

Personal branding in the Finnish contemporary art market

Case study: How to create a personal brand
for an artist

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ABSTRACT

Making a living as an artist is financially challenging, especially if you are not established. The general perception of the art world in Finland is that it is closed off and it takes considerable effort to understand art. People are interested in buying art but do not know where to buy or how to buy it.

The purpose of this thesis is to research how artists can brand themselves in the Finnish contemporary art market and make their work more accessible and easier to purchase. This thesis examines the main obstacles that artists face when branding themselves and how branding is generally perceived in the art world.

This thesis can be thought of as a guide for artists who want to brand themselves to find customers who are interested in their type of art. Additionally branding can be used as a tool to better understand themselves and their art. In short the challenge is to find out how artists can gain visibility by branding themselves while simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls of over-commercialization.

A deductive approach was used in this thesis and the information gathered is generally qualitative. Primary data is gained through interviews conducted with people who work in the art industry. Secondary data is gathered from literature, internet and journal resources. The framework for this thesis is generally acknowledged branding practices that are commonly used. Additionally the author used branding tools that he learned during an internship at a brand design agency.

In conclusion, the author succeeds in giving artists practical tools to create a personal brand that accurately portrays their values and body of work. This brand can be used to make their work more accessible and relatable to a larger audience.

Key words: branding, contemporary art, artist branding, economics of art, perceived value

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Elannon tienaaaminen taiteilijana on hyvin haastavaa Suomen taidemarkkinoilla. Erityisesti jos et ole vakiintunut. Yleinen käsitys on, että taidemarkkinat ovat sulkeutuneita ja taiteen ymmärtäminen vaatii paljon vaivannäköä. Ihmiset ovat kiinnostuneet taiteen ostamisesta, mut eivät tiedä mistä ja miten ostaa sitä.

Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on selvittää miten taiteilija pystyy brändäämään itseään Suomen nykytaide markkinoilla ja tehdä töistään lähestyttävempiä ja helpompia ostaa.

Tätä opinnäytetyötä voidaan pitää ohjeena taiteilijoille, jotka haluavat brändätä itsensä. Brändäyksellä voidaan tavoittaa asiakkaat, jotka ovat kiinnostuneet taiteilijan tyyppisestä taiteesta. Lisäksi brändäys antaa taiteilijalle työkalun ilmaista ja ymmärtää taidettaan paremmin. Lyhyesti sanottuna haasteena on selvittää miten taiteilija pystyy brändäyksellä saavuttaa näkyvyyttä ja samalla välttää ylikaupallistumista.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytettiin deduktiivista lähestymistapaa ja suurin osaa kerätystä tiedosta on kvalitatiivista. Primääridata kerättiin haastatteleamalla henkilöitä jotka työskentelevät taide alalle. Sekundääridata kerättiin aiheeseen liittyvästä kirjallisuudesta, internetistä sekä aikakausjulkaisuista. Tämän opinnäytetyön viitekehys on yleisesti hyväksytty bränditeoria. Lisäksi kirjoittaja käytti hyväksi työharjoittelun aikana opittuja brändi työkaluja.

Lopputuloksena kirjoittaja onnistuu antamaan taiteilijoille työkaluja luoda oma brändi, joka tarkasti kuvaa heidän arvojaan sekä taideteoksien periaatteita. Tätä brändiä voidaan käyttää hyväksi taiteilijan julkiskuvan luomiseen.

Avainsanat: brändäys, nykytaide, henkilöbrändi

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The role of an artist is often defined differently according to the culture of the country and time. The Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taike) has defined the act of creating art and the role of an artist as a social activity. Working in the art world requires following certain rules and values as well as understanding trends. All people can create art but it is important to emphasize the practical point of view in becoming a legitimate artist. For practical reasons the following factors are in the core of a legitimate artist's definition: member of an artist organization (or a registry), membership in the grant registry and proper artist education. (Rensujeff 2010.)

Artists in Finland are constantly under financial pressures and they are highly dependent on government grants. The financial uncertainties often have a screening effect on artists that are just starting out their careers. Only the most resilient artists continue their careers regardless of uncertainties or financial pressures and this result in only the most motivated professionals succeeding. (Rensujeff 2010.)

A majority of people value art in Finland and they are ready to invest moderately when buying art works. A survey conducted by Ornamo revealed that two out of three Finns have bought art, but nine out of ten are interested in buying art. From this one can deduce that there is a 20-percentage point, in other words, one million Finnish people that form an untapped market of art consumers. (Rikkinen et. al 2014.)

