financial, physical, social, time invested and psychological concern of how a product will fit to their perception of themselves.

3.2.3 Perceived Quality

The perception of value is linked to perceived quality. The consumer’s assessment of value in a product comes partly from their perception of product quality but also from price, image and brand perceptions. (Snoj, Pisnik Korda & Mumel 2004) Perceived quality is a key to future performance (Ambler 1997) and purchase decisions and brand loyalty are directly influenced by perceived quality (Aaker 1991: 19).

However Snoj, Pisnik Korda and Mumel (2004) suggest through their research that perceived quality should be seen as a factor associated with attributes rather than being the attribute itself. The perception of quality comes from the consumer’s knowledge about and experience of a brand and/or product. The authors stress how important it is not to exclude objective quality or perceived quality since they are related and therefore neither should be neglected. In the end it is up to the consumer and his/her opinion about a product’s and/or brand’s quality and whether they mix perception of image, brand and product performance and characteristics. Marketers need to put emphasis on consumer perception of quality and not only see to technical construction and engineering to communicate the right quality message to the consumers. Furthermore the authors points out that it is important to integrate service
elements of the “product” with the development of the brand and not to overlook it. Lessons can be drawn from techniques and strategies in service marketing in order to profit from the perceived quality with consumers.

3.3 Brands

The word brand comes from marking or “branding” of cattle giving them a stamp of origin with a hot iron. Brand stands for burn-mark, which this mark actually was. A brand can be something that is noted graphically to distinguish one product from another and/or can emerge through being established on the market or through registration (Melin 1999a: 29-33). Trademarks can today include words, symbols and shape for example (De Chernatony & McDonald 2003: 33) Brands are being used by individuals to show off wealth, interests, values and lifestyle. The consumers choose brands that they consider meet needs. (Melin 1999a: 29-33)

"the brand is the result of a coherent marketing approach which uses all elements of the marketing mix" (De Chernatony & McDonald 2003: 21)

Marks have been used to show origin and producer, something that facilitated trade around the Mediterranean Sea (Melin 1999a: 20-26). It has been found that branding was used in Greek and Roman times. Shopkeepers had pictures above their door showing the products they sold. In the middle ages, specialised craftsmen used marks and symbols to put their names on things they sold, which became the beginning of trademarks and were to become a guarantee for the product’s origin. (De Chernatony & McDonald 2002: 32-33) Consumers started to have a demand for products from the same producer and with the same origin. They had developed a demand for what a brand today would stand for. (Melin 1999a: 20-26)

A consumer’s choice of brand depends partly on the brand’s perceived value and its advantages and partly on a certain lifestyle. Information about this can be used to address and persuade consumers into acting a certain way. (Orth et al. 1994) Brands give a certain feeling to branded people, to them the experience of owning a product of a certain brand is essential rather than the actual product features gives them a certain value. An identity is being bought into where beauty is a factor through which the brand can satisfy a need but also make clear the position of the brand. (Quart 2003: 23; Björkman 1998: 79) Developing and building a brand name’s reputation is being referred to as branding. Consumer segments must be understood and a brand is created to satisfy the needs/wants of these segments. (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 256) This powerful marketing concept represents a range of activities derived from the whole marketing mix, to create added value with the consumer (Kapferer 2004: 96).

Brands are intangible, conditional assets according to Kapferer (2004: 10) and they should be used as an adjective, never as a noun for instance it is a Volvo car not a Volvo. Brand assets are brand awareness, the form of relationship with the consumer and patents. It is the learnt mental associations and affects. Associations to a brand are important; Volvo is associated as being a highly safe car while Absolut Vodka is fashionable vodka. (Kapferer 2004: 13) A person who perceives a value through a product or a brand is branded (Quart 2003).

“… a brand is a friend, and you don’t tamper with what it means to people.”

Associating an object with a product attribute or a characteristic will help position your product on the market. (see figure 3.4 adapted from Aaker 1991: 115) These kinds of
associations are positive since this will give the consumer reasons for purchasing or not purchasing brands. Aaker (1991: 114-117) mentions that Volvo has for instance associated its brand to durability and showing how long their cars last while BMW is talking about performance. The competitive advantage in this strategy is to find an attribute not claimed by a competitor and that reaches a large market segment. However it is important not to overdo it with the attributes since this can create confusion.

Historical associations and the heritage of a brand should be recognized and used in the marketing of a product if this is an association that appeal to people. It is important not to mess about with a brand’s meaning to consumers. (Aaker 1991: 117) It is a mixture of what makes a brand different, its value or values, its competence and ability to make itself recognised. It is about being itself about having different goals from other brands and being resistant to change. (Kapferer 2004: 96)

Functions that a brand can fulfill are: carrier of information, guarantee, catalyst or image creator. Carrier of information, suggests that a brand has got an individualisation and identifying function and gives the consumer information about price, function and quality of the product. Guarantee means the assurance that the brand and its products are keeping an even quality. As a catalyst, the consumer gets a possibility to experiment and find their favourite. A brand can have a symbolic value that plays a big role for the image of a brand, that is the function of the brand as an imagecreator. These functions can contribute to the creation of value with the consumer through information about price, quality and function for a product. Information about a product’s price, quality and function can be found through a brand’s identity and individualistic ability and it makes it possible for the consumer to compare products and learn about the market. (Melin 1999b: 110-112) Brands can be evaluated in different ways and estimated mostly through price and money (Linn 2002: 119).

Individuals are using brands when they want to show wealth, interests, values and lifestyle and they choose brands that they think would meet their needs. Doyle (2002: 161) describes this as a dynamic process, where self-esteem, self-fulfilment and belonging are seen as a physical or economic need. Brands can be associated with social and economic risks. A
A competitor may copy a product, but the brand itself is unique. A product can also become out of date while the brand itself is timeless.

A branded product consists of two parts: the product and the brand, where the brand is the most persistent part. A brand could have existed for years, while its products are a part of an innovation process. An important goal is to attract brand loyal consumers with a long-term value-added product. (Melin 1999b: 109-112)

There is a symbolic value in a brand that is important for its image. Image is central for the brand and creates a picture of who the consumer is and what his/her message to others is. It is possible to reach self-fulfilment and social status. It can also be another product’s brand-image. (Dimbleby & Burton 1999: 281) Brand image can be defined as the beliefs of the consumer about a specific brand (Kotler et al. 2002: 218).

### 3.4 Brand Equity

Behaviour, market shares and price are components that inflict on brand equity. If the first two components were stable, this would let managers to think of possible improvements. It is important not to ignore consumers’ mental state since knowing what changes behaviour makes it easier to employ the marketing mix to this change. (Ambler 1997)

Brand equity is defined by Aaker (1991) as: “Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers.” (Aaker 1991: 15-21) Furthermore if assets and liabilities are to cause brand equity, they ought to be connected to the name and/or symbol of the brand. Should this name or symbol change in anyway, this could affect the assets and liabilities. Ambler (1997) suggests that it is an intangible asset created through marketing and not a financial measurement and he refers to brand equity as a “…key to the evaluation of marketing performance, exists in the hearts and minds of consumers and other marketplace players, but is largely assessed on the basis of observed behaviours.” (Ambler 1997: 283)

Aaker (1991: 15-16) groups the assets and liabilities into five categories:

1. Brand loyalty
2. Name awareness
3. Perceived quality
4. Brand associations in addition to perceived quality
5. Other proprietary brand assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships.

Brand equity can be seen as a meaning of brand-consumer relationships and should be considered a relational market-based asset. This is a result of external relationships between a brand and other parts of the value chain, leading to an external asset to the company that emerges from brand associations and behaviours. (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2005) When positive associations are created in the mind of the consumer, it can lead to brand equity (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard 2002: 71). It is important to realise that an understanding for the consumer is essential in order to understand how to create brand equity (Linn 2002: 161).

In Kotler et al. (2002: 466-468) is brand equity being described as the value of a brand and it is based on wheather it has high loyalty or a perceived quality. High brand equity could lead to competitive advantages, and a high level of a consumer brand awareness and loyalty.
Brand equity is further being defined by Baldauf, Cravens & Binder (2003) as brand assets and liabilities that are being linked to a brand or to its symbol or name. Moreover there are three notions that could be drawn; the awareness of a brand, the perceived quality and the brand loyalty. These factors have got an effect on price, distribution and advertising. They can also lead to two value components for the customer in form of perceived customer value and an intention to make a purchase. A perceived quality would compel a customer in buying a product and it can enhance the competitive advantages of a brand. Brand equity can also be used in the terms of brand image. Advertising develops a brand image which design help create (Meenaghan 1995).

A part of a brand image is brand name, something that can reveal product quality, efficiency and brand awareness. It can call for the consumers attention. A brand add value to consumers and society and increases innovation. In addition Orth et al. (2004) mention how design is a way to develope these features and to look for new ones as well as communicate information about products which may lead to an increase in sales. An image does not solely centre on taste or quality rather associations (Orth et al. 2004). Design will provide an excellent opportunity for a company to differentiate and positioning a product on the market. Design can be seen as an investment and lately it has been recognised by other companies and people as something that may increase brand and product image. Good design contributes to a certain image and look for a product and form will follow function. (Kotler et al. 2002: 468) Something that also should be highlighted is that a product has got a functional benefit, while a brand is a form of design, symbol or mark that will increase and create a value beyond functionality (Farquer 1989: 14, in Orth et al. 2004).

Quality can be considered when a customer returns but the products do not (Siemens in Kotler et al. 2002). Product features are another product attribute. A feature should be assessed on the basis of the customer value. A way to add customer value is with product style and design. Companies are aware of that and therefore they extend their competitive advantages by highlighting some product features. There is a strive for new and modern design features and not boring and poor touch and function. Good design can also enhance the usefullness of a product. (Kotler et al. 2002: 466-468)

The process of building a brand in the mind of the consumer (see figure 3.5 adapted from Melin 1999a: 50) creates and helps to sustain brand equity. It starts by involving the consumer in the branded product. There are two kind of involvement, low or high. Products with a low level of involvement, such as everyday commodities, require information to reach the consumer while products with a high level of involvement, such as computers, require the consumer to research information him/herself. An increased involvement can lead to price-sensitivity, which leads to brand-sensitivity. Brand owners would like for the consumer to have brand awareness that is being aware of the brands’ existence, so that he/she spontaneously would notice and buy the product. The consumer can also associate adverts, features, perceived quality and price to a product and its brand. It can also be important to create brand associations based on emotional values originating from lifestyle, performance, area of employment, celebrity endorsement or country-of-origin. (Melin 1999a: 48-50)

Positive brand associations help to create added value with the consumer, meaning that the consumer perceives and experiences the brand to have several appealing features and that it performs as expected. If this is what the consumer believes the brand to possess, he/she is likely to purchase the product again. (Melin 1999a: 48-51) When choosing branded products, the brand-sensitive consumer uses the brand as his/her main source of information. The consumer might keep to one brand and change little or never which could lead to the
consumer being *loyal* to the brand. (Melin 1999a: 48-51; Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 256) It is more expensive to get new customers than trying to keep the existing ones, since these customers may be satisfied or like the brand (Aaker 1991: 19).

Ambler (1997) argues that brand equity can only be described in a behavioural term. This since it can be measured and objectively observed however attitudinal measures do not correspond to behaviour because people may say that they are loyal to one brand but act differently. For instance a consumer may claim that he/she swears by Puma but yet he/she buys a pair of Adidas since they were on sale.

Trust is important when developing brand equity (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2005). Trust has got a part in the relationship between the brand and the consumer, which builds brand equity. Relationship with a brand can occur if a consumer wants to be connected with a certain brand leading to the consumer buying more products to satisfy him/her. It then depends on the number of people interested in the brand and what they are willing to pay for it. An increase of price may lead to the consumer perceiving the brand to exploit the consumer and take advantage of him/her. It takes a long time to build trust for a brand but it can be very easily destroyed. (Ambler 1997) There is high probability or/and expectancy that a brand will be positive to a consumer if there is a lot of trust in the picture. When the consumer believes that a brand has specific qualities, he/she reads into it honesty, responsibility, consistency as well as competency. (Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Alemán 2005) Trust may help in the understanding of brand equity through providing a way of predicting performance and assessment of brand equity that can be a function of brand-consumer relationships. If customers are satisfied, trust will build up and it may lead to success but it can also be created after success or become a habit. (Ambler 1997)
3.5 Country-of-Origin Effect (COE)

In international marketing cultural differences amongst customer and stakeholder groups creates a variety of perceptions and behaviour (Mühlbacher, Dahringer & Leihs, 2002: 170-173). In a global market where it is increasingly difficult to establish a sustainable competitive advantage (Baker & Ballington 2002), it is essential to define and comprehend these cultural differences that have an affect on taste and preferences (Mühlbacher, Dahringer & Leihs, 2002: 170-173). It is vital to be aware of how a market’s scope extends beyond that of a product and its primary functions; factors that should be recognised when developing products for international markets (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 317).

Acting in an international arena is about understanding your customer and cultural background from which he/she originates. Confusion on this level may cause loss of market shares and customer confidence in a company. To succeed with worldwide operations, it is fundamental to be sensitive to the cultural needs of markets and organisations in foreign countries. To emphasis, as a company it is important to understand your consumer and keep in mind your key customer group wherever they may be. (McAuley 2001: 56-60) For instance Japanese women did not like the fact that Coke launched its diet product as Diet Coke. Diet Coke reminded them about dieting, which can also be seen as sickness or stressing weight loss. The company changed the name to Coke Light in Japan and several other European countries. (Ghauri & Cateora 2006: 318) Attitudes towards products and behaviour occur within the framework of a culture. It is important to specify the role that a culture plays in the company, to its products or in the relevant market since it could influence business success (Mühlbacher, Dahringer & Leihs 2002: 170).

It is crucial to consider how a country’s image is being perceived by the target market and what consumers associate with it, when deciding about where to manufacture a product. The concept of Product-Country-Image (PCI), emerged from a discussion of consumers’ higher perception of manufactured products in more economically developed countries (Papadopoulos & Heslop 1993). Marketers should not underestimate the value of a country. This is a notion that should be considered when creating a brand from its initial phase, where should the brand be manufactured and where should people perceive it to have been manufactured. (Lindstrom 2005)

There is an increase in using PCI as a marketing methodology due to globalised competition. Products with standardised core features can be made almost anywhere and so it is therefore common practise that marketers use country association to differentiate their brand from competitors. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002) There has been a boost in consumer awareness of foreign countries and their products. This is to some extent a reaction to influences such as the media, desire to travel, education and increased imports, confirming product country image as a purchase criterion. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002) Another example is where a brand has an image originating from a pseudo country such as Maybeline from L’Oreal, it origins from a French company but has an urban chic NY image. (McAuley 2000: 164)

The perception of a country and a stereotype is formed through time. Transformations over time are not likely to happen unless extensive change in international markets, politics, society and economics. (Papadopoulos & Heslop 1993) These changes on a macro-level are of importance and can affect the international marketing from domestic companies (Klein, Etenson & Morris 1998). Studies show that product class level, brand level and global level demonstrate that stereotypes are phenomena that exist on different levels and in all classes even though image could differ. (Laroche et al. 2005) A product manufactured in Japan during the 1950s would have meant a cheap reproduction or rip-off; while today, “Made in
Japan” means high-tech products which conjure up with high quality conjures up connotations all connected to high quality (Lampert & Jaffe 1998).

The formation of images relies on perception and stereotyping, where an entire group of products and objects may be generalised as a direct or indirect consequence. It is common to use stereotypes, a biased image often prejudicial, when referring to a country’s national image (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2000). Stereotypes occur when information or events are confirmed repeatedly and contribute to how the world is perceived. (Papadopolous & Heslop 2002) Lindstrom (2005) describes an example with Denmark, where “Made in Denmark” conveys an assortment of superior design while a term such as “European appliances” no added value to most Danish consumers unlike Australian consumers. (Lindstrom 2005)

Studies have portrayed that when consumers evaluate a product they rely on the “Made-in” labelling (Papadopolous & Heslop 1993). Lindstrom (2005) advises that as a company it is at the up most importance to map the value of ones brand and what it stands for, hence as stated before it is essential to discuss and decide the product’s ‘Made in’ label, where should it be manufactured or where should the consumer perceive it as being manufactured (Papadopolous & Heslop 1993). Many perfume labels place Paris, Milan or London on their bottles although the perfume might have been bottled in Helsinki or Prague for the seemingly simple reason that the label might give them a sense of quality and tradition. (Lindstrom 2005)

O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy (2000) argue that the image of a nation is linked to the social concept of a nation which is impacting on a brand’s applicability to a nation. Despite this a nation cannot be considered a product it consists of inhabitants of a determined area that share a common culture, values and beliefs. Following this, according to Niss (1996) the consumer’s image of the country of origin is either cognitive such as socio-economic, cultural and political or affective such as feelings and attitudes to a country (Niss 1996).

Usunier (2000: 249) lists different meanings of the made in image and not just the national image of the manufacturing company. It can also be national images of generic products such as yoghurt from the Balkans, perfume from France and jeans would be connected to the United States. An essential factor to be mentioned is that the image of the ‘made in’ label in the sense of the manufacturing origin is legally appended to the product; origin labelling is mandatory in international trade. Min Han (1990) suggests from his studies that a greater emphasis should be put on country image, if the country of origin is a developed country. It is important to find the communication and teach consumers about the products and the fact that they are worth considering.

The figure 3.6 (see below figure adapted from Usunier 2000: 249) brings up different directions to product image and takes into consideration the global image of products in terms of domestic goods and foreign goods but also country or country based and country related images of the generic product. Apart from that the model also addresses the corporate image diffused by the producer, brand image and made in related product image.
3.6 Summary of the Theoretical Review

The activity of buying depends on the individual. In some cultures, consumers might have to consider their families and not only themselves before making any decisions.

Values, beliefs and customs are established through social and cultural influences. These essential factors are influencing consumers’ purchasing decision and their impacts have to be considered and understood in every international market.

A perceived value or quality is an aspect of brand value and it may influence a consumer in choosing a certain brand. Customer perceived value is a concept that is important in marketing and it has sometimes been neglected.

Marketers need to put an emphasis on consumer perception of quality and not only see to technical construction and engineering to communicate the right quality message to the consumers.

A consumer’s choice of brand depends partly on the brand’s perceived value and its advantages and partly on a certain lifestyle. Information about this can be used to address and persuade consumers into acting a preferred way.

Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities that are linked to a brand, its name and symbol. Associating an object with a product attribute or a characteristic will help position a product on the market. These kinds of associations are positive since they will give the consumer reasons for purchasing brands.
In international marketing, cultural differences amongst customer and stakeholder groups create a variety of perceptions and behaviour.

The formation of images relies on perception and stereotyping, where an entire group of products and objects may be generalised as a direct or indirect consequence.

“Made in X” in Europe conveys a perception of specific associations to that country area whereas “European appliances” would not as the term holds no added value to a specific European country but another continent would perceive European appliances as superior to Made in X European country.

“Made in …” stands for different things: “manufactured-“, “assembled-“, “designed-“ or “invented-in”, “made by a producer whose domicile is in”, and “wanting to look like it was made-in …”

It is important to map the value of ones brand and what it stands for, hence it is essential to discuss and decide the product’s ‘made in’ label, where should it be manufactured or where should the consumer perceive it as being manufactured etcetera.

### 3.7 Theory Discussion

This theory review can be summarised in one figure (see figure 3.7) created to illustrate the interrelation between a brand and a consumer as well as the influence chain on the consumer’s perception that would lead to purchase.

The international market comprises of different markets, countries and cultures. Going international or global means making decisions related to your product and its ability to fit a new market. It can be decisions about adjusting to culture and to the inhabitants’ lifestyle, habits or behaviour. When developing a product on an international market, a company may have to adapt their decisions to the country they enter. Legislation can also vary between markets and countries.

If looking at the exchange process between the business and the consumer, it is about knowing and understanding your customer and it is all about creating, communicating and delivering a value to the consumer. This is done through a product, a product category and a brand. This exchange process is partly shown by the interaction but also the company’s effort or attempt to reach out for the consumers, while the consumers are trying to satisfy their needs. The needs are those that can be found in “Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” (see figure 3.1), where the ranking depends on goals, culture or country of the single consumer.