The Ornamo study also revealed an interesting dilemma with Finnish art consumers; 90 per cent of Finns are willing to invest in art, but they consider the purchasing process to be troublesome. People who answered the survey felt like there is no easy way to purchase art that fits their interests. It is explained that Finnish people prefer to buy art straight from artists and they would like to come across art in everyday familiar environments. (Rikkinen et al. 2014.)

In conclusion one can notice that there is a need for artists to make themselves visible in everyday outlets and use effective personal branding as a tool to help people to find their work.

1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions and Limitations

The thesis objective is to give artists an understanding of the brand creation process so that they can construct a visual identity and brand that accurately portrays their values and body of work. The brand has to be frequent, consistent and unique. The goal is to help artists to bring their identity forward and make their work accessible to consumers who are interested in that particular style of art.

Having a basic knowledge of the economic concepts of the art world will further bolster the brands credibility. Considering the nature of the art world it is important to use the right type of nuances to create a personal brand experience that does not compromise the artistic value of the artists work. In other words the art cannot be branded in traditional profit-making ways, as this does not fit the non-commercial art world (Adamson 2013).

All of these factors considered the main research question is the following:
How can artists brand themselves in the Finnish art market?

To obtain an answer to this question and further analyze the issue I have established the following sub questions:

- What are the biggest challenges for artists to brand themselves in the Finnish art market?
- How is branding perceived in the Finnish art market?

The biggest limitation of this study was that the visual side of the brand is not addressed as it is not relevant and the author does not have expertise in the area. Additionally there is no customer data to support the case study portion of the thesis. However it is important to note that the case study should be considered as an example of how to build a brand with

tools used in brand design agencies. The lack of customer data does not make it invalid.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The goal of this thesis is to create a guide for artists on how to create personal brands of themselves. The first step to reach this goal is to establish an understanding of the economic side of art and delve into what factors contribute in the price of art. The purpose is to give the artist an insight on what customers think when they are buying art. Several art world economic studies will be used to construct a supportive theoretical framework. This theoretical component is established in chapter two.

The next step is to form an overall picture of all the common elements of a brand. The intent is to give the artist an understanding of the framework behind the visual portion of a brand. Commonly acknowledged and accepted branding theory will be used to establish a theoretical structure for this part of the thesis. The brand identity model (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000) and the brand equity model (Aaker 2002) are two examples of commonly acknowledged branding theories.

In the last phase the thesis author will conduct a case study by using branding methods he learned during an internship at a brand design agency. The methods introduced will act as the theoretical framework for this part of the thesis. The tools were used in brand workshops with clients and they are proven to be effective when creating a brand.

1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

Research is a process where you gather information to dismiss or support a theory (Lee & Lings 2008, 35). When conducting any research it is important to establish what kind of research method is used, as it will enable the researcher to create a research design, help him or her to form a research strategy and take possible restrictions into consideration. One can use a deductive approach, in which data follows theory. The alternative is theory following data, which is also called an inductive

approach. (Saunders et.al 2009, 124.) In this research deductive approach will be used the deductive approach. The following table further illustrates the differences between the two approaches:

TABLE 1: Different emphasisation between deduction and induction approach. (Saunders et.al 2009)

Deduction emphasises	Induction emphasises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Scientific principles •Moving from theory to data •The need to explain causal relationships between data •The collection of quantitative data •The application of controls to ensure validity of data •The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition •A highly structured approach •Researcher independence of what is being researched •The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events •A close understanding of the research context •The collection of qualitative data •A more flexible structure to permit changes of emphasis as the research progresses •A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process •Less concern with the need to generalise

Once the approach has been chosen, the next step is to determine what type of data collection method will be used. A method or analysis procedure that creates numerical data is usually referred as quantitative. A method or analysis procedure that creates non-numerical data is usually referred as qualitative. From these two methods you can either choose to use only one (mono method), use both methods separately (multiple method) or use both methods parallelly/sequentially (mixed method). (Saunders et al. 2009.) The author will use a mixed method with qualitative being the main data type. . The following table recaps the research methodology and data collection used in this thesis:

TABLE 2: Thesis research methodology and data collection

Research method	Data collection method	Data collection techniques
Deductive approach	Mixed method, qualitative data is the main type of data	Primary: interviews Secondary: books, journals, articles and internet sources

The data itself can be divided into primary and secondary data. Information that has been gathered by another party and for a cause other than your current research is considered secondary data. Primary data is information compiled directly through the researcher's efforts. Primary data collection techniques include: surveys, interviews and direct observation. (Saunders et al. 2009.) In this thesis secondary data will be gathered through books, journals, articles and internet sources. Primary data will be gathered through interviews.

1.5 Thesis structure

With the research question and sub questions in mind the thesis structure will be the following:

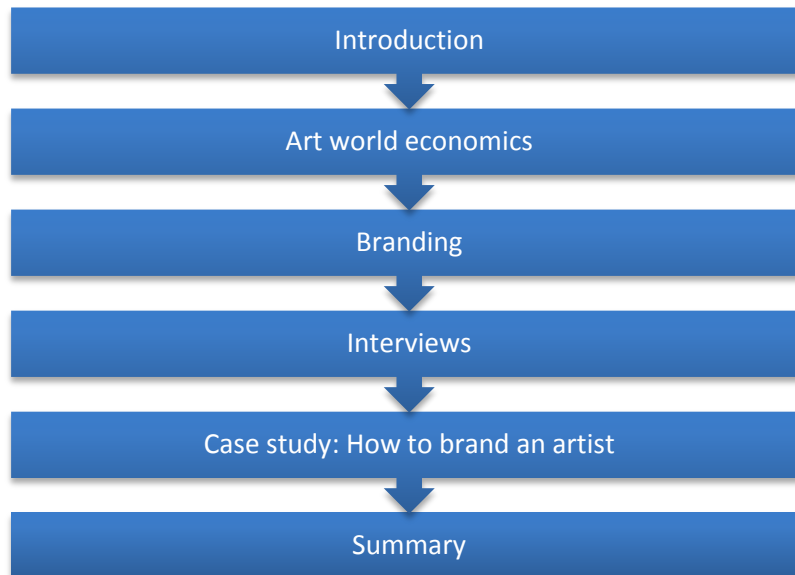


FIGURE 1: Thesis structure

Firstly, a short introduction of the Finnish art world must be established. This is mainly done in order to give the reader a basic understanding how the art market functions. Then practical issues such as economic factors, pricing methods and main operators in the Finnish art market will be described. Next step is to delve into tools and concepts that are commonly used in branding. The methods described are commonly acknowledged branding practices.

The third step is conducting interviews. The aim is to bring out perspectives that offer new insights on the topic and confirm the previously gathered theoretical data. People interviewed will be a gallery owner, an artist promoter and an already established artist. All interviewees have wished to stay anonymous. In order to reach transparency, the interview questions and answers are written out. This clarifies how the conclusions were made from the interviews.

The last step is to use all the previously described information I have gathered and see how it works in practice. A case study will be conducted with an artist student. A brand that encapsulates his work and values will be created.

1.6 Risk factors

The most significant risks in this thesis are that branding simply does not work in the Finnish art world and the methods used in the case study do not produce the desired results. Additionally a risk that has to be considered is that most branding methods are designed to be used by companies, rather than individuals. The lack of customer data can also in the case study portion of this thesis can also be considered as a risk factor.

2 ART WORLD ECONOMICS

Buying art is a process that is seemingly separated from logic. For a lot of people buying art is a form of self expression and an opportunity to convey a personal image of sophistication and taste. (Aaker 2010.)

In this chapter we will go through the following topics: levels of the price of art, operators in the art world, how economic fluctuations affect price and what are the risk factors that have to be considered when buying art. The intention is not to go into too much detail about economic nuances and intricacies, but rather offer a brief overview.

2.1 The six levels of price in the contemporary art world

For people buying art either as an investment or just because they appreciate the work, it is important to understand how the price is formed. Contemporary art prices usually go through six levels: authentic, debut, established, retrospective, post-mortal and museumic (Laitinen-Laiho 2003). Considering the thesis topic, the focus will be on the first four levels.

The authentic level is the starting point for an artist. At this phase the price is essentially formed from all the material costs that were required to produce an artwork. On the second level the price is formed by how much interest the artist generated when he made his debut. If the artist succeeds to stay relevant he will enter the third level and considered established. This status brings certain perks and a considerable increase in the price. (Laitinen-Laiho 2003.)