The influencers are actors more or less present in the international market, they should be considered and they may influence or they may be influenced to change the perceptions of the consumers. They can influence the consumers, but also the brand. External influencers such as culture, images, celebrities, media would influence the consumers, but also the factors of the EPISTLE and the Country of Origin Effect. The consumer can be influenced by the surroundings, which leads to perceptions and influences behaviour and purchase. The steps in an EPISTLE analysis: the macro-environment scanning model, political, economical, social, technological, environmental, information and legal can be used to scan the environment for influencers but also as influencing factors to the consumer in one way or another. Media and celebrities are also great influencers to the consumer. Consumers are influenced by their attitudes, values, needs and demand. Their behaviour or actions lead to consequences and the
way consumers associate to products; brands and their surroundings will also have an affect on the purchase and the perception of something.

The external actors that can influence on a brand are the company that owns the brand, their finances and their wishes. It can be competitors launching a new product on the same market, like for instance Pepsi Cappuccino and Coke Blâke in France beginning of 2006. Internally they would have influencers that could influence consumers to a purchase, with a brand or product in focus. Other influencers are the company itself, competitors, the vendor’s strategy and marketing strategy, positioning, methods and other factors such as the 4Ps (product, price, place and promotion) need to be considered. Some influencers create a brand and differentiate it, they present it so that it would catch the buyer’s attention and create a competitive advantage.

It is important to respond and to be coherent to trends, and evolution in the market. A brand can also be a part of the attraction and not only part of the product itself and its functions. For instance by appealing to the patriotic side of a consumer through emphasis on the country of origin. The right ‘made in’ label can play a great role in marketing. Culture has to be considered when going international to be able to reach consumers across nations. The figure Sources of culture (see figure 3.3) shows different factors involved in the term culture. It gives us a broad perspective of influencers to the customer, but also to the business environment.

The country of origin is an important influencer in a consumer’s perception process of a product, a product category or a brand. The product country image can influence the consumer to purchase. If the product has got a good country image and this image is relevant for the product when going international and if the country you enter has a positive perception of the country of origin, then it is ok or even recommended to use the country of origin as an association for a product, a product category or a specific brand. These factors are and can be influenced through different players in the environment, perceptions and product categories. Referring to the different factors of an EPISTEL analysis, these factors can influence and/or have an impact on the purchase behaviour or perception of a product/ a product category and a brand. It should be pointed out that it is not recommended to solely base the marketing on this particular association but to develop other associations with the consumer to persuade him/her to buy the product. This is to try to avoid influences from the environment such as economical roller coasters in the country of origin.

How consumers associate and recall different aspects of a brand can also be seen as an influencer in creating a perception of value, risk or quality. In Aaker’s model ‘Brand Associations’ (see figure 3.4) he lists different associations from a consumer perspective. If the consumer recognises one of these associations, he/she might also be influenced by it. A brand can be associated to different attributes such as appearance, design and performance that specifically relates to the brand but also to the country of origin and the product country image. Either of these attributes could provide competitive advantage and generate a perceived value that is part of its brand equity. Other aspects influencing consumers are celebrities and price. The consumer forms attitudes that together with needs, demands and emotions at the moment of purchase will play a role in the perception and behaviour. This can furthermore lead to loyalty from the consumer’s side towards the brand.

In the process of creating a brand and to manage brand equity, the different steps of Melin’s model: “The brand creating process in the mind of the consumer” (see figure 3.5) The understanding of brand equity and consumer behaviour is essential in defining and
understanding a consumer’s view of a product, a product category and a brand. The associations, attitudes and behaviours linked to the brand are the bits and pieces that the consumer uses in his/her product evaluation.

Influencers in the international and domestic markets influence the consumer into perceiving a product, a product category or a brand in a specific way. It may be the situation or an emotional moment that makes the choice for the consumer. Different factors single or combined influence and make the consumer perceive the value, quality and risk of a product or a brand, which is a part of their evaluation before it leads to a purchase.

The Perception Chain (see figure 3.7) summarises and structures actors, influencing factors and interrelation between brands and consumers on the international market. It makes it easier to investigate further and use existing theories when filtering into practice. Being able to see the chain of influencers and interrelation with different aspects of influencers gives an understanding of purchase behaviour.

3.7.1 The Perception Chain

![The Perception Chain diagram](image-url)

*Figure 3.7 The Perception Chain (own)*
4 Initial Empirical Phase

This chapter presents the initial phase of the empirical research. This initial phase of the consumer survey consists of two interviews were held to define questions and establish an interview guide. The chapter is divided into three parts: empirical research, interpretation and next steps.

4.1 First Interviews

4.1.1 Introduction & Buying Habits

The interviewees link their buying behaviour to quality and price. They are buying products from countries where the products have a good reputation in the country, for instance pasta and shoes made in Italy and wine from France. They also buy brands in which they can trust. Buying behaviour is based on perceived quality.

“...it depends on my quality perception” interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

Neither of the interviewees thinks of Absolut Vodka as a Swedish brand. One of them mentioned that it was not a surprise to learn that Absolut Vodka is Swedish. The respondent would not care in particular about the origin of vodka and would not mind vodka from Sweden as long as it tastes good. Furthermore vodka is mostly associated with Russia or Poland. The same person pointed out that Swedish vodka is supposed to be the best vodka and that it is good for shots and should not be mixed.

“If I want to mix the vodka I won't take Absolut! Absolut is good enough to take shot”

pilot interviewee, Paris

4.1.2 Country of Origin Effect

When asked how the interviewee perceived and associated the origin of a product, one interviewee answered that origin means quality because those producers are supposed to have a long traditional experience with the product. This would be proof of an obvious quality, which would lead to purchase. An example was given that French people are known for being proud about their country, language, way of life and their notorious wine. In France you can hardly get wine from any other country, especially not from the new world for example Australian or Californian wine.

“I will associate the origin of a product with the reputation the original I have in my mind”

interviewee, Paris

One consumer did not believe that the country of origin label had high importance. The brand is more reliable than a country of origin label as you cannot trust that one country is the best producer of one product category. It is easier to measure the quality of a company. The other consumer pointed out that if you would like to purchase an African item, you would not buy something ‘African’ if it is made in Taiwan. A remark was made about COO that Asian products would be associated to mass production where the quality is not very good. However the consumer would still associate the product to the reputation of the COO.
“The origin I don’t care except if you exactly know what you want and you want quality”
interviewee, Paris

The origin of a product impacts the purchase decision. Both interviewees prefer to buy products and brands from France if they know that the origin is French. If there is a choice of products they would choose the one with a closer situated made in label. However both consumers said that they do not care about the origin of a product or a brand. It depends on what you buy and if you would like to buy quality. Despite this they made a remark about quality in connection to the origin of a product. Furthermore the same consumer pointed out that when buying a car, it would have to be of a French make.

“I won’t buy other car than French car…” interviewee Paris

The origin is attractive if linked to the consumer’s culture or education. If there are several countries to choose from, the respondents would prefer regional products then national and after that products coming from Europe if possible. However this does not apply if one country has got a tradition and is globally seen as the producer of a product or product category. A perceived savoir-faire (know how) of a particular product with a country is high on the list.

“I think I will be attracted by products which are linked to my culture and my education especially Mediterranean products.”
interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

4.1.3 Made in Sweden

With regards to Sweden as a country, the respondents perceive it to be a rich country with large well-known companies with new technologies such as Ericsson. There is a perception of a slight difference between France and Sweden regarding products. One respondent referred to France as holder of products more based on design and Sweden more on functionality and quality. The perception of products made in Sweden is that they are of good quality if they are produced in Sweden. Also the label Made in Sweden is reliable and implies good quality.

“the reputation of Swedish is to be good quality not fake.” interviewee Paris

The interviewees describe Sweden a cold but green country, with lakes and snow and where people feel good. It has got high levels of equality rights and a very comfortable style of living. Other associations to Sweden are IKEA, lakes, snow, sauna and blondes with blue eyes. One respondent mentioned that Swedish people seem cold and hard to get close to.

“cold country, but the people feel good” interviewee Paris

4.1.4 Swedish Brands

The interviewees were asked to list and describe Swedish brands and Swedish products that they could think of. They mentioned four brands that they said they liked very much; Ericsson, good quality but pricey mobile phones, IKEA, cheap but very nice furniture and accessories for houses, WASA nice bread and KRISPROLLS.

“…over all I like those Swedish brands…”
interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

When mentioning H&M the two consumers have differing opinions. One respondent does not think that French people know of H&M as a Swedish company, saying that the perception
would not change if they did, au contraire it is a pity that they do not mention it more. The other interviewee believes that people are aware of the clothing company is Swedish and says that it is good quality for the price you pay, adding that you get value for money when buying cloths from H&M.

Regarding the two Swedish cars makes Volvo and SAAB, they are too big for French people. Volvo is a safe and big Nordic car, but not so easy to park in Paris. Furthermore the interviewee states that one can only trust French and German cars.

IKEA plays well with its Swedish origin because the reputation of Swedish is good quality. Shops are the same in France as they are in Sweden. However the consumer would not buy IKEA because it is Swedish but because it is cheap for what it is.

The respondent was asked to recall any advertisements on television or in magazines referring to Sweden and to describe these. The respondent remembered all the KRISPROLLS advertisements and commented on them as being very funny, especially the one with the guy who is eating KRISPROLLS secretly and his wife calls him and he has to talk with his mouth full of KRISPROLLS. The tone of the advertisements are fun and out of the ordinary. The respondents mention advertisements for IKEA and then KRISPROLLS, a man hides for his wife that he eats KRISPROLLS with all possible ways.

Another remark was that there is few advertisements referring to Sweden as a vacation place and that French people would rather go to the sun and to places such as Tunisia, Greece and Martinique.

“Oh remember all the krisprolls advertising... so fun! Especially the one about an old guy who is eating in secret some of them. His wife is calling him and he has to talk with a full mouth”

interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

4.1.5 Quality

When asked if knowing a product is Swedish would change the perception of a product, one of the interviewees described that it was no surprise to learn Absolut is a Swedish brand. There is also a tendency towards a product perceived as having some characteristics that could change if there is a change that is making the reliability of the product tremble.

An aspect of quality was mentioned. Consumer perception could change if learning that a brand or a product with a very bad quality is Swedish. The interviewees buying behaviour depends on their quality perception.

“For example for Absolut when I learned it was Swedish I was not surprised. But for example knowing that something with a very bad quality is Swedish will maybe change my perception if it is in the bad way. If I buy an Ericsson mobile and it breaks after three weeks I will be surprised and it will change my perception of the product yes this mobile is shit.”

interviewee, Paris

“...a brand is more reliable than a country of origin label as you cant trust that all of a country is the best producer one product.

On the other hand, the quality of a company is easier to measure”

interviewee, Aix-en-Provence
4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 Buying behaviour

There is a contradiction in the two interviewees’ answers that highlights the level of involvement when making a purchase decision. The level of involvement depends on the purchase and so does the origin of the product linking to quality perception. If consumers perceive a product to come from a specific country, they also expect these products to be of highest quality or to be the original, best as you can get product.

“I trust in some brands for instance Barilla for tomato sauce”

*Interviewee, Aix-en-Provence*

Brands and products can also radiate trust with the respondents. This is not entirely linked to the origin of a product but to the brand and label. Another important factor in the buying behaviour is the confidence that the consumer holds towards a brand something that according to Aaker’s assets and liabilities (see chapter 3.4) adding or subtracting from a brand’s value. The trust that the consumer is referring to might be due to brand loyalty, name awareness or the perceived quality that the brand has created with the consumer. It can also be a result of a choice based on habit of purchasing the same brand or product. Habit is one of the five reasons for purchase choices that O’Shaughnessy (1987) listed (see chapter 3.1.2). There might have been a poor selection of brands in the local supermarket, which could have lead to a habit of buying a specific brand. Another reason is decision on trade-offs, which for instance it is not until later years that there has been an increase in the supermarkets’ own brands to choose from on the shelves. The feeling of trust can also be based on what has been longer on the market or what came first on the market. Moreover this indication of trust influences the perception of the COO of the producer and the brand.

4.2.2 Country of Origin Effect

There is a nationalistic approach in one of the comments made (see below quote) where the consumer gives an indication that regional goes before international. Buying a product from the own country is perceived as more beneficial.

“If I have to give my money to someone better if it helps my country”

*Interviewee, Paris*

Going back to the basics mentioned in the theory review, we know that the consumer is screening the information flow. With selective retention the consumers are forgetting things and recalling whatever supports their beliefs and attitudes while forming different perceptions. This means that the marketers need to understand the consumers’ mind-sets. Following this it can be discussed how the consumers perceive Swedishness in Swedish products, brands and companies. This can help us understand how the country of origin effect in terms of Swedishness work. For instance the consumers interviewed in the initial empirical phase are buying products from countries where the products have a good reputation. One consumer said that learning that something with very bad quality is Swedish might change the respondent’s perception.

Furthermore falling back on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (see figure 3.1 adapted from Maslow 1954) we can get an understanding of consumers’ needs and applying it on French consumers. To cover needs today the consumer has got several choices often depending on budget. This applies for instance for food and an interesting aspect is the choices the consumers make to cover step one in the pyramid. Covering this step could mean buying
bread, from this you can either choose to bake it and buy the ingredients, choose several types of bread which in France could mean choosing a baguette. Let’s say your type of bread is dry crisp bread, you will soon realise that there are several brands on the shelves and you have to make another decision. This is where your budget kicks in or any of the other steps in the pyramid might play a role. The respondents referred to KRISPROLLS when mentioning any advertisements with connections to Sweden. For the consumers, buying KRISPROLLS might be the safe choice if you perceive the brand to bring quality and be associated to quality products. So if you invite someone over on dry crisp bread, giving them KRISPROLLS, it might correspond to several steps on the pyramid. This degree of involvement in product evaluations was noted by D’Astous and Ahmed (1999) who claimed that the greater the involvement was the greater the likelihood of references to the COO in product evaluation.

In addition they might be looking at their and other people’s stereotypes of Scandinavian countries and applying to them to be socially accepted. Buying a Made in Sweden product might even raise their self-esteem if they perceive such a product to have a certain level of quality. Perceived quality can therefore both correspond to step two, as a safe choice but also step four, self-esteem.

This could be drawn to an image conscious society where a purchase might be based on and where the savoir-faire is the rule of buying. The French are renowned for their wine and own the savoir-faire of wine. There is an indication of people buying products from their own country, which could criticise this statement that being French, means buying wine from your own country first before considering wines from producers in other countries. The below quote indicates that savoir-faire and the origin are influencers and stand for a perception of quality caused by the inventor or inventing country, does this mean that all products made in a country are the priority purchase or is the country with savoir-faire the priority purchase?

“I buy generally products from countries where they have a reputation of being good: pasta from Italy, wine from France, shoes made in Italy.

Interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

The French have their lifestyle, relaxed working attitude and are social drinkers. The social fear factor of appearing below what is socially accepted can be if you have got a cheap brand or buying a lesser quality brand. French are somewhat nationalistic in their purchase behaviour when it comes to COO products. Aaker (1991: 19) argued that purchase decisions and brand loyalty are directly influenced by perceived quality. This can be seen in the earlier quote on Barilla for tomato sauce, where the customer relies on a specific brand for a specific product.

4.2.3 Made in Sweden

There is a clear link from the Made in Sweden label to quality and has got a good reputation. The interviewees declared that this label has got a good reputation. The perception of what a country stands for and the country of origin of a brand or/and product plays a role in marketing, in the brand and for the perception of a product. A company needs to decide on the “origin” of the made in label.

The origin of a product could be a sign of quality. Lindstrom (2005) pointed out that a made in label might give the consumer a sense of quality and tradition. He also illustrated the importance of deciding on the made in label. This is something that the consumers seem to perceive. They are referring to quality if there is a tradition in a country for producing a specific product category. The consumers said that a Made in X country label would not mean
a lot to them, while in fact it did impact their purchase decision if they knew that there was a country with a good reputation.

Made in Sweden for IKEA with these consumers seem to be more linked to the origin of the company, they are not reflecting on the actual country of manufacturing for the products sold by IKEA. For them buying from IKEA seem to be linked to the functionality of the furniture, a perception of paying less than the quality you get. There was no direct link to a product category as being Made in Sweden, rather associations to specific brands. This means that brands seemed to be more linked to Sweden and could profit more from a Made in Sweden label than a specific product category. Cheap furniture or clothes would not be linked to Sweden and neither would cars and bread. However in France there is a higher layer of product awareness, which Pâgens seem to have created which allows consumers to associate the product category dry bread /painification seche to Sweden. This is something that is fitting into the layers of Usunier’s figure Several layers of country-, company- and brand-related product image (see figure 3.6). In France the consumer perceive KRISPROLLS to be related to Sweden and there is an image of the generic product giving it a national image.

The interviewees state that if they are buying a specific product category, they would be interested in the so called “expert” of the category and immediately link this to quality. They would not care about a made in label in all purchases but it is an influencer to purchase. Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) mentioned that a boost in consumer awareness of foreign countries and their products would increase the consciousness of what is produced and where and who is the “expert” of whatever has been produced.

4.2.4 Swedish brands

This perception comes from the consumer’s knowledge about and experience of a brand and/or product. The consumers perceive Swedish products as quality and the fact that the country is developed and economically stable in comparison to other countries inflicts on the quality perception. On the other hand consumers could also be affected by Sweden’s history of business-to-business quality products generated before the expansion to the business-to-consumer market. The fact that the respondent realises the quality of vodka and that a bottle of Absolut implies that and should not be mixed as it is better as a shot gives some sort of quality indication. This is the product’s initial intention, a snaps – shot. It can be seen as an example of consumers associating price with quality and a product with quality. Snoj, Pisnik, Korda and Mumel (2004) brought this up in their article that if a product is expensive it has most likely good quality and is often preferred over a cheap product.

The consumers make references to IKEA, Ericsson, KRISPROLLS, Wasa but are reminded of Absolute Vodka, Volvo, SAAB and H&M. In addition to these, there are no other companies, products or brands mentioned. These brands will all be questioned in the survey.

“WASA is showing a lot of sequential images with bread”

interviewee, Aix-en-Provence

4.2.5 Quality

There is no surprise for the consumers to learn that there is vodka made in Sweden, a product category that they had previously perceived to originate from Russia. This implies that there is a certain quality perception about Sweden transmitted to products. This since there is a perception of the vodka product category to be originating from Russia, where they in addition must be the best producers of vodka. These consumers seem to believe that if a
product is seen as ‘the original’ it also holds the ‘experience’ and ‘knowledge’ of its production and is therefore perceived to be the best and of quality.

“origin means quality because those producers are supposed to have long traditional experience on the product. So it is a proof of obvious quality”

Interviewee Aix-en-Provence

There is also a link between quality and price. One of the examples mentioned was linked to the introducing questions on Absolut Vodka, where the consumer is aware of the refined product they would get due to this link. Brand associations are mentioned in by Aaker (1991: 15-16) in addition to perceived quality. This is seen here when the consumers made more links to brands than products.

“The price. It depend of the price and also the quality I know that Absolut is around 15€ in France but it is a good one for 10 € you have one bottle but not the same quality.

Interviewee, Paris

4.3 Next Steps

These initial interviews gave a clearer picture of what French consumers think and associate around the Swedishness in Swedish brands and products, Sweden and Scandinavia. It also gave an idea of buying habits, perceived quality and the country of origin effect. The following three points needs to be clarified further:

- There are interesting aspects of how the interviewees refer to Swedish products as quality products, e.g Absolut Vodka when they learned that it is Swedish they were not surprised etcetera.

- Knowing a product is Swedish would change the consumers’ perception to an extent. It could be due to the Swedishness and in that case, what influence does the Swedishness have on the consumer?

- Investigate further how French customers perceive the quality in products and if the Swedishness in the products is linked to the quality and vice versa.