At an established level, time and material costs are no longer factors that affect the price of art. For new established artists it is primarily the dealer's reputation that lifts the perceived value of the artist's work and concurrently drives the price up. After the artist gains fame, the price of his or her art is formed according to his or her reputation. (Thompson 2008.)

If the artist maintains an established status for a long period of time, the art can be valued retrospectively; it will be valued according to the achievements and fame he or she has gained in the past. (Laitinen-Laiho 2003.) At this level the price is often thrust upwards by a "ratched effect". This means that the price will hardly go down, but is unrestricted to go up (Thompson 2008). The price functions as a tool for art world operators to gain publicity and to show that the agents pricing the art have the required expertise to do so. (Uusitalo 2008.)

2.2 Contemporary art world operators in Finland

The art market can be described as a web of intersecting actors that all have differing tasks. All actors are connected to each other and create strong or weak networks through interaction. In economic terms artists are the suppliers of the product and gallery owners are the vendors for their work. To help legitimise the artist, galleries generate links with art critics and museums. The role of art schools is to give information of new upcoming talents. Ultimately legitimization for an artist is achieved through collaboration with different operators within the art world. (Jyrämä & Äyväri 2010.) Legitimation is crucial for the artist to advance through the levels of price.

To get an accurate view of the different aspects of the art world, it is important to use different theoretical approaches when studying the subject. Dual industry theory is an alternative approach to the previously mentioned network-like theory. The general characteristic of a dual industry is a strong oligopolistic core consisting of a few strong operators and numerous smaller agents that operate on the outskirts. The core operators have a broad strategy and they target a mass audience, while the smaller agents have a specialized approach and they target a niche market. (Uusitalo 2008.)

TABLE 3: Artworld operators in the Finnish art market (Uusitalo 2008).

Actors/fields	Established art field	Contemporary art field
Artists	- only important as creating part of the art works value	- important as suppliers, experts, participating in the sale of art works
Galleries	-	- main distributors
Art dealers / auctions	- main distributors	-
Tradesmen	- fringe distributors	-
Museums	- established art museums, giving prestige to artworks by their purchasing choices	- contemporary art museums, important as legitimizing artist and gallery reputation
Art critic	- not relevant, don't reviewing auctions or dealers sales	- important in bringing reputation and acceptance for artists and galleries
Collectors / customers	- important, experts bringing prestige by their choices, also a source of art works for exhibitions	- important, experts giving prestige by their choices
Media	- important, especially through writing articles on auctions	- important, creating "stars"
Foundations / government boards	- not related to art works as such - influential through laws and regulations	- gives financial support for artists to work, influences the field structure
Academic art world	- part, but not active in commerce, spreading information on art by research	- part, but not active in commerce, spreading information on new art styles and movements
Art related products	- not relevant	- relevant suppliers for artists, but in the fringe
Art schools	- not very relevant	- influence the accepted taste, styles - recommend artists to galleries

The Finnish art market is split into two different fields, which each have their own values and belief systems. Each field has hierarchically set operators that have a specific role to fill. In the contemporary art world galleries, museums, art critics, collectors, media, foundations/government boards and academic art schools all function as operators that increase the perceived value of the art work. (Uusitalo 2008.) It is important to note that this thesis will mostly be focusing on the contemporary art.

2.3 The effect of macro economic factors in the Finnish contemporary art market

Finland has a relatively small population and is located in the outskirts of Northern Europe. Because of this, the market for high value art is small and the appreciation for art differs from other countries. Government taxation is one of the most significant macro economic factors affecting the price of contemporary art in Finland. In 2003 a bill was passed that applied an 8% tax to works that were sold by an artist and a 22% tax to works that were sold by galleries or other retailers. This change only applied to works that are sold for over 8500€. Essentially this change meant that in order to get the same amount of money as they previously received artists had to raise their prices. (Laitinen-Laiho 2003.)

3 BRANDING

This chapter will go into depth of what a brand is and what are the tools needed to create an effective personal brand. The vocabulary commonly used in the branding industry will also be introduced. The aim is to focus on information that is relevant from an artist's perspective. The goal is to give artists an overall picture of what a brand is, how it can be designed and how to manage it. The theory gathered in this chapter will be utilized in the case study afterwards.

3.1 What is a brand?

By definition a brand is a “name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them those of competition” (American Marketing Association 2015). In simple terms a brand can be thought as a tool that helps you create a personal relationship with the customer and create differentiation for your product or service. Another way to think about a brand is that it is your company, products and services in person form. (VanAuken 2015.) The bottom line of branding is creating a strong brand-customer relationship, where the brand has positive associations in the customer's mind. This translates into long lasting customer relationships. (Aaker 2002.)

The following can be considered as the most essential elements and procedures of a brand: creating a vision, positioning, value proposition, brand promise, brand equity as well as brand identity. (VanAuken 2015.)

3.2 How to design a strong brand?

Building a brand usually focuses on three aspects: creating visibility, generating distinct associations and developing customer relationships. All of these aspects are guided by fundamental brand elements such as the brand identity and positioning. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.)

It is important to note that the brand design process is not necessarily linear, but it contains certain procedures that need to be completed in order to create a strong brand. One important part of the process is targeting the customer and then accurately positioning your brand to gain a competitive advantage. Other processes are for example the formation of the aforementioned brand elements: brand promise, brand identity and brand equity. (Van Auken 2015). In this chapter I will gradually go through the brand design process.

3.3 Creating a vision

A vision is a tool that helps to visualize long term goals. It is used as motivational tool and is strongly future orientated. A good vision is a summary of what the organization is striving to be and what all actions must aim for. (Pulkkinen 2003.)

To form a strong, concise and clear vision it should answer the following questions:

- Is the vision understandable?
- Is it easy to memorize?
- Does the vision make people believe in the brand?
- Is it realistic?
- What has to be done for the vision to be achieved?

Creating a vision is essentially setting a goal that you aspire to achieve. The goal should be high, but realistic to achieve. To avoid making the goal overwhelming, Pulkkinen suggests creating secondary objectives along the way. (Pulkkinen 2003.)

3.4 Understanding and targeting the customer

An ideal target customer is somebody who has a need for your product, has a preference for it, admires your brand and brings revenue over a long period of time. (VanAuken 2015.)

It is important to have a basic understanding of the underlying needs and attributes of people, so that you can factor them in when creating your brand. List of basic human needs: need for recognition, sense of self-worth, need for respect, freedom and autonomy. List relevant basic human attributes: lifestyle, demographic, needs, desires, hopes and aspirations. (VanAuken 2015).

To find out the needs and attributes of your customer group, VanAuken (2015) suggests a process called environmental scanning. This practice emphasizes reading literature related to your business, monitoring relevant media, actively following trends and continuously researching emerging ideas (VanAuken 2015). Other techniques to create a deep understanding of your customer base include the following: interviews, researching the emotions related to the use of the product and enquiries (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000). From an artist's perspective, environmental scanning is the most realistic way to conduct customer research.

3.5 Positioning

Positioning is the act of strategically constructing a desirable, clear and distinctive image of your product in the customers mind. Positioning is always done in relation to your competitors products. (Kotler & Amstron, 2012, 49.)

A strong positioning is created by strategically arranging your brand based on customer needs and competing products. You then combine it with the brand's values as well as the product or services that the operator offers. A well executed strategic positioning will give you an advantage over competitors and create brand awareness in the customer's mind. The goal is to create a strong mental image of your brand in to the customer's mind, which in turn creates awareness and brand recognition. (Pulkkinen 2003.)

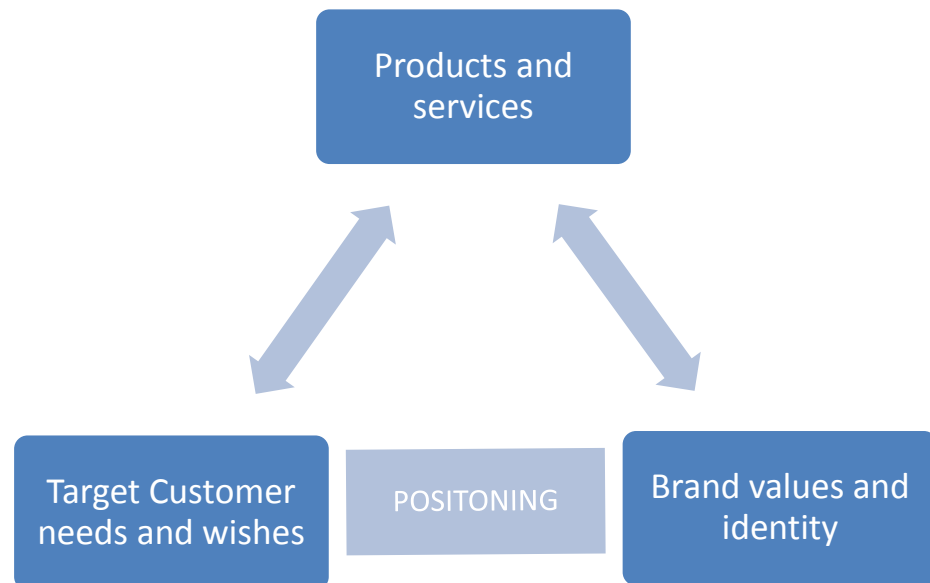


FIGURE 2: Positioning illustration (Pulkinen 2003).