There is a need of understanding the point of view of companies that are marketing their Swedish product on the French market in a “Made in Sweden” context. To do this, two interviews will be held with professionals at IKEA and Pågen. IKEA is marketing their products with the Swedishness around the products but necessarily not as Swedish products. Pågen market their product, KRISPROLLS, as a Swedish product and Swedish bread. What is the view of Swedishness in marketing and what do they associate to around Sweden, Swedish products, their products and marketing from Sweden to French consumers.

In developing the questionnaires, there should be more closed questions with multiple choices, but there is a need of dominance in open questions so that the consumer can associate freely around the question. It is important that the questionnaire is not too long so that the respondents feel they could answer within a short period of time.
5 Secondary Empirical Phase

This chapter accounts for the secondary phase of the empirical research. A presentation of the main customer survey and two expert interviews with representatives from companies that produce “Made in Sweden” classified products in the French market. The phase is divided into three parts: empirical research, interpretation and next steps.

5.1 Eva Stål, PR-manager, IKEA in Sweden

IKEA is a company with its origin in Sweden, founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943. Today, IKEA is more of an international company with its head office in Holland. The materials for production and products are being manufactured in different countries. This is all depending on the best solution and best material suitable for manufacturing and meeting IKEA’s needs. Therefore, products sold by IKEA are marked with the country of origin for each single product. Products can for instance be manufactured and carry the label “Made in Sweden”, “Made in Pakistan”, “Made in China” or “Made in Poland”.

Made in Sweden could mean different things such as country of manufacturing, design and inspiration from the Scandinavian culture. For IKEA, “Made in Sweden” stands mainly for the country of origin where the company was founded and first expanded. The “Made in Sweden” also stands for part of the manufacturing and production, a part of the design and a large part of influences from the Scandinavian culture. Sweden is one country of many making IKEA the international company it today is.

The worldwide location of the IKEA stores is also a reason for producing products closer to the point of sales, to avoid long and unnecessary transportation. There are about 1300 centres in over 50 countries around the world with the task to find suppliers and train them to be able to meet IKEA’s expectations and needs.

“Theyir tasks are to find the right merchandises to the right price and the right quality.”

(Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11)

Sweden is an important part of the IKEA concept since it does describe the origin and heritage. IKEA Germany plays a lot with the Swedish origin such as Swedish holidays and traditions. They used, for instance, their perception of Swedish midsummer in advertisements in summer 2005, which went too far in playing the traditions and prejudices to the extreme.

IKEA might be perceived more as a Scandinavian company outside the Nordic countries and Europe. They try to maintain this perception while they like to put an emphasis on Sweden as the country of origin in the Nordic countries and Europe. When marketing internationally, IKEA plays on its origin as being a Swedish, Scandinavian company. We use the yellow and blue colours in the flag in our logo and on the stores. We get inspired through bringing out the four seasons, the story about Ingvar Kamprad and how he created IKEA but also through colours and materials in the design and layouts of the rooms in the IKEA stores. There is not really a strong “Swedishness” in the products but rather a sense of Swedishness through the design expression per se. It should be functional, simple and it has often got bright wood and
colours. All designs and products cannot be originated to Scandinavia, but it is present in parts of the assortment. These parts and their design language can be drawn to Scandinavia.

“…there is a little decorator in each of us…”(Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11)

IKEA has a tradition in compact living with the emphasis on design and taste for small surfaces. We call one part of our collections, “Young Swede”, it refers to a playful, cheerful and very colourful style with the functional aspect of compact living. Another part of the collection is called “Country” and is a bright collection where Scandinavian design plays a role and brings out different aspects in the creations of rooms and homes in the IKEA store, putting function in the centre. These conceptual frames are something that all stores, regardless the country, apply and follow. There are some minor differences made to suit culture and country.

IKEA would like for the consumers to associate the company and the products to Sweden’s nature, recycling and clear air. For the consumer, the most obvious Swedish influence except for the blue and yellow colours in the store, is of course the food, which to 90% is Swedish. You can find a Swedish food shop in every IKEA store if you go abroad. Here you can find meetballs, salmon, jam etcetera all with connections to Sweden. We believe at IKEA that home and food have a natural connection and tasting the “Swedishness” is an important association to Scandinavia for our consumers worldwide.

5.2 Georg Kittel, Information manger, Pågen AB in Sweden

Georg Kittel has been working at Pågen AB since 1985 as Export director (1985-2000) where he held marketing responsibilities such as strategical marketing decissions for KRISPROLLS together with French partners. He then went on to become brand manager for Pågen’s corporate brand (2000-2006) and more recently, the Information responsible.

Pågen’s KRISPROLLS are made from almost only Swedish raw material. The flour comes from our own mill in Scania. All product development of KRISPROLLS is made with Swedish attributes and the different tastes are based on Swedish raw material eg blueberries and cranberries or something that have connections to Swedish food culture eg cardamom. KRISPROLLS is a premium brand both in quality/taste and price. You are able to find a similar product for about ¼ of what you pay for KRISPROLLS, which makes it a price premium product for this market leader.

The brand KRISPROLLS, is a made in Sweden product. They have especially in France become known as a very Swedish product. The term made in Sweden is not literally used in the marketing of KRISPROLLS but the Swedish heritage plays an important part in all communication and marketing, but in different terms and means. KRISPROLLS is most likely one of the products that French associate to Sweden, but we have no idea on how our product could have contributed to their total picture of Sweden or if it influence Sweden as a brand. Pågen believes that the picture of Sweden has had a large impact on the brand KRISPROLLS in France. The Swedish heritage plays a big part in everything Pågen does when it comes to KRISPROLLS. It All started 25 years ago with a special term for this kind of product, pains grillés suédois/petits pains suédois, something that have had great impact and presence on the packaging during these years.
5.2.1 KRISPROLLS in France today

Pågen started slowly with their KRISPROLLS in smaller speciality stores and it was not until 1984/85 when they got the department store Monoprix that it lead to a sudden expansion into other supermarkets. The brand KRISPROLLS was introduced in France in 1985 with pains suédois as a product name. There were no pains grillés in France before Pågen launched them but there were a range of products within the category painification seche, which meant that the French already had a consumer behaviour that pain would suit. Competition started, with partly Swedish bakeries but also French companies that tried to copy the bread. France is today the largest market in the world for this product category and KRISPROLLS has got a market share of over 45%, is present in almost 100% of the French market and is the most known brand of its category of bread. Almost 90% of the KRISPROLLS-sales happen abroad. One country answers to most of the sales, and that is France with more than 60% something that is influencing how we market our product on an international basis. Pågen currently adjusts their marketing to other countries according to how their situation is on the French market.

Most people on the French market associate KRISPROLLS to Sweden and as a Swedish product while they have little or no knowledge about the company behind this Swedish product, Pågen. Consumers might not use KRISPROLLS but talk about petits pains suédois. Those who buy the product might have a positive perception of the product that it tastes very good, that they are mainly breakfast bread and that they are a bit exotic coming from Sweden.

5.2.2 Swedishness

The Swedishness has had a large impact on Pågen’s marketing. With the made up category pains grillés suédois, Pågen built up their marketing with the Swedish heritage present in the name itself something that today is famous. With the brand KRISPROLLS, an identity was created to distinguish them from the competitors.

The registered brand KRISPROLLS, used globally, is also a way of marking the Swedishness especially in France. Even if Swedes do not perceive it to be a particularly Swedish name, the French do. K is an exotic letter in French and the whole name is hard to pronounce and a bit mystical. French perceive the name as Nordic, exotic, difficult to pronounce and a lot of French people pronounce it Kirrippssroll and think that it is an old Viking word. In previous research, consumers have stated, “You can really imagine how Vikings sat and crunched on these kinds of breads”. The Swedishness is important to give our brand a distinguished identity and KRISPROLLS owns “Sverige” within panification seche, which includes dry bread products, biscottes, and pains extrudes, pains grillés, crispbread etcetera.

Pågen uses television as the main channel of distributing advertisements and has had regular campaigns since early the 90s, but also used magazines, radio, PR and competitions. The most remembered advertisement was a television commercial with the excentric KRISPROLLS lover Ingmar (Claes Månsson, see Krisprolls advertisements in figure 5.1 adapted from <www.pagen.com>) that was shown on French TV during 1995-2003 and became very famous. Ingmar is a Swedish aristocrat and passionate KRISPROLLS lover who tries to trick his somewhat controlling but forgiving wife so that he can get hold of another irresistible KRISPROLL.

During the first years of this commercial, this was the KRISPROLLS’ slogan “Un des meilleurs moments de la vie suédoise” (one of the best moments in the life of a Swede), the breakfast with KRISPROLLS that is. They also play with Sweden living in darkness during the winter and daylight all day and night during the summer.
Figure 5.1 Advertisements for KRISPROLLS shown in France [www.pagen.com].

It was followed by a couple of clips where the last comment was “Comment dit-on KRISPROLLS en suédois?” (how do you say KRISPROLLS in Swedish?) said by Ingmar with his mouth full of KRISPROLLS. For reference to the commercials please see www.pagen.com, the International site. Between the years of 2003 and 2004 Ingmar was replaced by the Gustavsson family whose breakfast habits emerged on radio and on billboards and played with the Swedishness. "KRISPROLLS. Réveillez-vous suédois!” (wake-up the Swedish way!). One recent advertisement shows Sweden as a winter wonderland in darkness and another shows people wearing clogs all year and the thing that breaks this monotom life is “KRISPROLLS, ce que la Suède a de plus croustillant” (The most tasteful/exciting that Sweden has got). The word croustillant has got a double meaning, both tasteful/crunchy and exciting.

The packaging shows the Swedishness in several ways:

- Product / country of origin, pétits pains suédois
- Swedish flag on the front page with the text origine suédoise
- A fun Swedish lesson on the backside with a different word for the different types e.g Hej! God morgon! Smaklig måltid, Skät om dig! Njut av dagen! Every expression is phonetically explained and translated into French with an explanation.
- Holds the Royal Warrant Holders appointment
- A short presentation of Pågen as a Swedish bakery with good heritage.
5.3 Survey amongst French Consumers

5.3.1 Introduction

An Absolut introduction helped to indicate whether the consumers recognise the brand as being Swedish. Respondents believed the origin of the brand to be either Russian or Polish as this is where they perceive vodka as a product category is from. A few of the consumers knew that the Absolute Vodka brand was Swedish, however in this case the often made a comment about having lived or spent time in Sweden and therefore knew that it was a Swedish brand and product.

Initially people do not reflect over Absolut Vodka as a Swedish product. Several countries are given as a suggestion for the country of origin and suggestions are made for Russia, Poland, France, England and then there are those of them that know it is Sweden. Most people guess it is from Russia and do associate this product category to originate from here. They also state that it does not influence them that Absolut is from Sweden. A few consumers reflected over the origin saying that it could be a disadvantage that vodka comes from another country other than the global image of Russia as the product category ‘owner’. People make associations to their drinking habits referring to drinks or mixers such as orange juice, Fanta Lemon. The brand is also associated to as trendy, clean and pure. Someone mentioned that it is a serious production of a quality product since it is produced in Sweden.

“Absolut associates to Fanta Lemon, Party, Luxury” Female, 55yrs

Most respondents refer to Absolut Vodka as a sophisticated quality product yet a bit pricy. The price is higher than other vodka brands and some people even said that the brand corresponds to an image of Sweden when they find out that it is Swedish. People remember advertisement TVs and in magazines where the Absolute bottle has been in focus. Remarks are made that this is a product with a nice bottle and one of the most recognised and famous vodka brands in the world today with good marketing of the bottle. However no remarks are made about the origin of the vodka.

5.3.2 Buying Habits

Purchase is based on quality and price. A few people mentioned feelings as an indicator and origin is an average base for purchase. The origin could give a feeling of the quality a product have. Consumers either go for quality or the price but not the necessarily the brand directly. Although they do believe that brands are related to the quality, not necessarily perceived quality but a stated quality as if it was decided by someone when launching a brand. Purchase is also based on need, comfort and feelings. Buying clothes involves more style and design, hence quality but the price plays a role in the decision too.

”Parties in Sweden are good so drinking Absolut is like having a Swedish party”
26yrs old Computer Engineer, Antibes

5.3.3 Overall perception of Sweden & Scandinavia

The French consumers tended to group the three Scandinavian countries together. They stated that Norway, Denmark and Sweden are similar and sometimes even too similar that they very seldom hear about them separately. They would therefore not be able to define an apparent difference. The respondents have a very high perception of Sweden as a country and Swedes. It is a large country that is developed and industrialised and inhabited by few inhabitants, all
blond beautiful women and tall handsome blond men. Very few of the respondents acknowledge the difference between the Scandinavian countries, that Norway is the richest amongst the three and they have the highest life quality in the world. Someone said that there is a different mentality between the Scandinavian countries. One consumer recognise that Norway has got more mountains, got its independency late and is not a member of the EU. Denmark seems to be closer to the rest of Western Europe loosing a bit of its “exotic taste”.

“c mieux d’avoir le nom de pays tout de même car Scandinavia sa fait un peut trop global. Perso je préfère quand c’est marké made in X.” student 21, Antibes

Sweden is seen as a northern exotic country associated with mainly IKEA, blond women, long winters, cold country, salmon, beautiful landscape/nature scenery/lakes and forests, good social network and a high standard of living. It is sophisticated, organised and reliable but pricy for foreigners.

"Les lacs, les forets, et les suedoises" male 43 Grasse

People are environmental friendly, respectful, healthy and think a lot about what they eat and their own well being, they are sporty and live long lives. The people are family oriented, modern, discreet, open-minded, and nice but some might be cold. They take care of their environment and in general Sweden is a politically and socially well-organised country. Sweden has got a lot of wood, hence wood products both deco and outdoors. Someone even associate Sweden to the ship Wasa that sunk in the 17th century on its first voyage. Furthermore the consumers referred to the women as beautiful, blond, tall and blue eyed. Women who had answered the survey also noted that Sweden and / or Scandinavia had tall blond beautiful people or guys.

“Nicest blond women in Europe!!” male 27

5.3.4 Country of origin / Made in label

The respondents see the origin of a product as an indication for the product’s quality. Some countries are specialists, something that the consumers refer to as the savoir-faire / know-how of a country. It would make them decide if it is a high or low quality product they are about to purchase. An example is given that there might not be a difference between USA, France and Sweden, but there is if you choose third world countries. The consumers also say that if it were clearly stated that it is a Swedish product and it is manufactured in Sweden, the trust in the product and its quality would increase drastically. For French consumers, the products are allowed to be a bit pricy as this would be a sign of quality. The overall perception though is that the products would be pricy and that it is expensive to live in Sweden. The respondents state that these pricy products are in general quality, hence value for money. If there is a country that they like more than another country, it could be reason enough for a purchase independent from the quality. Factors as economical and geopolitical can also be influencers.

“Depends on the price. Eg: 30€ for a shirt made in Taiwan is too expensive as the labour costs there is so cheap” 27yrs male Engineer Antibes

If there is one country that you like more than another country, this could be reason enough for purchase, independently from the consumer’s perception of quality. Origin of a product would influence purchase if the country has got a good reputation and the consumer likes that
country. This would change depending on what country they are in. If in France, you buy French meat, if in Sweden you buy Swedish meat.

On several occasions, the participants state that Europe stands for quality while Asia has little or no expected quality; their products are cheap and not long-term. It should be mentioned that Japan is perceived differently and technical products are mentioned as products from Asia that could be trusted.

On an overall general view, if French consumers are making a purchase, they are influenced by if they like a country or not, the trust they have and if this applies on several products with different origins and that they would choose the best price. If there is technology involved in the product, the country of origin has a larger importance. Also if the product has a recognised more expensive brand, the origin is significant. Some countries have a savoir-faire of a product it might be the original country of origin and that they are perceived as the creators or those who know how to produce, manufacture or design a certain product.

Also it is interesting to know where a product is manufactured. There is a somewhat underestimated knowledge of the importance of the Made in X label. The origin depends on this label and there are several associations to the country of origin although sometimes the consumer does not acknowledge it. They might say they do not care about this label, but it turns out that they do through stating that the origin country is important but the Made in X label is not. Some note that the country of origin is not important but some countries seem to be better in producing some goods.

The Made in Label is an indicator of where the product is being produced, the conditions for the production, working condition etcetera. Generally, the consumers reflect over food as something that is very important to know the manufacturing country. You would be careful about food but also generally about buying products from your own country to support local production. It could be worth paying a little extra as you could be sure of the quality you get and about the situation in which the meat, product etcetera are being produced. People try and buy French in France. They would choose a European product first, then French and if they find a German or Swedish product it is of interest too. It is preferable that there is a label of some sort that note if it is Made in X than nothing at all. Even though some consumers do not care about the origin, or claim they are not influenced by it or that it has got an impact, they still would like to have a label showing the origin. This could be because if there is a political issue or they know that the company are doing something wrong, using child labour etcetera this is one major reason for not choosing a product from a particular country.

They also prefer that the label saying “Made in X country” rather than “Made in EU or Scandinavia”. The participants mention that some places may have a tradition to make a certain product and would produce it better than others.

“I believe more and more in concepts than origins. We are ethnics before we are citizens…”

Brand manager, NYC

A consumer often has got an idea of where the product originates from and with this as an base, makes a decision. If there were a blue, white and red label on it, it would awake an interest for the origin. The same could most likely be applied on other European products and especially Sweden. Wonder why this is not recognised when it comes to KRISPROLLS or even Wasa, where part of the package has got Sweden’s yellow and blue colours and it is
recognised in IKEA. The origin of KRISPROLLS shows in the marketing of the bread as Swedish and the fact that some French people refer to it as Swedish bread.

“My trust in the product’s quality would increase if I know it was made in Sweden.”

Computer engineer, 26yrs Antibes.

If the respondents know the product is Swedish their perception of the quality of a product would increase. The overall perception of Sweden is high, mostly 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the highest. They think that Swedish products have a good reputation.

“One of the most advanced country in the world in term of life level, social laws, sex equality, sex liberties.” Engineer, 27yrs male

“Sweden is a north-european, industrialized country.” 43yrs Grasse

5.3.5 Sweden in the label

Products manufactured in Sweden appear to be a bit exotic for French consumers. They also refer to the products as high quality with strange names. If the have visited Sweden or Scandinavian countries, the perception is even higher and often the answer is that the country has advantages to France that they prefer. Swedish products appear to be clean, practical and easy to use. If the respondents know that the product is Swedish, they have in general a very good perception of it.

“First idea is that they should be good quality” 35yrs, male

Products are of good quality, but pricey and more expensive than average. They also expect “Made in Sweden” labelled products to be of better quality. As for the label itself it gives an indication of the level of design, quality and durability.

“Stands for some idea of design and quality” 36yrs, male, Valbonne

“To sum up my vision of the Swedish products, I think they give the impression of clean practical and easy to use merchandise.” 26yrs, Computer Engineer, Antibes

Some of the respondents answer that they would be surprised if they find a product that is made in Sweden. It intrigues them and they find it a bit exotic and some state that they would look closer on what the product is if they see this label. Although they think it would be a bit pricey they would associate it to quality. French people tend to prefer products made in Europe and look highly on those made in France, Germany and Sweden. Several consumers admit to being able to tell a product is Scandinavian but not being able to define which Scandinavian country that stands for the Made in label.

5.3.6 Swedish brands

First brand that comes into the minds of the French consumers is IKEA, they have in general a high perception of the company and their products. They reflect over the furniture, the concept and the food. IKEA plays a lot with its Swedish origin and hence they reflect over its advertisement on TV, in newspapers etcetera. The perception of IKEA is that they play with their Swedish origin through colours, blue and yellow from the Swedish flag. IKEA also sells Swedish products, furniture made of wood with a practical transport idea. The quality is perceived as high with likable design and function most of the consumers answered 4 and 5 out of 5 when asked to define their perception of quality. One consumer mentioned that IKEA
has done a good job in marketing their brands that they have built their own image independent from Sweden. A lot of participants describe the food store or has recognised it, they can also account for a few products being sold. It has got a positive image with young people.

“Useful because it is dry bread but less tasty than real fresh baguette.” Female, 55yrs

The participants perceive KRISPROLLS as a good, healthy breakfast product that makes crunchy noises. They all relate to the KRISPROLLS advertisement about Ingmar eating KRISPROLLS with his mouth full when his wife who dislikes it discovers him. People do relate to KRISPROLLS and Wasa as Swedish bread and they tend to generalise, while they do not realise that it is just one type of bread and that Sweden produces several kinds of bread.

Kittel (personal interview, 2006-08-15) confirms that KRISPROLLS are a true Swedish product, they are manufactured in Sweden from Swedish raw materials and it is a Swedish own brand with connection to Swedish food culture. It makes the product Swedish in several ways. Despite this the term Made in Sweden is not literally used in the marketing but the Swedish heritage does play a role in the marketing and communication of the product.

The consumers either like or dislike Swedish bread but cannot specifically point out that they are either KRISPROLLS or Wasa or even both. Their perception of them is that Swedish bread is thick, brown and healthy. Swedes are also perceived to like taking care of themselves (gym, healthy products.) according to French consumers.

“I like the taste and the noise it makes” 25yrs trainee man, Antibes

It is interesting though that someone mentioned Swedish bread as being soft and delicious, most people claim Swedish bread is KRISPROLLS or Wasa forgetting about all other kinds of bread. Few participants recognise the Swedish flag on the package of KRISPROLLS and the blue colour with yellow cross on the Wasa package. If there is any scepticism between any of the respondents when it comes to the taste of KRISPROLLS or crispbread, they always mention French bread, the baguette that is.

“Good to have if you are in a breakfast bread emergency, crunchy noise when you eat them.” 22yrs female student

When it comes to Volvo and Saab, they all know what Volvo is, but fewer the people know Saab and know that it is a Swedish car. Volvo is generalised as a big car with reputation of being a solid, durable, comfortable car that stands for quality and reliability. They are nice cars, Volvo being more solid and Saab being sportier. Some people thinks Volvo are a family car while Saab is more for elderly citizens. It is also mentioned that Volvo plays on a Swedish origin by demonstrating its functionality in extreme weather conditions. When mentioning these cars and what they perceive about the origin of them, the participants mentioned in most cases that they like the cars but do prefer French cars or even more often German cars. Generally German cars are the best according to French consumers. Some people even mention maintenance as the main reason for buying a German or French car. Most respondents said that they agree or strongly agree that the country of origin matters when buying a car.

"Réputation de solidité et de durabilité" male 43, Grasse

"Big cars, not a good idea to have one of those in a French city", student 22, Paris
Taking a closer look at the answers that the respondents provide in connection with H&M, it is interesting how they are surprised about it being Swedish. Very few consumers know that this is a Swedish company. Then they do not reflect more over it and state that it does not affect them. Respondents mention the product as quality but there are a few who said that their products have no quality. They reflect over the quality of the products but agree on that it is trendy, cheap, quality for what you pay for and for the mass market. When the consumers found out that H&M is Swedish they claimed that it does not matter to them that it is a Swedish company. For those who expressed that it is quality products they were not surprise.

Other products mentioned by the respondents were: ABBA, Ericsson, Skype, PropellerHead, Project Entropia, SAS, Electrolux, the Nobel Prize, SEB, Brio, Gravelax, WE (skateboard clothing), Lindeberg, Acne Jeans, Face Stockholm. The respondents also mention products that are not Swedish, but Scandinavian or Finnish. Nokia (Finnish) and Lego (Danish) are referred to when they are asked to list Swedish brands and Swedish products.

TV advertisements that refer to Sweden are mainly IKEA and KRISPROLLS according to the participants. They first of all mentioned IKEA, as it seems to be a synonym to French consumers. Then when they were able to refer to a TV advertisement they would mention KRISPROLLS. When they are being asked about KRISPROLLS, they would remember the different advertisements shown on TV with Ingemar not being allowed to eat KRISPROLLS. They often refer to KRISPROLLS as being healthy Swedish or Nordic crispbread. The advertisements have a great impact on the consumers. They often contain happy Swedish people, a chilly and white landscapes, saunas and snow. There was also apparently a large commercial campaign with Wasa, where the slogan “Vas-y Wasa” left a mark with the consumers. Some respondents mentioned that TV advertisements for products made in Sweden often use sex and humour and one person referred to an IKEA advertisement as:

“Ikea, with a women sitting naked on a lounge table” 27 Engineer

5.4 Interpretation

In the process of understanding French consumers perception of Swedishness and perceived quality of a brand or product – it was important to define the consumers’ perception of the country itself. This perception was further defined through stating what the country’s image is with French consumers. Sweden was not seen as a separate country but as Scandinavia. A French consumer does in general not make a difference between either of the Nordic countries and is grouping them all into one – Scandinavia – which mixes up country specific attributes, companies and brands. The Scandinavian countries and in particular Sweden have a good reputation and affects French consumers positively. Moreover Sweden appears to be the most recognisable and famous of the Nordic countries of which is consistent with the previously in the study mentioned Anholt’s brand index.

The influence of Swedishness on the perception of quality made it possible to understand the quality-perception process of French consumers. In pointing out how Swedishness work it became clear that consumers were associating and indirectly relating products and brands to Sweden even if they might be referring to Scandinavia. Swedishness is partly the identity of a country and partly the image that it holds and attributes that can be associated with a country. The French consumers are being influenced by attributes connected to what can be defined as Swedishness. The concept in its turn would influence French consumers, a group of people if you are able to generalise. This is done through seeing a common pattern between different people and their perception. You are then able to understand if a group of people think or says the same things. In the questionnaires most people would see a certain identity and image of a
country together with their impression of Swedishness. There were four main elements that can be linked as influential factor important in this study (see figure 5.2)

![Figure 5.2 The 4 S's – Influential factors (own)](image)

After going deep into the collected data, the respondents’ answers led to the establishment of five categories for the interpretation and discussion of the findings with relevant theories:

- French consumer’s buying behaviour
- Made in Sweden
- Swedish brands
- Swedishness
- Perceived Quality

### 5.4.1 French consumers’ buying behaviour

Selective attention, distortion and retention are three perceptual processes that a marketer needs to understand in the mind of the consumers (Kotler & Armstrong 2001: 186-189). From this the consumer would form perception and choose what supports believes, attitudes or needs which are defined in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (see figure 3.1). Background influencers such as the environment, political, legal and economical reasons as well as culture and media can also influence the consumer. For instance several consumers have seen advertisements on the television for KRISPROLLS and they would relate to this when they are about to make a purchase. Their perception of this product is generally quality related and related to the advertisements behind the product. With IKEA there is a need for cheap and trendy furniture, which they provide in a Swedish design related context while playing on the Swedish traditions in their marketing. Buying furniture from IKEA is like buying a piece of Sweden.

The consumers were first questioned about Absolut Vodka. It is not perceived as being Swedish despite the fact that the origin of the vodka is mentioned six times on the bottle. Absolute vodka is a national speciality and something that Swedes refer to as a typical Swedish brand and product. Flavoured vodka from different parts of Sweden and even Norway is marketed by its region or city. This is not the same national speciality that the below quote refer to. Here a national speciality is a product that is perceived by the general public to be made in X country. Someone associated learning that Absolut Vodka is Swedish with the fact that consumers buy vodka from the country they are in. Buying products locally
produced something that also can be linked to preferring products from your own country or
the country you are in for the moment you make the purchase. When marketing Absolut
Vodka abroad, the focus has not been on the origin but on the bottle itself, something that
appears strange to Swedish people who associate the brand heavily to Sweden. This is an
example of how the international market could differ and the importance of adapting your
marketing across different countries and to your target consumers.

“quand tu es en Suède, tu peux préférer acheter de la vodka de chez toi…”
Clermont-Ferrand, 26 yrs

If there is a country that you like more than another, it could be reason enough for purchase,
independently from the quality. The origin of a product would influence purchase if the
country has got a good reputation and the consumer likes that country. This would change
depending on what country they are in. If in France, you buy French meat, if in Sweden you
buy Swedish meat.

In the theoretical pre-understanding we learned that Usunier (2000: 249) listed different
meanings of the made in image. It is not only related with the national image of the
manufacturing company, but also the image of imported products versus national products or
with even the image of national products versus international products. It can also be national
images of generic products such as yoghurt from the Balkans, perfume from France and jeans
connected to the United States.

Several respondents answered that the country of origin has great impact when buying a car
and they often refer to the origin of preference as German. This does not mean that they
favour French cars less, because they would buy them because they are French and not
because they perceive the German car to be better and of more quality. This is more likely to
be a purchase decision based on emotional value rather than functional and the preferences of
products and brands derive from the consumer’s country of origin. However are they able to
tell if it is down to the quality itself or the country of origin of the product? Lindstrom (2003:
81) divided value into functional and emotional value and associates for instance geographical
origin to values associated to a brand. So this mean that the consumer would most likely put
more emphasis on the emotional value than the functional value.

5.4.2 Made in Sweden Concept

Made in Sweden could mean different things such as country of manufacturing, design and
inspiration of the Scandinavian culture. This is recognised by the COO theories but also by
the experts. As we can see in the Perception Chain, see figure 4:6 COE, culture and image are
external influences that could influence the consumers and that would result in their
perception of a brand or product. Some factors are easier to influence than others, as
Papadopoulos & Heslop (2002) discussed about place equity, compared to a corporate image
or a brand, places and nations are not directly under the marketer’s command. Every place has
got an image and the power of place equity can be positive or negative, diffused or focused
and determined or influenced by media, politics, education and business experiences.

An interesting aspect is the country of origin of Absolut Vodka, produced in Sweden with its
history written on it and with six references to its origin on the bottle, people still do not know
where this vodka originates. One of the trial interviewees mentioned that Absolut Vodka has
got a trendy bottle with its history written on it and was not surprised to learn that it is a Swedish brand.

“Good impact as I like the country and as the Swedish products have a nice reputation.”

Computer engineer from Antibes, 26yrs

Through mentioning Absolut first in the survey, it extinguishes if a consumer knows the brand, if it is associated with something in particular and where they perceive the brand to come from early on. If the consumers knew it was a Swedish brand, they commented on it and said that they had lived in Sweden or had visited the country.

“A Swedish product will remind me of the country that I visited. So, it will have a good impact on me simple because I had a nice time there.” Computer engineer, male

“IKEA colours are the colours from Swedish flag!” Male aged 41

IKEA uses the Swedish flag’s colours in their corporate logo and brand. This is a deliberately made choice to increase revenues playing on the Swedish origin. The company also refer to Sweden in different ways in their marketing through media and advertisements including anything from traditions to stereotypes and prejudices. If returning to Usunier’s Several layers of country-, company- and brand-related product image (see figure 3.6) we can see how IKEA fits in well with all layers. The fifth layer, ‘Made in’ is interesting where the perceived image of IKEA naturally leans towards Swedish produced products, it is not often thought of by the consumer as the international products, IKEA would like to communicate; Made in Poland, Made in China, Made in Pakistan and Made in Sweden. All respondents in the survey know that IKEA is Swedish, so the marketing at least in France worked. The company has got a Swedish identity and an emphasis on nature and simplicity according to some of the consumers, which is partly confirming what Stål said. This product feature adds a competitive advantage to a product and lets the company compete on the market.

“Stands for some idea of design and quality” 36 male, Valbonne about the Made in label

The design and simplicity appears to be noticed and/or is appealing to the consumers. KRISPROLLS are also mentioned as a Swedish or Scandinavian quality product; in fact the word quality appears on several occasions in relation to Swedish companies, brands and products both when the consumers know it is a Swedish labelled product or a Swedish brand and when they learn that the product is Swedish or Scandinavian. However the Made in Sweden label appeals to the consumers positively and reflect the Scandinavian know how.

“It sounds serious and reflects the Scandinavian know how”, student 31 male Valbonne

“I don’t really mind but it sounds good.” Female aged 22 about the Made in Sweden label.

The fact that a product or brand is Swedish or appears to be Swedish or Scandinavian influences the consumer. For IKEA, this is also true. They have a concept of marketing their products giving them a Swedish concept and they have lines of products that have design heavily influenced by Sweden or Scandinavia, ‘Young Swede’ and ‘Country’. Here bright colours with functional aspects are put in focus and the product lines are sold worldwide with minor differences made to suit culture and country. According to Ståhl, IKEA would like for consumers to associate the company and the products to Sweden’s nature, recycling and clean air, which is something that the respondents recognise in a product or brand from Sweden.
“To sum up my vision of the Swedish products, I think they give the impression of clean practical and easy to use merchandise.” 26yrs Male computer engineer, Antibes

KRISPROLLS is a premium brand that the consumers know more about than the company that manufactures them. This is a product made in Sweden and something the respondents know and can associate to. Petits pains suédois a term for this sort of product that emerged 25 years ago and has had an impact on the packaging of the products from Pågens.

One consumer reflected over vodka and the Made in Sweden label (see quote below) highlighting one of the COO issues. A product category with a reputation and perception to come from a specific country would reflect on the Made in label. This issue is important to bear in mind as the wrong label can sink your ship! There is a possibility people who do not know of a product category would, depending on buying behaviour, exclude a brand if carrying the wrong label.

“j’ai tendance a penser qu’une vodka qui vient de Russie sera meilleur qu’une autre vodka... donc si c’est écrit qu’elle viens de Russie ça peut donner envie de l’acheter... alors que si tu dis que c’est de Suède... ça peut faire l’inverse”, 27yrs analyst, Paris

A company such as H&M might not choose to market their products as Swedish or Made in Sweden. There are two sides. H&M has got a well functioning concept where they produce fashionable clothes to a low price and keep up with trends. To some people this concept might not be what they prefer and there might be a perception of H&M as cheap low quality clothes. In this case, marketing it as Swedish might not help. The other side is that you pay for what you get and in most cases it is more quality for what you paid for in comparison to other quality – price situations. This means that a Made in Sweden label could help or would not hurt the marketing activities as it could emphasise the origin of the design and not the country of manufacturing.

"Not important although some products seem to be better made in some countries, eg electronic supply in Asia, cars in Germany... " 36 male, Valbonne

When asked how the respondents perceive the origin of a product, consumers on several occasions answered that they do not see the COO as important while hesitating or contradicting themselves in other questions. This could be through preferring some countries to others and a reference to the savoir-faire of a country and a perceived stereotype. However D’Astous and Ahmed (1999) suggested that consumers in reality do not generally seek COO information, so therefore they do not think it is important. In my study most consumers were of this opinion, saying one thing while showing another thing in their product evaluations. D’Astous and Ahmed (1999) suggested furthermore that if consumers were tested the COO is stands out as a significant cue. Earlier studies such as Ohame (1989) had stated that consumers did not care about the origin as they were looking for the best products they can get at the lowest price. D’Astous and Ahmed (1999) had two possible recommendations with their study; the COO becomes important for the consumer if it is made available at the point of product evaluation and secondly the importance of the brand name showing some indication to the COO. These possible suggestions are confirmed in my study in the context of the target segment being French consumers with Internet access aged 20-55 years.
5.4.3 Swedish Brands

Melin (1999a) brings up brand awareness and the fact that the consumer would associate advertisement, product features, price and perceived quality to a product and its brand. The French consumers often mention the crispy sound of KRISPROLLS, something that they associate to the product allegedly because of the advertisement on television with Ingmar, the Swedish aristocrat that eats KRISPROLLS despite his wife’s attempt to forbid him. As the advertisement describes the sound the bread makes when you are eating it, the consumers refer to it when they associate to the brand. As Melin (1999a: 48-51) also points out, this type of association creates an added value to the product.

As for KRISPROLLS, they would know it is Nordic, Scandinavian or Swedish when they see the product. They would not necessarily remember it as Swedish when they were asked what Swedish brands and products they know exist or/and have bought. The originality or heritage of a product will help sell it. Respondents illustrated advertisements that they recognised and remembered and referred to them when triggered by a Swedish product or/and brand. Kittel (personal interview, 2006-08-15) exemplifies French consumers in previous marketing research that they have done at Pågens with “You can really imagine how Viking sat and crunched on these kind of breads”. The respondents relate heritage and Swedishness to Sweden and Scandinavia when they think of Ingmar eating Krrrrrisprolls in the advertisements.

What is interesting is that they perceive Absolut as sophisticated quality vodka yet a bit pricy and that there is an emphasis on it being quality. There must be a relation to the price. The interesting part is that France actually produces vodka, Grey Goose, and that this vodka is at least twice the price of Absolut. It also has got a French flag on it, which makes you think that this must get a few French people to buy it. So if discussing that Grey Goose would be an ultimate bottle of vodka for French consumers as it is produced on a home market then would that not be seen as quality, buying to support your home market. Despite this Russian vodka sold in France is cheaper and there are lots to choose from, but it does not make it of less quality. Does the fact that it is Russian provide a good enough evidence to sell the product? Perhaps you should ask yourself what purpose vodka is used. Is it because you would like to mix cheap drinks, to drink it straight? Absolut Vodka is being produced in a country where flavoured vodka and eau de vie is drunk straight in shots during a festive meal. This drink originally was produced in a few flavours, the original, lemon, pepper and currant. The product has no added sugar and is as strong as the tradition is. If you think that this vodka is a rip-off from the Russian vodka produced to earn money on a classy look and designed bottle with fancy advertisements? You are wrong Absolut has been produced under its name since 1879, a long-time and with a particular history. The bottle is produced locally as well as the grains used for the distillery.

H&M and IKEA both sell cheaper products than the average. Both companies have made their company name into a brand and thus they have good quality and design for what you pay for, they might have a reputation of breaking easier just because they are cheaper. These companies are good examples when testing the sense of quality perception that consumers could reflect on. Stål (personal interview 2006-08-11) state that IKEA uses the same basics for their communication and advertisements but that it is being adopted and adapted differently by the country markets.

An aspect of brand value is a perceived value or quality, something that could influence a consumer when purchasing (Baldauf, Cravens & Binder 2003). Looking at the accumulating
respondents’ answers, quality appeared a significant amount of times and it became obvious that this needs to be highlighted. Perceived quality will be analysed further in chapter 5.5.

5.4.4 The Swedishness

The impact of Sweden’s image on Swedish brands and products along with Swedish brands’ and products’ impact on Sweden’s image, depends partly on the perception of consumers and external stakeholders but also partly on the image that companies want their brand or product to communicate.

It has become obvious that very few brands are instantly recognised as being Swedish or Scandinavian by the French consumers. The brand that appears to be the most recognisable Swedish brand is IKEA, whose image breaths Swedishness and influences people to believe in Sweden’s impact rather than the company’s impact. Is IKEA the epitome of Swedishness? Well, it is supposed to be the archetype of Swedish but perhaps it can be defined as Swedishness then. If you believe one of the consumers, the company offers a Swedish time:

“*The company offers a Swedish time when you go there.*” Male age 23 about IKEA

IKEA is part of the Swedishness, promoting Sweden through their marketing of products, but not necessarily the products themselves. Ståhl referred to there not being a strong Swedishness in the products but rather in the design and the presence of Scandinavia in parts of the assortment (Stål, personal interview 2006-08-11). The consumers are aware of the Swedish shop in every IKEA outside Sweden, where they discover Swedish food and furniture with Swedish design and influences.

Someone mentioned a Swedish woman sitting naked on a lounge table, a quote that is very interesting as it combines the IKEA influence of furniture and the stereotype about Sweden as a country where there are more equality between females and males, where there is a liberal view on sex. French consumers also seem to see blond tall women as a symbol for Sweden.

The consumers seem to perceive Sweden as having well-known companies with new technologies. This could be linked to Sweden’s industry history with companies in the B2B sector producing quality products. Sweden early established an indirect confidence for Made in Sweden products by producing useful high technical products and means for the B2B market such as Sandvik, TetraPak, AlfaLaval, Volvo and SKF. These reputable corporations contributed to a perception that later for the consumer market would not be as well known as the B2C companies. Finally companies such as IKEA and Ericsson would benefit from being associated to Sweden and Scandinavia. This is part of the Swedishness’ history that appears to remain slightly hidden from the consumers.

Furthermore, Sweden is often described as a cold country in the North, where you would not really go for summer vacation, as it would be too cold. The winter is too long, cold and dark and somehow this has become a general perception. Furthermore, there is a strive for quality within all systems and students would apply for exchange programs in for instance Denmark and Sweden, as there is a perception abroad of high-level education with skilled students and teachers.

Products related to Sweden and French consumers’ perception of them is also part of the Swedishness. The consumers’ buying behaviour and the overall perception of quality and added value is essential in explaining Swedish products’ and brands’ image and their impact. The interrelation between consumers and brands would result in French consumers being
exposed to Swedish brands and products in their everyday life. This could then be recognised by them as a Swedish brand and/or product that could affect their buying behaviour.

The KRISPROLLS slogan: “Un des meilleurs moments de la vie suédoise” (Kittel, personlig interview 2006) helps promote Sweden together with sketches in the advertisement on television. Most consumers can recall the advertisements and how they pronounce KRISPROLLS. Pågens seem to have succeeded in using the Swedishness in the product, in the brand and in the advertisements so that the consumer would recognise it. Respondents mention the significant crunchy noise when you eat KRISPROLLS that is present in the advertisements. It is interesting as this is a big part of the advertisements around KRISPROLLS that were communicated in France. Would French consumers associate the noise itself to the product if they had not mention it in the advertisements? Probably not.

As McAuley (2001: 56-60) points out, acting in an international arena is about understanding your customer and the cultural background from which he/she originates. This is essential to understand, but nevertheless to keep the customer’s confidence in the company/product etcetera. The products and brands mentioned in the study all appear to have a good reputation with the French consumers and despite what involvement the consumer needs to have, it is generating confidence and a quality perception. Mühlbacher, Dahringer & Leihis (2002: 170-173) highlight the importance of paying attention to cultural differences amongst customer and stakeholder groups as this creates a variety of perceptions and behaviour that ought to be considered while going international. Kittel (personal interview, 2006-08-15) illustrates that there was a tendency for similar products to KRISPROLLS on the market when they launched the brand in the 80’s. Hence it is important to see what does exist and what could be enhanced etcetera.

Stål (personal interview, 2006-08-11) mentioned that IKEA believe that outside the Nordic countries, they are most likely to be perceived by consumers as a Scandinavian company. In this case, the French consumers seem to differentiate between Sweden and Scandinavia; they mention Swedish colours, Swedish feeling etcetera. When they are asked if they perceive there to be a difference between Sweden as a country and the other Scandinavian countries, they see no difference and group the three countries together. Stål (personal interview, 2006-08-11) also pointed out that IKEA label their products as “Made in Poland, China” if this is the case. Despite this people would assume that it is Made in Sweden, as this is deeply rooted caused by marketing. The consumers also perceive the IKEA furniture to be quality products and that they have got a high standard.

“We are very much Made in Sweden, but today we see to what the world has to offer and to what other countries could give IKEA.” (Ståhl, personal interview, 2006-08-11)

Ståhl might have referred to logistics but what she also said is that although the company, value proposition, communications etcetera may be made in Sweden and breath Swedishness, IKEA are open to what the world has to offer but then influences and logistics would decide on where you are in the world.

Volvo is often perceived as being a German car because it is seen as a quality car. This is linked with the perception of Germany as having the savoir-faire of cars. Cars such as Volvo are proven to be solid and of good quality. It is interesting to see that the respondents reflected over cars and the different aspects of them. They mention that the best cars are French or German. When it comes to cars, they are often said to be where the country of origin matters a lot. Most respondents said that they agree or strongly agree that the country of origin matters
when buying a car. This could imply that they believe in the stereotype that German cars are the best ones, and in this case, the origin is significant and strongly associated to the product. Does this mean that BMW, Mercedes, Volkswagen or Porsche are cars that you should buy, because they are German and those are the only cars you could rely on? Then what about a Volvo, you can rely on it, is it solid etcetera and this is the perception that French people have of the car and the brand while they do appreciated a smaller car than a Volvo. Then it could be argued, why are Volvo not making a smaller car, could it be because it will loose part of its ‘quality solid car’ stamp just because of the fact that smaller cars loose the solidness and reliability of being a safe solid quality car that you can rely on in situations. What can be drawn from this is that the French consumers generalise and believe that German cars are the best. The consumers have no good explanation of why, or seldom refer to why, but they have heard that German cars are best.

Aaker (1991: 117) state that the COO heritage should be emphasised if it can be positively associated to the brand/product. In accordance to this the French consumers appear to have a very positive picture of Sweden and perceive their products and brands as quality products. If the associations are positive they create an added value with the consumer, which would lead to purchase, something that can be seen in the Brand creating process in the mind of the consumer in figure 3.5 (Melin 1999a: 50).

“Made in Sweden is a real value for a product.”
Brand Manager, NYC

Snoj, Pisnik, Korda and Mumel (2004) state that the perception of value is linked to perceived quality, a perception that could be linked to brand perceptions and images. The impact of Sweden’s image on Swedish brands reflects positively on the made in Sweden label.

5.4.5 Perceived Quality

There is a perception about the quality in products from Sweden. If the consumer knows that a product is made in Sweden or from Sweden, their trust in the product would increase. This could be either products that are perceived to have quality or products that have a higher perceived quality compared to other products. This could mean that the savoir-faire of a country plays a role or the reputation of a product with a product country image.

“My trust in the product’s quality would increase if I know it was made in Sweden.”
Computer engineer, 26yrs Antibes

Something that often plays a role in the discussion of quality is price. There is a visible link between the perceived quality of a product and the price. A product is often seen as having low quality when it is cheap, but it could be forgotten that a product that is cheap might have the quality of something whose costs are the same as the quality would be. For instance products made by IKEA might be cheap but the quality would be good corresponding to the actual price that the customer pays hence the quality cannot be claimed to be low as the price is low. The customer would be somewhat influenced by the value for the money concept. A country could be perceived to be producing products that are cheap and that are so cheap that the quality is bad and the product’s function might be perceived as a faulty appliance.

“As I perceive the made in China as faulty appliances, I perceive the Made in Sweden as well manufactured.” 21 student
Papadopoulos and Heslop (1993) depict that the whole concept of Product-Country-Image emerged from a discussion of consumers’ higher perception of manufactured products in countries that are more economically developed. Respondents confirm this through stating that they might see little difference in products from U.S.A, France and Sweden, but perceive a third world country as poles apart. They also state that Sweden and Scandinavia are well developed and stable. This is into widely recognised by the French consumer and something that they take under consideration when purchasing. The perception of a product is higher if the consumer learns that it is from Scandinavia, something that could be linked to this discussion of more developed countries. With this, the perception of quality also arises.

A product such as KRISPROLLS, where the Swedishness in the label but also in the reference to the product itself ‘pétits pains suédoises’ is a good example of where Sweden has become the country of savoir-faire of dried bread panification seche, pain grille, biscottes, pains extrudés and crispbread (KRISPROLLS owns the identity Sweden within this group of dried bread).

5.5 Next Steps

When interpreting the answers that the French consumers gave me when returning the questionnaires, it became obvious that a few findings could lead to a theory. This theory is based on the French consumers’ perception of Sweden, Scandinavia and the Swedishness in products and brands associated to originate from these countries. With this in mind, I will have to clarify these findings further in a final research phase to be able to build a proficient theory that I could verify in a final phase through one or two personal interviews.

The final phase will comprise of two interviews to validate the concluding assumptions of the secondary phase. These interviews will enable me to check what has been already said and also to ask more questions that have emerged during the interpretation of the findings of the survey questionnaires.

- The COO and Made in Scandinavia. The respondents tend to use Scandinavia when they refer to the Nordic countries and not separate them. Identify the usage of Scandinavia rather than single out Sweden or any of the other Nordic countries when referring to products or brands.

- Quality is a constant association consumers make to Sweden and Scandinavia in a COO context. There is a link between price and quality perception, therefore there might be a link between the French consumers perception of Sweden as being expensive and their perception of Sweden or Scandinavia as producing quality products.

- To let the consumer explain to me and to realise why he or she first says that the COO is not important when asked how the respondent perceive the origin of a product. Previous study shows that the consumers on several occasions answer that they do not see the COO as important while hesitating or contradicting themselves in other questions. This could be through preferring some countries to others and a reference to the savoir-faire of a country and a perceived prejudice on it being the truth.

- Define the importance of the savoir-faire of a country in a COO context and its importance as a base when purchasing.
6 Final Empirical Phase

This chapter portrays the final phase of the empirical research. It comprises of an individual customer interview to validate the theory derived from the previous two phases. The phase is divided into two parts, the: empirical research and the interpretation as the next steps is the final conclusions that will be presented in chapter 7.

6.1 End Interview

The end interview was held with Julie Guedj, a 25 year old French consumer from Nice on the 12th June 2007. The interviewee was first asked to list brands that could be associated to Sweden: IKEA, H&M, KRISPROLLS and Ericsson while hesitating on whether Nokia might be either Finnish or Danish.

6.1.1 COO & Scandinavia

Scandinavian countries are perceived as cold with high technology and a high quality of life. They have low unemployment and a good economy model. The respondent listed Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Iceland as being part of Scandinavia. She then also stated when asked that there is no difference between any of the Scandinavian countries and she perceives them as being the same.

Absolut Vodka is definitely from one of the Scandinavian countries, the respondent mentions Sweden, but she said she has no idea at all. It is a product that can be found everywhere in every country and she associates it to Russia as a strong alcoholic beverage but she knew it was Scandinavian. Sophisticated and traditional vodka compared to Russia and it would influence her that it comes from Scandinavia a good way and she would perceive the vodka to be of a better quality than Russian vodka that she perceives as a stronger alcohol. This led us to a quality discussion where the interviewee states that Sweden equals high quality and has got technology experiences and concepts.

The respondent is more likely to buy something that originates from Scandinavia and the Nordic countries as they have a “…very good reputation…” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12).

Perception of Scandinavia is that the countries are cold, the streets are clean, “not like in France” and everything is safe, like in England, you are able to walk on the streets without being bothered. Swedish people are tall with blond hair, friendly and well educated academically. It is also expensive but they produce high-tech products.

6.1.2 Quality & Price

Price is important when compared to a quality brand. The respondent first states that: “I don’t care where it is from!” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12), which is something that led us to the COO and its impact. Furthermore it is mentioned that depending on country of manufacturing, the COO has got an impact. The consumer mentioned H&M as a Swedish brand but in this case she would not care about where, in what country, it is manufactured. When explaining the COO concept further, the respondent explained that she looks at where
things are supposed to be manufactured and gives the following examples, French wine, German cars and Italian shoes. It is a guarantee of quality. She would base decisions on COO except for main and big purchases such as flying to China with Air France and not China Airlines. There is some quality perception of the Made in label but she might not necessarily base decisions on it and might consider another brand. One remark was that Volvo must be a German car as it is a good quality car, which brings us to the perception of German cars as being the best.

When hearing the Made in Sweden label, the consumer associated it to technology, to good quality and to high technological products, but stated that if it were written Made in Norway instead, it would have the same effect on her and not make a difference. Choosing a product Made in France or Made in Sweden would depend on the product and not the country as the respondent has got a similar value of the two countries. Another illustration of the consumers perception of the COO is that you buy cars from countries that you perceive as having good car manufacturers and who are known for being good with cars and that have got a perceived savoir faire of cars.

6.1.3 Savoir faire & Swedish brands

Savoir-faire is the expertise of a country and it is related to the traditions of what the country used to make and has done so for years. For example, France is famous for food, baguettes, cheese and wine. “France is like a label when you buy wine.” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12) Furthermore the interviewee listed Scandinavia, mobile phones, IKEA furniture, KRISPROLLS, smoked salmon and said that she thought Wasa bread probably was from Scandinavia but was not sure on from which country. She also said that Sweden perhaps has got the savoir-faire of KRISPROLLS.

When talking about advertisements referring to Sweden, Krisprolls is the only one that Guedj expresses: “It is really funny, they did a good job.” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12) Her perception of Krisprolls is that they are healthy and very good.

“Maybe KRISPROLLS in Sweden is like the baguette in France?” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12) When mentioning bread in general in a French context, the respondent instantly point out baguette as being bread and associated as bread. Guedj was then given a bag of KRISPROLLS and when examining the package, a few signs point in the direction of Sweden and Scandinavia. The flag on the front of the package shows that it is a Swedish product and perhaps something written in Swedish on its back.

Guedj was not sure whether all Swedish products equal quality, but she said that it is often a warranty of quality and that Scandinavia could easily be associated with quality.

Furthermore she stated that H&M has a good business model and that they are expanding quickly, always ask girls on the street or at universities for the nearest shop when going abroad and travelling. It is a company that offers style and trend different to French, Italian or Spanish fashion, a style typical for Nordic countries and England. “The quality is good and it is better than what you pay, but it is important to understand that paying 20€ for a skirt does not make it a Gucci skirt.” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12)

Guedj reflected that IKEA is like H&M in a way, developing everywhere. IKEA markets their products where to her the names seem to be Scandinavian, they have a clean style on the furniture with straight lines and they appear to be very practical. They have self-service, you
shop and eat at the same place and you would be able to get the basics of what you might need for your apartment.

Finally the respondent advises marketers who might want to market a Swedish product or brand in France to advertise quality and to specify where it is from. If there is a savoir-faire suèdoise and quality link it is even better.

6.2 Interpretation

6.2.1 COO & Scandinavia

It can be verified through the end-interview that French consumers do not care if the product or brand comes from Sweden, Norway or Denmark, as they tend to group the countries together and use Scandinavia when referring to the Nordic countries. They would be able to name the countries within Scandinavia and often include Finland, but to the French consumer there is no difference between the countries or their perception of them individually as countries. During the interview the respondent related to Scandinavia and the Nordic countries rather than just Sweden. Association to Sweden and Scandinavia have got a positive impact on the consumers. It also became clear that it does influence whether a product is Scandinavian and these countries reputation is good therefore it has got a positive impact on consumers internationally. When listening to the consumers there is no real difference between the countries something that has been mentioned in all phases. When asked whether the consumer was most likely to buy a product that is from Sweden because of a quality perception, Guedj (personal interview 200-06-12) answered that it did not only apply to Sweden but also to the other Nordic countries as they all have a very good reputation.

Of course more consideration is put in when dealing with big purchases, as they normally are more expensive. There is a leverage of different alternatives when buying a larger and more expensive product hence more consideration is put into it. Guedj would put more thought into her purchase when buying a ticket with an airline if she was flying a longer route and gave the example that she would take Air France rather than another for her unknown airline.

The consumer would prefer to buy a product and / or brand that she has got confidence in for instance Absolut Vodka. The vodka can be found everywhere and it is perceived to be from Scandinavian countries as they are cold just like Russia and you have to drink strong alcohol. Absolut Vodka appears as a traditional drink with more sophistication than the Russian vodka and bottles.

“If I have to choose one from Russia and one from Scandinavian countries, then I would choose the Scandinavian bottle.” Guedj (personal interview 2007-06-12)

Buying habits such as when you buy a product, on what decision and for what reason was discussed with the respondent. Design could be more important than the actual place where something is manufactured. Guedj stated that she does not care that clothes from H&M would not have been manufactured in Sweden but in Turkey instead as she is addicted to their style and trend hence it has low importance in this case where the country of manufacturing is. To her the country of design and of origin is Sweden as that is where the ideas of how the clothes will be designed etcetera are. The country of origin would impact differently depending on where it is originated.

A quality perception might be based on the country of origin but could be reflected in the made in label and could give an indication of quality. This is not necessarily a base for
decision for the consumer but definitely something that is weighted when deciding on what to purchase. It was interesting in the end-interview that Guedj first indicated that the country of origin does not impact her purchase decisions and perception of a product, but just like a tendency in the questionnaires, she shared her perception with the consumers previously asked.

6.2.2 Quality & Price

This final phase confirms the outcomes of previous phases, where quality discussions were related to Sweden and Scandinavia. Quality is associated by the interviewee to these countries and appears as a general understanding in this context. Furthermore the discussion concerns quality and price, sometimes a consumer pays less than the quality, Guedj agrees and gave an example with H&M that you pay little but get a reasonable quality for what you pay for. She also pointed out that it must be clear for everyone that a 20€ skirt is not of Gucci quality. This reasoning is similar to what I first reflected over when using H&M as an example in the quality discussion. The company is perceived to be producing cheap and low quality clothes, compared to the quality perception of Scandinavia this is an interesting aspect and Guedj said she knew it was Swedish. What I wanted to hear was if it mattered if the quality is perceived to be high because the company is Swedish, but it could be hard to define if Swedishness has got anything to do with the quality perception or if it is merely the price and quality relation that defines the perception. Some people refer to H&M as cheap with bad quality, but it might be quality for what you pay or even as Guedj said: “you actually pay less than the quality but sometimes it is more expensive”.

Then what impact does the Swedishness have on quality? Sweden is expensive but it has high-level quality products. Just because the consumers have a perception of Sweden as being expensive, it could have an impact on the perception of quality. If it is pricey it means that it is of good quality but it can also be influenced by France’s import of products from Scandinavia. This means that Swedishness could account for some of the idea of brand equity. This could mean that the Swedishness would be a brand asset if comparing to the definition of brand equity provided by Aaker (1991: 15-21): “Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers.” It is a brand asset if it is positively associated to a brand. Quality is an attribute that is positively seen when connected to a product, brand or even company, if the origin is seen as a quality marker then this would be a great competitive advantage.

In the interview, quality came up when Sweden and Scandinavia was mentioned which confirms the tendency of mentioning quality when associating to Nordic countries. In trying to figure out where the root of quality comes from in this context, Swedish products and companies comes up. There is a perception of Swedish products being high quality. Is price one of the reasons? Quality could depend on the companies in Sweden or about certain products being imported in France and the French consumers having a perception of those products being expensive and more expensive than other similar French products. This could create a perception of quality. Other reasons for quality being mentioned in the same context as Sweden and Scandinavia could be that there is a link with the knowledge in high technology products that are very well made with a good quality. With this, French consumers could easily associate Scandinavian products and quality. The country of origin where the product is made for instance, Made in Sweden, could be a warranty of quality but it would depend on the product. It might not be the same with a Made in China label according to the respondent. In a context of high technology etcetera, it is important with the origin and it will impact consumers.
6.2.3 Savoir-Faire & Swedish brands

“Advertise the quality and to specify where it is from and play with the savoir faire a la suèdoise and the quality.” (Guedj, personal interview 2007-06-12)

In the final phase it is verified that French consumers depend on their common perception of a generalised concept where the common understanding of what originates from where and what is produced where is in their minds. Savoir-faire in high technology is a warranty of quality so you would have to pay the price. Absolut Vodka appears to have a quality status, so does IKEA, H&M and KRISPROLLS. As stated in previous phases, IKEA is the most known Swedish and Scandinavian brand but next is KRISPROLLS that is also well known to be Swedish.

Different origins, traditions of making things in light wood have created a tradition of practical, simple and straight design and functionality. A country’s savoir-faire of something is related to the tradition of that country and what the country is used to doing for years and has expertise. Guedj propose what could be seen as both prejudice and perceived savoir-faire. A fine line between the two could be seen as negative and it is also more likely to be seen as prejudice than actual perception of origin. For instance Guedj mentioned USA as being good for both bad food such as fast food, hamburgers and ready-made meals whilst Italian shoes, leather, bags and Gucci sounds more quality related.

Guedj suggests that perhaps KRISPROLLS in Sweden is like the baguette in France. This is an interesting assumption because whenever you say bread in France, people would think of baguette, both French and other nationalities. The baguette is world famous and the interviewee mentioned it as being part of France’s savoir-faire therefore it is interesting that she mentioned KRISPROLLS as possibly the savoir-faire of Sweden.

In the example mentioned by the consumer about the COO and H&M, the COO does not matter when it comes to the country of manufacturing, but as the consumer defined it as a Swedish brand, this might have another importance. In this case, the fact that there is a connection between a brand and Sweden impacts the consumer positively. But then if it is as Kapferer (2004: 20) pointed out, that a brand is reducing uncertainty and perceived risk when purchased, then it would be something that, in a savoir-faire context, would be true.

Guedj highlighted that Scandinavia has got a reputation for mobile phones, being good producers of technology, for furniture with IKEA and perhaps clothes then with H&M and suggested that these may be the savoir-faire of Sweden. It could be argued that strong brands and companies could be a reason for this perception of savoir-faire and perhaps this is not a true reasoning since history and often the success of products and companies reflects people’s perception. Haven said that this might just be the reason for savoir-faire and that Sweden and Scandinavia have got savoir-faire of quality perhaps then quality is the savoir-faire of a country which means that mentioning French wine and Italian shoes is not only a common understanding and perception of something but also the perceived quality produced. Then it is not far away that the marketer or a company uses consumers’ perception as a stroke of guidance when promoting and marketing their brand or product. This should be considered at least when marketing in France for a Swedish and even Scandinavian product or brand.
7 Conclusions

In conclusion of the previous interpretation in chapter six, this chapter is an attempt to answer the research questions and respond to the purpose of this study.

7.1 Country of Origin
French consumers’ purchase decisions depend directly or indirectly on the country of origin. The consumers strongly admit to buying or preferring products from a country that is said to have the savoir-faire / know-how of a product.
French consumers do not seem to distinguish between the Nordic countries and perceive them to be one country. They refer to them as Scandinavia but include: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland.
Sweden and/or Scandinavia impact French consumers positively. This is mainly through a perception of quality and a general view of the countries.
A product or brand being referred to as Swedish or can be associated with Sweden is evaluated positively by French consumers.
When marketing Swedish brands and products in France, it can be profitable to refer to Sweden or Scandinavia and to highlight the Country of Origin.
The Made in Sweden label implies quality, high technology, practical, healthy and simple yet stylish design.

7.2 Quality & Brands
Products and brands originating from Sweden or Scandinavian countries stand for quality, some idea of design and reliability.
There is a perception of the quality of life in Scandinavia where Sweden and Scandinavia are associated with quality, high technology and economically wealthy.
There is a connection between price and quality. French consumers link the price of a product with its quality. Scandinavia is perceived as being expensive which implies that while such products may be costly, they are of high quality.
Brands are referred to as Scandinavian if they are not differentiated by country.
Absolut Vodka is not perceived to be Swedish, but as it is a quality product in the eyes of French consumers, they are not surprised of it being a Scandinavian product.
No attention is paid to the origin of Absolut Vodka but vodka is automatically perceived to be a Russian speciality.
KRISPROLLS is widely known by consumers as a Swedish product, petits pains suédois that make a ‘KRRISSSPPRRROOOLLSSSS’ sound when being consumed by Ingmar in the television advertisements.
KRISPROLLS are perceived as a healthy and suggested to be the equivalent to French baguette.
All French consumers mentioned IKEA in the survey. They are all aware of its origin and they perceive IKEA as a producer of cheap quality furniture with a Scandinavian design and touch.
8 New theory and concluding discussion

This chapter is a concluding discussion presenting my reflections that arose from the final phase of study as well as my conclusions in descriptive figures. Furthermore this chapter conveys recommendations and suggestions for further research on the topic as well as criticism on the study.

8.1 Discussion

In the process of understanding French consumers perception of Swedishness and quality of a brand or product, it proved important to define the consumers’ perception of the country itself. Throughout the study it became clear in all three research phases that COO impacts strongly the consumers’ perception of brands and products and their perception of quality. In addition to Swedishness one could also refer to Scandinavian-ness since the consumers often referred to Sweden and Scandinavia as the same.

In order to go in depth and illustrate French consumers’ perception of Swedishness in Swedish brands and products, I have constructed three figures (see figures 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3). These figures go from a high-level process of the French consumers’ quality perception to a more detailed process and lastly a figure showing how Swedishness work with generic steps that can be applied in similar assessments of situations where the country of origin effect is present.

In the first figure (see figure 8.1) you can see the process of how French consumers reach their quality perception. This figure shows four key steps in the order of how they influence and lead to the French consumers’ quality perception of a country, which in this study is Sweden/Scandinavia. How they perceive the image of this country is also linked to the identity of the country. Consumers are influenced by global and national perceptions of countries of origin. If there is a global or national picture of a country and it is perceived to have the savoir-faire of a product, then this is how it is to many consumers. For instance if Sweden and Scandinavia are perceived to be producing quality products and is perceived to have the savoir-faire and tradition of producing / manufacturing a specific product category, then this image strongly influences the consumer. This leads to a strong perception of Sweden and Scandinavia being related to quality with the savoir-faire of producing quality products. The consumers’ perception of the country of origin influences their buying behaviour and perception of a product category. Moreover Swedishness and the country of origin effect in companies, brands and products would finally lead to some indication of perceived quality.

Figure 8.1 French Consumers’ Quality Perception Process
The four elements identified in figure 8.1 can be further detailed with separate influencers or groups of influencers. These influencers have an effect on the individual consumer’s perception of Swedishness but also what Swedishness is perceived to be within the target group. Swedishness in companies, brands and products can also be influenced by elements that then affects and impacts the French consumers. This can occur both with a perception flow from both directions. The below figure *Perception flow: external influences* (figure 8.2) shows how the perception flows of French consumers and Swedishness are influenced by each other and by the various elements. The consumers’ perception of companies, brands and products depends on their influence on them. The same goes for price, quality and savoir-faire. The background and origin seems to have a large impact on consumers. ‘Country of origin’, Made in X or regional areas or groups of countries such as Scandinavia and Europe are place equity factors that are difficult to impact.

![Figure 8.2 Perception flow: external influences (own)](image)

French consumers’ product evaluation is dependent on their perception of the country of origin, which is reflected in their perception of the quality of life in Scandinavia. The product evaluation is divided in layers where its importance can be linked to the hierarchical needs (see figure 3.1) but also via other influencers (see figure 3.7 and figure 8.2). For further details on these influential steps, I created a figure *Country of Origin Image influencers* (see figure 8.3) showing how consumer perception of Swedishness works in detail and which influencers make it work. It can be applied to similar products and country image situations, answering what Swedishness is and how it works in terms of COE. All steps can have a positive or negative effect and make the product country image more explicit.

In understanding how *Swedishness works in detail* there is always some sort of brand or product associations depending on country, competitors, lifestyle, benefits, price and product attributes such as the ones Kapferer suggested in his figure *Brand Associations* (see figure 3.4). Furthermore there are different directions to product image via a global or corporate image of Swedish or Scandinavian products that can influence the buyer. This is something that also was shown in Usunier’s figure showing the layers of country-, company- and brand-related product image (see figure 3.6). If consumers are not familiar with a product, a product category or a brand, they might exclude it from their range before deciding on a purchase. This could be more or less explicit and the consumer could be referring to other products or brands in the same category or to other product categories.

A consumer’s perception of a country can vary with either positive or negative place equity such as country images. This can also be linked to a source of brand identity such as for instance the USA, a country with not all positive sides. Some people might perceive the
country’s politics, power or actions in other parts of the world to be negative which is a disadvantage. A Scandinavian country such as Sweden for instance has got a lower profile with mostly positive associations. Furthermore there are associations to companies, brands and products that can influence explicitly brand perception. A consumer’s buying behaviour is influenced by his or her perception of quality but there is always an influence from price and the hierarchy of needs. These combined with the consumers’ Sources of culture as seen in figure 3.3 with background, education, religion, culture as influential factors.

The COE is not always positive and it is important to understand that there might be implicit negative sides related to the EPISTLE factors or history. However the EPISTLE factors together with media and advertisements can also be positive influencers. The reputation of countries, companies, brands and products influences perception and play a part in how the Swedishness works. Consumers may have general images of products from a certain country and rely on products in a general context. There are several layers of how much a product matters; it can be more explicit than another product category. The brand itself might be the determining factor.

In this study the consumers’ behaviour is explicit in relation to the product, where the product matters but more explicitly the origin of a product. In some cases such as with KRISPROLLS, the brand matters when buying this type of product. What is implicit is how important a specific brand is to the consumers. They may associate a product category more with a country than with a brand and if they do associate the product with a specific brand, it will not mean that they buy it more frequently. There are also various brand associations as mentioned by Aaker (1991: 115) where aspects other than the country of origin impacts. Moreover this study confirmed that the country of origin and made in label is important to French consumers.

Other influencers are stereotypes and general images if they are part of positive associations with the consumers. A company can rely on these stereotypes and images if they are positive and explicit as Swedishness is to French consumers. Relating to an identity trait as influential as quality. Even negative stereotypes can be used in marketing cross-national if they are used with humour on the target market without touching a sensitive side. French consumers mentioned the environmental friendly mentality, beautiful nature and cold climate with snow. These images can be used if perceived positively by the consumers. The perception of COO and Swedishness that consumers have is explicit and present in a decision of purchase. The colours of the Swedish flag, blue and yellow, also have a similar effect. The visual design is an integral part of a company name or brand with IKEA as an example we can see the colours from the Swedish flag in the company logo and on the IKEA stores. The colours make consumers associate to Sweden and link the company with the country of origin.

\[10\] EPISTLE; environment, political, information, technological, legal and economic
8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 General

Map what values the French consumers have and how they perceive the specific country of origin. A built up perception of national identity is a valid unit of measure and the usage in a marketing context could be highly relevant if adapted to a specific country.

Devise a clear strategy for the target country that you are in or would like to enter. Consider the target consumers’ perception of your country and anything related to it. For instance what does your brand or product mean to French consumers and what does the country of origin stand for in their eyes.

French consumers make a strong connection between quality and price. This can be used to indicate a high quality with a higher price or a higher value for money concept.

The Made in X-country indicates the level of quality for French consumers depending on the country. Using a label or indication of where your company, brand or product originates from can influence the consumers to purchase. They are focused on a somewhat general perception of how things are perceived to be in France about other countries.

French consumers are focused on which country or company has got the savoir-faire / know-how of producing or selling particular products. If you are in an industry or selling a particular product range where there is a generally positive perception, stereotypes or prejudices, you can profit from this in your marketing to French consumers.

‘Origin’ and ‘being the original’ are important factors for French consumers. An emphasis on these should be developed. If your product is the first to arrive on the market, then use this in your marketing communication.

French consumers prefer products from France. If possible this should be referred to and highlighted, it can be done even if the product is not of a Made in France origin. A product should seem original and possible have a history or tradition behind.
8.2.2 Swedishness

With Swedishness you can influence or reach the French consumers as it has got a high impact on what is being perceived to be of quality. There is a clear link between the two that can be profitable to explore and use in marketing strategies.

To create Swedishness from the French consumers direct image of Sweden:

- use clear and simple design features
- point out details or associations with Sweden, Scandinavia or the Nordic countries
- use terms referring to nature such as a natural and beautiful landscape, nature, snow and recycling
- use references to blond, blue eyed tall people

Swedishness in the Made in Sweden label implies quality. Therefore use it wherever possible to mark the origin of your product.

For marketing purposes and communication or, for instance, product names, use terms and references such as Swedish, Scandinavian and Nordic.

Swedish traditions, such as Midsummer and Crayfish parties, that are appreciated in Sweden do not have the same value in France. It is therefore important to see to what Swedish traditions French consumers are aware of.

Not all marketing strategies are international and can be transferred from one country to another. There is a need for adapting and investigating the needs and beliefs of the target consumers, which greatly depends on their perception and awareness.

Avoid overdoing the Swedishness when market a product. Few companies (if you are not IKEA that is) would master such an investment and pull it off. Instead take advantage of the perceived origin of your product for the French market and label it Made in...

Use figure 8.3 Country of Origin Image influencers as a generic figure when considering the influencers of your country’s image and identity when marketing cross-nationally.

8.3 Criticism of the study

After the completion of this research project I have realised that some things could possibly have been done differently. The survey was distributed over the Internet, however a distribution through other channels could impact the outcome and reach consumers who have no access to the Internet. Today in France there is lot of people with little contact with the Internet and the answers cannot represent all of the French population. A future survey could be distributed to a wider audience through addressing people on the streets and in stores. It could also be directed to children, teenagers, middle aged, 75+ or people of various professions. A comparison of the groups could also be interesting as it would show if perception is influenced at an early age by any of the in figure 8.3 named influencers. This type of study would also give a broader view of French consumers’ perception of Swedishness. It will also give an indication of the differences between ages, which could be interesting especially for a company with a specific target group such as teenagers.

Translating the survey questions into French and thus potentially improved the findings. Nevertheless it is doubtful if it would have changed anything significantly. As for the language both the description in French and the questions in English were all tested with a French native speaker. Respondents answered in both French and English in correspondence to the purposes of each question. If the questions had been translated the consumers could possibly have given a broader explanation, but then again as they did write in both French and English, the language did not hinder them in answering. A few respondents did not seem to understand the purpose of all questions but it appeared to be more of a confusion of the
similarity between some of the questions. These respondents gave minimal responses on these questions although some consumers had different answers to them, which was also the intended purpose of these questions. In fact the answers that respondents gave were sufficient in responding to the purpose of the study. Furthermore the results from the survey could have been used for a graphical analysis if I had received more filled in questionnaires.

Some people answered what they thought about one brand when comparing it to another brand, but did not describe what they thought about the brand itself. This is difficult when assessing what respondents think about a specific brand, but it can also give us a hint of which brands they use as a comparison. It is possible that a focus group could have been better to test the questionnaires, as it would have yielded more comprehensive answers and spontaneous follow-up questions.

**8.4 Further research**

During the research and the process of understanding the field of study, a few interesting aspects emerged. Further research could be conducted on the following topics to give further insight on them:

- Investigate and compare different age groups of French consumers, such as children, teenagers, middle aged and 75+.
- Why are Swedish products being perceived as quality products? Could it have something to do with the standard of living in Sweden?
- A similar study could be made to investigate the Concept of Swedishness split across another set of countries.
  - How is Swedishness perceived in other countries in Europe or around the world for instance in Germany, in the US, in New Zealand?
  - Turn the origin around, how is Frenchness perceived in Sweden?
  - Since consumers often mention German cars, Germaness in France
- How a product manager could use different levels of dosage of Swedishness e.g IKEA is using it full on while other companies might have it in the background.
- Explore the *savoir-faire* of a country and its impact on consumers both internally and externally.

**8.5 Epilogue**

As this study has shown consumer perception varies with the country of origin image. This means that a country related to one company or brand might still be perceived to be from the country where it originated.

Dagens Industri and Financial Times announced on the 31st March 2008 that Pernod Ricard won the auction of Vin & Sprit from the Swedish government for 5.6 billion euros and will be taking over Absolut Vodka. This means that the world’s fourth biggest spirits brand will become French owned. (www.di.se; www.ft.com/home/europe, 2008-03-31)

With this purchase, one could speculate further as to whether or not this will change French consumers’ perception and if it will result in them being more likely to purchase vodka because it is now French or less because its owner is not originating from the perceived country of origin or the country of origin. It is quite probably that changing brand ownership might not affect anyone at all as the country of origin image may remain with Sweden.


9 List of References

Literature


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Interviews

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Kittel, Georg, Information responsible & former brand manager KRISPROLLS, Pågen, personal interview, 2006-08-16.
Guedj, Julie, French consumer from Nice, personal interview, 2007-06-12, kl:13.00 lasted 52 minutes.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix 5 – End – interview questionnaire / interview guide
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Initial Phase – Interview Guide / Questions

1. Female / Male
2. Age
3. Occupation
4. City of residence
5. Introduction
6. What is your perception of Absolut Vodka?
7. Do you have any associations to it? What do you associate to it?
8. What do you associate Absolut Vodka with?
9. What about its origin, does it matter to you?
10. Do you know where it comes from?
11. How does the fact that Absolut Vodka is produced in Sweden influence your perception of it?
12. Buying behaviour
13. What importance has the country of origin on you?
14. If you are going to buy a product and there are several products from different countries. How does the country of origin affect you?
15. If you are buying a product on what do you base your purchase? What makes you buy something?
17. How do you perceive and associate the origin to the product?
18. What importance has the country of origin on you?
19. If you are going to buy a product and there are several products from different countries. How does the country of origin affect you?
20. Sweden as a brand
21. I am writing a thesis about French consumers’ perception of Sweden as a brand. What is your perception of Sweden as a country?
22. What do you associate with Sweden?
23. Do you think that knowing the product is Swedish would change your perception of the product? Can you describe
24. Write down Swedish brands and products that you can think of. Tell me about them.
25. Do you recall any advertisements on the Television or in magazines referring to Sweden? Could you please describe them?
26. How do you perceive products “Made in Sweden”? If you see the “Made in Sweden” label, how do you perceive it to be?
27. What do you think about their quality?
28. Do you think that there is a difference between products made in France or in Sweden? Why?
29. What do you think about “KRISPROLLS”/petit pain suédois? Tell me about them. Can you also identify the company that originally makes them?
30. What about Wasa and their hard bread?
31. What about H&M? Did you know that they are a Swedish brand? Do you think that French people know that they are Swedish?
32. What do you think about Volvo or Saab? Please describe in a few lines your perception of these cars.
Je m’appelle Annika Persson et je suis en train d’écrire ma thèse dans le cadre de mon master commerce international au CERAM et Växjö University. D’abord, je tiens à vous remercier pour votre participation. C’est une partie essentielle pour ma thèse et je vous en suis vraiment reconnaissante.

N’hésitez pas à écrire tout ce que vous pensez. Il n’y a pas des restrictions sur le nombre de lignes. Les questions sont en anglais mais vous pouvez y répondre aux questions en anglais ou en français, selon votre souhait. Vos réponses seront anonymes et elles ne seront montrées à personnes donc en aucun cas à des professeurs du CERAM ou de l’université de Växjö. L’analyse que j’effectuerai de vos réponses sera incluse dans ma thèse pour appuyer ma partie théorique. S’il y a quelque chose que vous ne comprenez pas, n’hésitez pas à m’en faire part et je pourrais ainsi mieux vous l’expliquer.

C’est aussi important de comprendre que des produits “Made in …” par exemple “Made in Sweden”, “Made in France” ou “Made in China” peuvent aussi être des produits qui sont manufacturé, conçus, provenus etc. Il peut également être des produits nommés en tant que ”French fashion & French perfume” ou “English tea”. Il s’agit des associations et des perceptions et non seulement du pays de fabrication.

Sincèrement,
Annika Persson BA
annika.a.persson@gmail.com
Female/Male:
Age:
Occupation:
City of residence:

**Introduction:**
1. Do you know where Absolut Vodka comes from?
   Yes ☐ from ___________________
   No ☐ perhaps ___________________

2. What is your perception of Absolut Vodka?
   Sophisticated ☐ Quality ☐
   Traditional ☐ Pricy ☐

3a. Does it influence you that Absolut Vodka is produced in Sweden?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

   b. If yes please describe how this influences you.

   

**Buying habits:**
4. When you buy a product, on what do you base your purchase?
   Price ☐ Quality ☐ Design ☐ Feelings ☐

5. Do you base your decision on the origin of the product?
   Yes ☐ No ☐

6. What impact does the country of origin have on you? On a scale where 5 is the highest
   1) ☐ 2) ☐ 3) ☐ 4) ☐ 5) ☐

7. How do you perceive the origin of a product?

   

8. When you buy a product and there are different “Made in …” labelled products to 
   choose from. How does the country of origin affect you?

   

9. What impact does the label “Made in Sweden” have on you?

   

IV
Sweden as a brand:

10a. What is your perception of Sweden as a country?

b. What do you think about Sweden? On a scale 1-5 where 1 is low and 5 is high.
   1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

11a. Scandinavia comprises Sweden, Norway & Denmark. Do you perceive Sweden to be different from the other two Scandinavian countries?
   Yes □  No □

b. If Yes, how do you describe the main difference between these countries?

12a. Would you change your perception of a product if you knew it was made in Sweden?
   strongly disagree □  disagree □  agree □  strongly agree □  don’t know □

b. Please describe how your perception would change.

13a. List Swedish brands and products that you can think of. Please describe them.

b. Which Swedish products have you bought?

14. Please describe advertisements on TV or in magazines referring to Sweden

15. What do you think about products with a "Made in Sweden" label?

16. Do Swedish products mean quality? 1 is low quality and 5 is high quality
   1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

17. Is a difference between products made in France and products made in Sweden?
   Yes □  No □

b. How would you explain your answer?
**Swedish brands:**

18a. What do you think about “KRISPROLLS”/petit pain suédois? Please explain them.

b. Please describe any advertisements for “KRISPROLLS” that you have seen.

19. What do you think about Wasa and their flatbread? Please explain. How would you describe their advertisements?

20. How would you associate these two products with Sweden?

21. Did you know that H&M is a Swedish brand? Please explain your thoughts around this company and if it matters to you that they have a Swedish origin.

22. Does the “country of origin” affect you when buying a car?

   Strongly disagree □  Disagree □  Agree □  Strongly agree □  Don’t know □

23. What do you think about Volvo’s and Saab’s Swedish origin? Please describe.

24a. What do you think about IKEA? On a scale where 1 is low quality and 5 is high

1) □  2) □  3) □  4) □  5) □

b. How do you think IKEA markets its Swedish origin?

If there is anything that you would like to add, please feel free to write it below:

---

I would once more like to thank you for participating and answering to my questions. If you are interested I will be happy to send you a copy of my study when it has been approved by CERAM and the School of Management and Economics at Växjö University.

Annika Persson
# Structure & Purpose of the Survey Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Needed information/Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female / Male</td>
<td>To be able to analyse if the sample is representative for sex, age, occupation or city if necessary. Refer to when using quotes from the respondents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of residence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Introduction

1. **Do you know where Absolut Vodka comes from?**
   - Does the consumer relate Absolut Vodka to Sweden? Vodka is often perceived as coming from Russia. Could this be a disadvantage to market Absolut as being Swedish. Russian vodka is supposed to be the best according to some perceptions. Have they noticed that it says “Country of Sweden” on the bottle?

2. **What is your perception of Absolut Vodka?**
   - The aim is to compare a Swedish perception of Absolut Vodka as being a Swedish export to the perception of French consumers. Absolut Vodka has created an image of a trendy bottle that you can fill with anything and yet relate to Absolut Vodka something that is tested in this question.
   - Do the consumer associate to the bottle or to the country of Sweden? To make the consumer perceive and associate different things to the product

3. **Does it influence you that Absolut Vodka is produced in Sweden?**
   - To see if the consumer influenced by the fact that this vodka is Swedish.

## Buying habits

4. **When you buy a product, on what do you base your purchase?**
   - In the trial interview, four factors came up: Price, Quality, Design and Feelings. This question is aimed to find out what factors the consumer think of that could be of importance to a purchase. It can also be related to the questions below about Sweden and quality.

5. **Do you base your decision on the origin of the product?**
   - A direct question to trigger the consumer’s perceptions when it comes to buying a product because of its origin. Negative for this question is that it could make the consumer feel too subjective even racist answering YES. Therefore a few follow-up questions are asked but differently below.

6. **What impact does the country of origin have on you? On a scale where 5 is the highest.**
   - Scale for the consumer to classify the impact of the country of origin on them. Question is asked to be able to measure the level of impact on the consumer.

7. **How do you perceive the origin of a product?**
   - As mention in question 5, this one could develop the Yes or No in the above question. It is a more in-depth question that aims to trigger the
8. When you buy a product and there are different “Made in…” labelled products to choose from, how does the country of origin affect you?

This question aims to test what the consumer thinks about the “Made in …” label and to test their perception towards theory. What impact does it have on the consumer? Will the choice of product depend on what country it originates from.

9. What impact does the label “Made in Sweden” have on you?

How is the label “Made in Sweden”, being perceived by the French consumer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sweden as a brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10a. What is your perception of Sweden as a country?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This question aims to find out a general perception of Sweden. This is important in identifying the country that is being studied as well as the perception of it. It could be adjectives or brands. What is the brand equity of Sweden? Is there any brand that have had an impact on Sweden and helped Sweden market itself?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. What do you think about Sweden? On a scale 1-5, where 1 is low and 5 is high.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims to measure if a consumer perceive Swedish products as being positive or negative. Is it good to mention in an international advertising that it is Swedish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11a. Scandinavia comprises Sweden, Norway &amp; Denmark. Do you perceive Sweden to be different from the other two Scandinavian countries?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim to see if the consumer perceives Sweden differently from the other two Scandinavian countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. How do you describe the main difference between these countries?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To see if the consumers can describe this difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12a. Would you change your perception of a product if you knew it was made in Sweden?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim to see if French consumers change their minds if they know a product was made in Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Please describe how your perception would change.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This question is posed to find out how the consumers would change their mind if they knew it is a Swedish product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13a. List Swedish brands and products that you can think of.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim to make the consumer think of brands and products that could be perceived as being Swedish. Essential to see which brands are famous amongst French consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please describe them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b. Which Swedish products have you bought?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posed to find out if the consumer has any personal experiences with Swedish products and if they thought about Sweden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 14. Please describe advertisements on TV or in magazines referring to Sweden. |
| This question aim to find out whether the consumer has seen any adverts that could be tied to Sweden and if they remember anyone in particular. Could this play a role in naming a certain product Swedish something? Swedish car, Swedish clothes, Swedish bread etcetera. |

| 15. What do you think about products with a “Made in Sweden” label ? |
| How is Swedish products perceived? The made in label could comprise different things. Is the consumer aware of this? The question is asked to find out what the consumer perceives in a “Made in Sweden” label. |

| 16. Do Swedish products mean quality? 1 is low quality and 5 is very high quality |
| Quality was mentioned in the pilot interview, is this a common perception? The question is asked to find out how high the quality is being perceived to be. |

| 17a. Do you think that there is a difference between products made in France or in Sweden? |
| This question is posed to find out if the consumers think that there is a difference between Swedish and French products? Do they refer to them producing different products or to the quality level. French are stereotyped to be very nationalistic set in their ways of culture, promoting everything French and the French language etc. |

| b. How would you explain your answer? |
| The consumer is here able to comment on the above question. What kind of comparison does the French consumer makes. Are the different products perceived differently |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>19a. What do you think about “KRISPROLLS”/petit pain suédois? Please explain them.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This product is called Swedish bread in french and is one of the roots to this study. This question is aimed to find out if they have tried the product and what they think about it. There has been advertising on TV.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| b. Please describe any advertisements for “Krisprolls” that you have seen. |
| Refer to Krisprolls’ Ingemar and the crunchy noise that is associated to the advertisements. What do the consumers remember? |

<p>| 18. What do you think about Wasa and their flatbread? Please explain. How would you describe their advertisements? |
| This product is also a well known exported Swedish brand. But most of the exported product is made in Germany. Wasa is today owned by italian Barilla which also makes it an interesting product when it comes to “Made in Sweden”. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. How would you associate these two products with Sweden?</td>
<td>Essential Swedish attribute according to Swedish people and can be found in all Swedish homes. On the shelves in France and has got a “Swedish flag” on its packaging. Do the consumers notice this? Question posed to find out if the French consumers perceive it to be associated with Sweden and do they associated Sweden to the product?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Did you know that H&amp;M is a Swedish brand? Please explain your thoughts around this company and if it matters to you that they have a Swedish origin.</td>
<td>Famous Swedish clothing company in the eyes of a Swede. This question is posed to see if they are recognized as being Swedish. They do not market themselves as being Swedish. It is positioned as a cheap trendy clothes for the many. Interesting to see if it being Swedish with the perception of quality that comes with it, changes the perception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Does the “country of origin” affect you when buying a car?</td>
<td>Perception on COO of cars, there is a stereotype about German cars being the best. What do they say about cars? Refer to French cars or German?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. What do you think about Volvo’s and Saab’s Swedish origin? Please describe.</td>
<td>Aim to find out the perception of Volvo and Saab. These cars are no longer owned buy Swedish companies, but the lorries are. Volvo is often seen as a safe car and Swedish people perceive at least Volvo to be one of the most Swedish symbols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24a. What do you think about IKEA? On a scale where 1 is low quality and 5 is high</td>
<td>This question is posed to find out what the consumer think about IKEA. This company is often associated to Sweden and therefore it is interesting how the company relates to the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. How do you think IKEA markets its Swedish origin?</td>
<td>French people tend to buy French cars. What is their perception in general about buying a car because of its origin? IKEA plays heavily on their origin. The question aims to find out whether it is perceived by French consumers if they do and how aware they are about this. IKEA plays heavily on their origin. The question aims to find out whether it is perceived by French consumers if they do and how aware they are about this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there is anything that you would like to add, please feel free to write it below:</td>
<td>Additional comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Expert Interviews – Interview Guide / Questionnaire**

Uppsats författare: Annika Persson, CERAM (Frankrike) samt Växjö Universitet. 
annika.a.persson@gmail.com, apemf02@student.vxu.se

Uppsats titel: “Made in Sweden – a study of French consumers’ perception of Sweden as a brand”.

**Syfte:** Syftet med min uppsats är att se hur franska konsumenter uppfattar Sverige som varumärke. Samt om deras utvärdering av produkter från Sverige beror på produktens ursprungsland. Föredrar de produkter pga ursprunget och ger ursprunget en känsla av kvalitet/uppfattat värde. Hur kan marknadsförare dra fördelar genom vetskapen hur franska konsumenter uppfattar Sverige som varumärke.

**Instruktioner:** Jag ber er vänligen att svara på varje fråga så utförligt ni kan. Varje svarsbox gör det möjligt att skriva obegränsat. När jag får tillbaka era svar, senast den 20 augusti, kommer jag att sammanställa dem som jag vill att de skall ingå i mitt examensarbete. Därpå kommer jag att skicka den sammanställda texten per e-mail till er för er godkänning av min återgivning av ert svar samt låta er verifiera det jag har skrivit med det ni skickade till mig. Tack för att ni tar er tid att svara på min intervju.

**Intervjufrågor:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Företag:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namn:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position samt titel i företaget:</td>
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<td>Telefon:</td>
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<td>E-mail:</td>
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<td>Kommentar till konfidentiella uppgifter:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kommentar till användandet av företagets logga:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Får jag återkomma med frågor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Vad betyder "Made in Sweden" för er?

2. Hur anser ni att ert företag lever upp till detta?

3. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt internationellt?

4. Kan ni berätta om ert produkt i Frankrike?

5. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt i Frankrike?

6. Vad är er uppfattning om den franska marknaden?

7. Vad är er uppfattning om de franska konsumenterna?

8. Hur vill ni att ert produkt skall uppfattas samt associeras till Sverige?

9. Hur tror ni att ert produkt samt ert företag uppfattas idag?

10. Hur tror ni att franska konsumenter uppfattar ert produkt/företag?

11. Hur anser ni att ert produkt influerar Sverige som varumärke?

12. Hur spelar ni på ert produkt/ers svenska ursprung?

13. Hur relaterar ni till "Made in Sverige" vid framställning av förpackning?

14. Hur relaterar ni till "Made in Sverige" vid framställning av produkt?

15. Vad har ni för reklam just nu i Frankrike?

16. Kan ni beskriva reklamen samt dess budskap?
17. Hur visas det svenska ursprunget i reklamen?

18. Finns det något jag inte har tagit upp som ni anser att jag behöver belysa?

19. Hur ställer ni er till publicering av era svar i min uppsats?

20. Får jag lov att använda er logga i min uppsats då jag refererar till ert företag?

21. Övrigt

Jag vill än en gång tacka ert för tillmötesgående samt att ni har visar intresse för min uppsats samt för era svar! Det betyder oerhört mycket för mig och hjälper mig i min forskning samt att skriva ett bra examensarbete. När min uppsats har godkänts vid CERAM business school samt Ekonomihögskolan vid Växjö Universitet kommer jag att delge er en kopia av min uppsats i pdf-format.

Annika Persson
End-Interviews / Final Phase

1. Would you still think that Swedish people are cold if they lived in a warm country?
2. does the fact that Sweden is perceived as being a cold country climate wise also mean that Swedish people are cold?
3. People does not seem to be aware of the fact that some people perceive H&M and IKEA as low quality, but then they see Sweden as high quality. Could this have something to do with the fact that you actually get value for money buying at these two shops. You pay cheap but get cheap too. Value for what you pay.
4. Do you buy products from a country
5. How do you perceive prices to be in Sweden?
6. What is the difference to France?
7. How do you differentiate products from Sweden and France?
8. Would the quality matters for you?
9. What aspects of quality would play a role for you?
10. what would you say is the reason for purchase for you?
11. How could you define an attribute in a product that is belonging to one specific country?
12. Is there such a thing as Swedishness?
13. What would you say is Swedishness?
14. What is typically French?
15. How could you describe the relationship between a French and his or her bread?
16. What does the baguette mean to you?
17. What is bread in france?
18. Can you define the savoir-faire of a product?
19. What is the savoir-faire of France?
20. What is the savoir-faire of Sweden?
21. Is there any particular products that you would associate as savoir-faire products of a specific country? List
22. Could you describe if there is a difference between just buying a product because it is from your country or if it is different if you buy a product from a “savoir-faire” country?
23. Would the origin of a product influence you?
24. how does products from Sweden influence you?
25. How does products from France influence you?
26. Absolut Vodka?
27. What is your perception of Absolut Vodka?
28. KRISPROLLS, IKEA, Lego, Nokia, Ericsson, SAS, Brio,
29. Vad betyder ”Made in Sweden” för er?
30. Hur anser ni att ert företag lever upp till detta?
31. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt internationellt?
32. Kan ni berätta om er produkt i Frankrike?
33. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt i Frankrike?
34. Vad är er uppfattning om den franska marknaden?
35. Vad är er uppfattning om de franska konsumenterna?
36. Hur vill ni att er produkt skall uppfattas samt associeras till Sverige?
37. Hur tror ni att er produkt samt företag uppfattas idag?
38. Hur tror ni att franska konsumenter uppfattar er produkt/företag?
39. Hur anser ni att er produkt influerar Sverige som varumärke?
40. Hur spelar ni på er produkts/ert företags svenska ursprung?
41. Hur relaterar ni till ”Made in Sverige” vid framställning av förpackning?
42. Hur relaterar ni till ”Made in Sverige” vid framställning av produkt?
43. Vad har ni för reklam just nu i Frankrike?
44. Kan ni beskriva reklamen samt dess budskap?
45. Hur visas det svenska ursprunget i reklamen?
46. Finns det något jag inte har tagit upp som ni anser att jag behöver belysa?
47. Hur ställer ni er till publicering av era svar i min uppsats?
48. Får jag lov att använda er logga i min uppsats då jag refererar till ert företag?
Interviews – Experts\textsuperscript{11}

1. Eva Stål, PR-manager, IKEA Sweden

IKEA is a company with its origin in Sweden and it was founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943. Today, IKEA is more of an international company with its head office in Holland. The materials for production and products are being manufactured in different countries. This is all depending on the best solution and best material suitable for manufacturing and meeting IKEA’s needs. Therefore, products sold by IKEA are marked with the country of origin for each single product. Products can for instance be manufactured and carry the label “Made in Sweden”, “Made in Pakistan”, “Made in China” or “Made in Poland”.

“\textit{We are very much Made in Sweden, but today we see to what the world has to offer and to what other countries could give IKEA.} (Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11)"

Made in Sweden could mean different things such as country of manufacturing, design and inspiration of the Scandinavian culture. For IKEA, “Made in Sweden” stands mainly for the country of origin where the company was founded and first expanded. The “Made in Sweden” also stands for a part of the manufacturing & production, a part of the design and a large part of influences from the Scandinavian culture. Sweden is one country of many making IKEA the international company it today is.

The location of the IKEA stores worldwide is also a reason for producing products closer to the point of sales, to avoid long and unnecessary transports. There are about 1300 buying centres in over 50 countries around the world with the task to find suppliers and train them to be able to meet IKEA’s expectations and needs. They are constantly looking for the right suppliers and training them to create long-term relationships. The five largest buyers are Poland (12%), China (18%), Sweden (9%), Germany etc.

“\textit{Their tasks are to find the right merchandises to the right price and the right quality.}” (Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11)

IKEA is a concept, there are guidelines for how things should be and used, everything from commercials and advertising to layout in the stores. Sweden is an important part of the IKEA concept since it does describe our origin and heritage. IKEA also train their people and when a new store is being opened they are trained to interpret the IKEA concept and to maintain it. These guidelines are then interpreted by all countries and adjusted to the country in question if necessary, this is mainly concerning commercials. IKEA Germany plays a lot with the Swedish origin such as Swedish holidays and traditions. They used for instance their perception of Swedish midsummer in adverts summer 2005, which went to far.

IKEA might be perceived more as a Scandinavian company outside the Nordic countries and Europe. We try to maintain this perception while we like to put an emphasis on Sweden as the country of origin in the Nordic countries and Europe.

When marketing internationally, IKEA plays on its origin as being a Swedish, Scandinavian company. We use the yellow and blue colours in the flag in our logo and on the stores. We get inspired through bringing out the four seasons, the story about Ingvar Kamprad and how he

\textsuperscript{11} Both expert interviews have been conducted in Swedish, these translations are made by myself.
created IKEA but also through colours and materials in the design and layouts of the rooms in the IKEA stores.

There is not really a strong “Swedishness” in the products but rather a sense of Swedishness through the design expression per se. It should be functional, simple and it has often got bright wood and colours. All designs and products cannot be originated to Scandinavia, but it is present in parts of the assortment. These parts and their design language can be drawn to Scandinavia and …

We have a tradition in compact living with the emphasis on design and taste for small surfaces. We call one part of our collections, “Young Swede”, it refers to a playful, cheerful and very colourful style with the functional aspect of compact living.

“…there is a little decorator in each of us…” (Stål, personal interview, 2006-08-11)

Another part of the collection is called “country” and is a bright collection where Scandinavian design plays a role and brings out different aspects in the creations of rooms and homes in the IKEA store, putting function in the centre. These conceptual frames are something that all stores, regardless the country, apply and follow. There are some minor differences made to suit culture and country.

At IKEA we find that it is important that the consumers have confidence in IKEA. We would like for the consumers to associate IKEA and our products to Sweden’s nature, recycling and clear air, something that we put an emphasis on in Sweden. For the consumer, the most obvious Swedish influence except for the blue and yellow colours in the store, is of course the food, which to 90% is Swedish. You can find a Swedish food shop in every IKEA store if you go abroad. Here you can find meatballs, salmon, jam etcetera all with connections to Sweden. We believe at IKEA that home and food have a natural connection and tasting the “Swedishness” is an important association to Scandinavia for our consumers worldwide.

IKEA is building a feeling of Sweden, through the store, products and food shop but also its leadership. How IKEA position themselves to hierarchy at work, which is clearly a Swedish way of thinking. It is important that everyone helps out, even the managers, and most of the time you will not be able to see who is the manager on the shop floor. For instance in Japan, it is not ok to do something wrong, but we at IKEA says that it is ok to make mistakes, learn from them. It is important that every employee takes responsibility to develop IKEA and to contribute so that IKEA increase their sales and would be able to open more stores.

**Att göra:**
- 9 teser som jag skall få tillgång till genom Eva Stål.
- Verifiera % och lägg till dem med statistik på www.ikea.com

Ta kontakt med Pierre, deir@memo.ikea.com
- har talat med Eva Stål, samt ställt frågor till henne
- återkomma till Eva Stål ifall han inte svarar
Interview – Georg Kittel, Information Manager, Pågen AB, Sweden

Georg Kittel has been working at Pågen AB since 1985 as Export director (1985-2000) where he held marketing responsibilities such as strategical marketing decisions for KRISPROLLS together with French partners. He then went on to become brand manager for Pågen’s corporate brand (2000-2006) and more recently, the Information responsible manager.

Made in Sweden is officially a product manufactured in Sweden with if possible Swedish resources and raw material. It can also make people associate different things to a product such as dependency on the product, the receiving country etcetera. Historically, the Made in Sweden concept implied quality for Swedish produced products for export such as steel, wood etcetera. In modern time, “the Swedish” has supposedly been taken over largely by other branches for instance music (ABBA), sports (Björn Borg), furnitures (IKEA), fashion (H&M) and food (Absolut, KRISPROLLS). Kanske finns inte Made in Sweden in these products.

The brand KRISPROLLS, surely is a made in Sweden product. They have especially in France gotten known as a very Swedish product. We do not use the term made in Sweden literally in our marketing of KRISPROLLS. The Swedish heritage plays an important part in all of our communication and marketing, but it is being used in different terms and means.

Pågen’s KRISPROLLS are made on almost only Swedish raw material. The flour comes from our own mill in Scania. All our product development of KRISPROLLS is made with Swedish attributes, we base our new products and different tastes and on Swedish raw material for instance blueberries and cranberries or something that have connections to Swedish food culture such as cardamom dried bread.

Pågen launched their wholemeal KRISPROLLS in Switzerland in 1978. This kind of Swedish bread existed in neither Switzerland nor Europe. Hence, Pågen called their product for “Schweden-Brötchen” and “Pains Grillés Suèdois” to give a feeling of a different product. It became an immediate success which lead to Pågen introducing the bread to other countries in Europe and amongst them, France about 1980 with the same importer ever since. KRISPROLLS are being sold and marketed in about 20 countries outside Sweden. Totally they have been sold to about 40 countries over the years. Almost 90% of our KRISPROLLS -sales happen abroad. One country answers to most of the sales, and that is France with more than 60 % something that is influencing how we market our product on an international basis. We are adjusting the marketing to other countries according to how our situation is on the French market.

KRISPROLLS in France today
It started of slowly with about 4-5yrs in smaller speciality stores and it was not until 1984/85 when we got the department store Monoprix, something that lead to a sudden expansion through other supermarkets. The brand KRISPROLLS was introduced in France in 1985 with pains suédois as a product name. Competition started, with partly Swedish bakeries but also French companies that tried to copy the bread.

France is today the largest market in the world for this product category and KRISPROLLS has got a market share of over 45 %, present in almost 100 % of the French market and is the most known brand of its category of bread. KRISPROLLS is a premium brand both in quality/taste and price. You are able to find a similar product for about ¼ of what you pay for KRISPROLLS, which tells us that this is a price premium product for the market leader.
Within the brand KRISPROLLS, Pågen sell about four to six different tastes such as Wholemeal (Complets), unsweetened wholemeal (Sans sucre), Vete (Dorés), Blueberry & Carnberry (Myrtilles & Cranberries). We have also had different flavours such as cardamom dried bread, oat and ecological KRISPROLLS. Most types can be found in two different sized packaging.

There was no pain grille in France before Pågen launched them but there were a range of products within the category painification seche, which meant that the French already had a consumer behaviour that pain would suit.

The Swedishness has had a large impact on our marketing. With the made up category pains grilles suédois, Pågen built up their marketing with the Swedish heritage present in the name itself something that today is famous. With the brand KRISPROLLS, an identity was created to distinguish them from the competitors.

We have very positive experience of French consumers since they have taken our product and our brand to their hearts. They are open and curious and willing to try new things. They are gourmets and enjoy the good in life but at the same time they are picky and prepared to pay more in order to get the best. They are brand conscious and choose their brands careful. This is of course not a general perception, but we thought that it suited well on the French consumers who we are particularly interested in.

Most people on the French market associate KRISPROLLS to Sweden as a Swedish product while they have little or no knowledge about the company behind this Swedish product, Pågen. Most consumers probably will not use KRISPROLLS but talk about petits pains suédois. Those who buy the KRISPROLLS has hopefully a positive perception of the product, that it tastes very good, that they are mainly a breakfast bread and that they are a bit exotic coming from Sweden.

KRISPROLLS is most likely one of the products that French associate to Sweden, but we have no idea on how our product could have contributed to their total picture of Sweden or if it influence Sweden as a brand. We believe that the picture of Sweden has had a large impact on the brand KRISPROLLS in France but we are not sure if this is also true.

The Swedish heritage plays a big part in everything Pågen does when it comes to KRISPROLLS. It All started 25 years ago with a special term for this kind of product, pains grilles suédois/petits pains suédois, something that have had great impact and presence on the packaging during these years.

The registered brand KRISPROLLS, used globally, is also a way of marking the swedishness especially in France. Even if we Swedes do not perceive it to be a particularly Swedish name, the French does it. K is an exotic letter in French and the whole name is hard to pronounce and a bit mystical. French perceive our name as Nordic, exotic, difficult to pronounce and a lot of French people pronounce it KRRISPPROOLL and think that it is an old Viking word. In previous research, consumers have stated that “You can really imagine how Vikings sat and crunched on these kind of breads”. The Swedishness is important to give our brand a distinguished identity and KRISPROLLS owns “Sverige” within panification seche which includes dry breadproducts, biscottes, pains extrudes, pains grilles, crispbread etcetera.
When several competitors with similar products emerged on the market in the end 80s, they not only got imaginary names in order to associate to Sweden/Nordic countries, eg Grillfjord, Skorp’rolls, Narvik, but also the productname pains suédois. The main competitor, Heudebert, a company owned by Danone, spent a lot of money on marketing their Les Petits Grillés and gave them a Swedish look and played with prejudice about Sweden in their advertisements. For instance the seductive advertisements with Gunilla who eats KRISPROLLS in bed. This contributed to French thinking it is a Swedish product. Since KRISPROLLS was the first brand on the market and already had an established presence in the mind of the French consumers as being a very Swedish product, these advertisements with Gunilla, increased KRISPROLLS’ sales every time they were broadcasted. People still recall this brand strengthening advertisement from the 80s that Pågen did not pay a cent for.

About 1990, Pågen started the initiative to lobby for winning approval that pains grilles suédois, not only was a name of a product category but also an original naming that only Swedish produced KRISPROLLS were allowed to have. Pågen contacted Sweden’s Bakeryassociation, Centre de Commerce, and Chamber of Commerce in Paris to change this perception. It payed off and most producers of pains suédois, changed their name or labelled their products as having a recette suédois (Swedish recipe). Heudebert let go of all references to Sweden on their Krisprolls as they only had increased the image of KRISPROLLS by putting pretending to be Swedish, something that did not work with a brand the French perceived as one of the most French you could think of.

During this period, Pågen introduced a mark on all KRISPROLLS’ packages, a Swedish flag with the text, Origine Suédoise Garantié (guarantee of Swedish origin), to differentiate from the French me-too products.

Pågen uses TV as the main channel of distributing advertisements and has had regular campaigns since early 90s, but also used magazines, radio, PR and competitions. The most remembered advertisement was a TV-commercial with the excentric KRISPROLLS-lover Ingmar (Claes Månsson) that was shown in French TV during 1995-2003 and became very famous. Ingmar is a Swedish aristocrat and passionate KRISPROLLS-lover who tries to trick his somewhat controlling but forgiving wife so that he can get hold of another irresistible KRISPROLLS.

During the first years of this commercial, this was the KRISPROLLS’ slogan “Un des meilleurs moments de la vie suédoise” (one of the best moments in the life of a Swede), the breakfast with KRISPROLLS that is. They also play with Sweden living in darkness during the winter and daylight all day and night during the summer.
It was followed by a couple of clips where the last comment was “Comment dit-on KRISPROLLS en suédois?” (How do you say KRISPROLLS in Swedish?) said by Ingmar with his mouth full of KRISPROLLS. For reference to the commercials please see www.pagen.com, the International site. Between 2003-2004, Ingmar was replaced by the Gustavsson family with who’s breakfast habits emerged in radio and on billboards and it played with the Swedishness. “KRISPROLLS. Réveillez-vous suédois!” (wake-up the Swedish way!)

Pågen has since 2005 continued to use TV as the main channel for advertising KRISPROLLS but this time without any specific personality except for the well-known humour about Sweden and KRISPROLLS. For instance one advertisement shows Sweden as a winter wonderland in darkness and another shows people wearing clogs all year and the thing that breaks this monotone life is “KRISPROLLS. Ce que la Suède a de plus croustillant” (the most tasteful/exciting that Sweden has got). The word croustillant has got a double meaning, both tasteful/crunchy but also exciting.

The packaging shows the Swedishness on several ways:
- Product/country of origin, pétits pains suédois
- Swedish flag on the front page with the text origine suédoise
- A fun Swedish lesson on the backside with a different word for the different types e.g Hej! God morgon! Smaklig måltid, Sköt om dig! Njut av dagen! Every expression is phonetically explained and translated into French with an explanation.
- Royal warranty symbol
- A short presentation of Pågen as a traditional Swedish bakery
**Intervju med företag**

**Uppsats författare:** Annika Persson, CERAM (Frankrike) samt Växjö Universitet.  
annika.a.persson@gmail.com, apemf02@student.vxu.se

**Uppsats titel:** “Made in Sweden – a study of French consumers’ perception of Sweden as a brand”.

**Syfte:** Syftet med min uppsats är att se hur franska konsumenter uppfattar Sverige som varumärke. Samt om deras utvärdering av produkter från Sverige beror på produktens ursprungsland. Föredrar de produkter pga ursprunget och ger ursprunget en känsla av kvalitet/uppfattat värde. Hur kan marknadsförare dra fördelar genom vetskapen hur franska konsumenter uppfattar Sverige som varumärke.

**Instruktioner:** Jag ber er vänligen att svara på varje fråga så utförligt ni kan. Varje svarsbox gör det möjligt att skriva obegränsat. När jag får tillbaka era svar, senast den 20 augusti, kommer jag att sammanställa dem som jag vill att de skall ingå i mitt examensarbete. Därpå kommer jag att skicka den sammanställda texten per e-mail till er för er godkännande av min återgivning av ert svar samt låta er verifiera det jag har skrivit med det ni skickade till mig. Tack för att ni tar er tid att svara på min intervju.

**Intervjufrågor:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Företag:</th>
<th>Pågen AB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namn:</td>
<td>Georg Kittel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telefon:</td>
<td>Removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail:</td>
<td>Removed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kommentar till konfidentiella uppgifter:**

Ingen av den information jag lämnar är av konfidentiell natur.

**Visst får du använda Pågen-logon, vi kan mejla den till dig om du vill för bättre upplösning, men jag inbillar mig att du kanske också vill ha KRISPROLLS-logon?**

Helt OK

**Kommentar till användandet av företagets logga:**

Alla följande frågor besvarar jag utifrån vår marknadsföring av KRISPROLLS i Frankrike; endast i undantagsfall berör jag andra produkter och länder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Får jag återkomma med frågor?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Vad betyder “Made in Sweden” för er?

Rent formellt är det ett faktapåstående som innebär att en produkt är tillverkad i Sverige, gärna med huvudsakligen svenska råvaror. Men begreppet kan givetvis också våcka associationer av olika slag, beroende på typ av produkt, mottagarland och en rad andra

I modern tid har väl » det svenska » tagits över i stor utsträckning av andra branscher, t ex musik (ABBA), sport (BJÖRN BORG), inredning (IKEA), mode (H&M), livsmedel (ABSOLUT, KRISPROLLS). Men jag är osäker på om just « Made in Sweden » finns med som begrepp i dessa exempel.

Själva använder vi inte begreppet « Made in Sweden » bokståndstroget i vår marknadsföring av KRISPROLLS. Det svenska ursprunget är en viktig komponent i all vår kommunikation och marknadsföring, men det uttrycks och förmedlas med andra termer.

2. Hur anser ni att ert företag lever upp till detta?

Varumärket KRISPROLLS representerar i högsta grad en produkt « Made in Sweden ». Skor är en ursvensk produkt. Pågens skor bakas i Sverige och görs nästan utslutande på svenska råvaror. Framförallt i Frankrike har KRISPROLLS blivit känt som en väldigt svensk produkt.

3. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt internationellt?

KRISPROLLS säljs och marknadsförs idag i ett 20-tal länder utanför Sverige. Totalt har vi sålt skor till ca 40 länder genom åren. Nästan 90 % av vår KRISPROLLS-försäljning sker utomlands. Ett enda land, Frankrike, svarar för merparten av denna försäljning (mer än 60 %) och påverkar därför i väldigt stor utsträckning hur vårt märke marknadsförs internationellt. Övriga länder får anpassa sig efter den franska situationen.

4. Kan ni berätta om er produkt i Frankrike?


Frankrike är idag världens största skorpmarknad volymmässigt. KRISPROLLS är suverän
marknadsledare med en marknadsandel på över 45 %, en butikstäckning på nästan 100 % i fransk dagligvaruhandel (exklusive hard discounters) och är skorpmarknadens absolut mest kända varumärke. KRISPROLLS är Märket med stort M som alla andra skorpor jämför sig mot. KRISPROLLS är ett Premium Brand både kvalitativt/smakmässigt och prismässigt. Det finns skorpi i lågprisbutiker som bara kostar en ¼ av vad man får betala för KRISPROLLS. Alltså en prispremium på flera hundra procent för marknadsledaren.

Under varumärket KRISPROLLS säljer vi normalt fyra-fem-sex olika smakvarianter av skorpor; just nu Fullkorn (Complets), Osttostad fullkorn (Sans sucre), Vete (Dorés), Blåbär & tranbär (Myrtilles & cranberries), men genom årens lopp har vi bl a också haft kardemummaskorpor, havreskorpor och ekologiska skorpor. De flesta varianterna finns i två olika förpackningsstorlekar.

5. Vad lägger ni tyngdpunkten på när ni marknadsför er produkt i Frankrike?

| Skorpi fanns inte i Frankrike innan Pågen kom. Däremot fanns/fins det en rad andra produkter inom kategorin « panification seche » vilket innebar att fransmännen redan hade/har ett konsumtionsbeteende som skorpi passade in i.  


|  

6. Vad är er uppfattning om den franska marknaden?

| Jag vet inte riktigt vad du söker med denna fråga, vad du menar med ”marknad” som ju kan definieras på många sätt.  


| De franska stormarknaderna, « hypermarchés », tar andan ur en svensk besökare pga av deras enorma ytor och otroligt breda produktutbud men också pga den mycket kvalitativa utsträlningen med inbjudande, ja direkt förföriska färskvaruavdelningar och breda/generösa gångar etc.  

XXIV
7. Vad är er uppfattning om de franska konsumenterna?

Denna beskrivning är givetvis inte allmängiltig, men vi tycker att den passar bra in på den grupp franska konsumenter som är av speciellt intresse för oss. Vi tror att den gruppen är ganska stor.

8. Hur vill ni att er produkt skall uppfattas samt associeras till Sverige?


9. Hur tror ni att er produkt samt företag uppfattas idag?

Vi hoppas och tror att fransk handel uppfattar KRISPROLLS ungefär på det sätt som vi har beskrivit, men vi tror nog inte att de skulle använda dessa ord själva. Ingen kedja skulle t ex öppet erkänna att ett visst märke är oumbärligt. Att KRISPROLLS är en svensk produkt tror vi nog att alla berördas av handel är medvetna om. Däremot tror vi inte att det är många som har någon uppfattning om företaget Pågen. KRISPROLLS är välkänd, Pågen i det närmaste okänt, skulle jag tro.

10. Hur tror ni att franska konsumenter uppfattar er produkt/företag?

Vi tror att franska konsumenter associerar KRISPROLLS med Sverige. Många av dem kanske inte använder namnet KRISPROLLS i dagligt tal utan talar istället om « petits pains suédois ». De som är regelbundna köpare av just våra skorpar har förhoppningsvis en väldigt positiv uppfattning : att skorporna är väldigt goda, att man njuter av dem till framförallt frukosten, att det är lite spännande att de kommer från Sverige. Vi tror inte att franska konsumenter har någon egentlig uppfattning om företaget Pågen, bara om KRISPROLLS.

11. Hur anser ni att er produkt influerar Sverige som varumärke?

KRISPROLLS är sannolikt en av de produkter/varumärken som fransmännen mest förknippar med Sverige, men vi har egentligen ingen uppfattning om hur vår produkt eventuellt kan ha påverkat deras totala Sverigebild. I någon liten mån har KRISPROLLS kanske bidragit till att väcka en känsla att « karga » Sverige faktiskt kan producera.
läckerheter som även de mest kråsna fransmän kan ta till sig och gilla.

Vi har inga ambitioner att bygga varumärket Sverige, men givetvis är det positivt om det uppstår en växelverkan mellan olika starka varumärken. Vi tror att bilden av Sverige haft en ganska stor betydelse för varumärket KRISPROLLS i Frankrike, men vi vet inte alls om det omvända också stämmer. Det kanske din uppsats ger ett svar på ?

12. Hur spelar ni på er produkts/ert företags svenska ursprung?

Som framgått spelar det svenska ursprunget en mycket stor roll i allt vi gör och har gjort kring KRISPROLLS. Det började redan för drygt 25 år sedan med att vi skapade ett särskiljande begrepp för skorpor, « Pains grillés suédois/Pétits pains suédois », som haft en framträdande plats på förpackningen i alla år.


Samtidigt introducerade vi själva ett « sigill » på alla KRISPROLLS förpackningar, på framträdande plats : en svensk flagga med kringliggande text « Origine Suédoise Garantié » (garanterat svenskt ursprung) för att ytterligare skilja originalet från de många franska plagiaten/me-too produktarna.
Även i all övrig marknadsföring av KRISPROLLS har Sverige stor betydelse. Vi har satsat på mediareklam som vårt tyngsta marknadsföringsverktyg med regelbundna reklamkampanjer varje år sedan tidigt 90-tal. Under merparten av denna tid har TV varit vårt huvudmedium, men vi har även jobbat med bl a populärpresse, utomhusreklam och radio. Även en hel del PR-verksamhet och konsumenttävlingar.


Under de första åren med Ingmar-reklam löd KRISPROLLS slogan : « Un des meilleurs moments de la vie suédoise » (En av de finaste stunderna i svenskens liv), dvs frukosten med KRISPROLLS. Här skojas bl a friskt om att Sverige lever i mörker på vintern och dagsljus dygnet om på sommaren.

Detta följdes av en serie filmer med slutklämmen « Comment dit-on KRISPROLLS en suédois ? » (Hur säger man KRISPROLLS på svenska ?) med svaret « kkkripppsrolll » framkastat av Ingmar med hela munnen hörbart full av skorpor.


13. Hur relaterar ni till ”Made in Sverige” vid framställning av förpackning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dagens förpackningar förmedlar svenskheten på flera sätt :</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Produkt-/ursprungsbeteckningen « pétits pains suédois »</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• En svensk flagga på framsidan med texten « origine suédoise »</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
innebördsförklaring.

- Kungliga Hovleverantörssymbolet
- En kort presentation av Pågen som ett anrikt svenskt bageri

14. Hur relaterar ni till ”Made in Sverige” vid framställning av produkt?
Vi använder nästan uteslutande svenska råvaror. Mjölet kommer från vår egen kvarn i Skåne. All vår produktutveckling av KRISPROLLS sker med svenska förtecken. Vi satsar enbart på nya produkter och smakvarianter som är baserade på svenska råvaror (t ex blåbär- & tranbärsmaskor) eller som på annat sätt har starka kopplingar till svensk matkultur (t ex kardemummaskor)

15. Vad har ni för reklam just nu i Frankrike?
Redan besvarat.

16. Kan ni beskriva reklamen samt dess budskap?
Dito.

17. Hur visas det svenska ursprunget i reklamen?
Dito

18. Finns det något jag inte har tagit upp som ni anser att jag behöver belysa?
-

19. Hur ställer ni er till publicering av era svar i min uppsats?
Absolut helt OK.

20. Får jag lov att använda er logga i min uppsats då jag refererar till ert företag?
Javisst, självklart.

21. Övrigt

Hälsningar
Georg Kittel

Jag vill än en gång tacka ert för tillmötesgående samt att ni har visar intresse för min uppsats samt för era svar! Det betyder oerhört mycket för mig och hjälper mig i min forskning samt att skriva ett bra examensarbete. När min uppsats har godkänts vid CERAM business school samt Ekonomihögskolan vid Växjö Universitet kommer jag att delge er en kopia av min uppsats i pdf-format.

Annika Persson