In order to achieve accurate positioning you must first find out where you stand in the customer's mind as of this moment. To find out the answer to this very important question Pulkinen (2003) has devised a four phase procedure. The phases are as follows:

1. Phase one: Research your current position in the customers mind and seek answers to questions like: how do people perceive us, what are our good qualities and how do we compare to the competitors?
2. Phase two: Create a goal for your positioning. Make a plan of how you want your brand to be perceived. To achieve this goal you must assess your strengths and weaknesses, analyze your segments and create realistic and vivid brand promise.
3. Phase three: Prepare yourself for continual work in order to maintain the brand image. Pulkinen declares that changing the way people perceive a brand is or establishing a brand image is hard and arduous work. Staying active is the key to reaching success.

4. Phase four: Analyze your results. Strategic brand positioning requires active monitoring of where your brand stands currently in the customers mind and making adjustments if necessary.

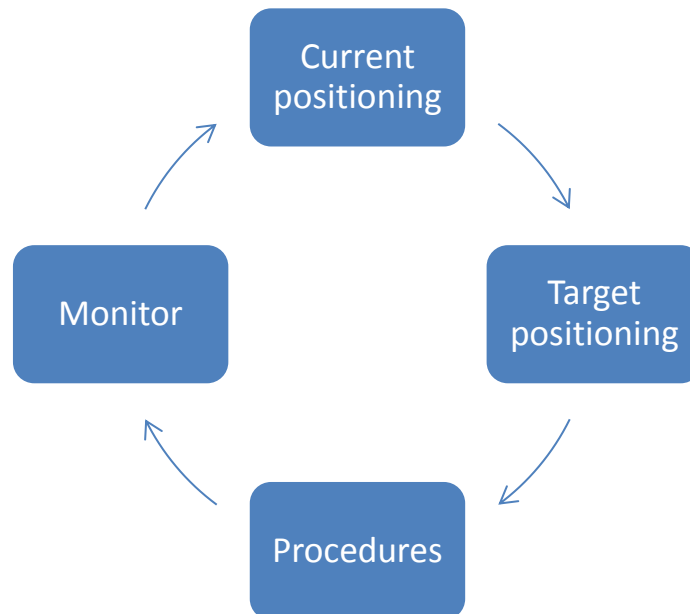


FIGURE 3: Four phases of positioning (Pulkinen 2003).

As you can see from the figure above, positioning is something that the company has to continuously be aware of. The positioning in the customer's mind is an ever-changing occurrence. (Pulkinen 2003.)

3.5.1 Value proposition and the need for self expression

By definition, a value proposition is a “positioning statement that explains what benefit you provide for who and how you do it uniquely well” (Skok 2013). After the initial positioning procedure has been completed it is important to examine specific motives and needs of people, so that you can make a value proposition that is effective. Pulkinen (2003) explicates several different needs based on positioning strategies, but from an artist's perspective the need for self expression is most relevant.

The need for self expression is a desire for people to send a certain message about themselves. Commonly brands that convey status have

tapped into this need. People buy these brands because they want to convey that they are part of a social group or that they have certain social role. This positioning strategy's effectiveness is based on attaching yourself on the values or desired traits of the social group. This strategy heavily emphasizes human emotion. (Pulkinen 2003.)

The best case scenario from a brands perspective is when a consumer makes the brand a part of their self image. This is a stage where the person has such a deep emotional connection with the brand that he or she makes it an integral part of their identity. Common items that can achieve this level of consumer loyalty are for example: heirlooms, gifts and collection items. (Aaker 2002.)

From an artist perspective this is the ultimate goal of their brand creation process. Positioning your brand so that people feel that buying your art work compliments their self image will create long lasting customer relationships. Ideally they will become advocates for your brand.

3.6 Brand Promise

The brand promise is the benefit you guarantee the customer will get if they buy your product or service. VanAuken (2015) explains that a benefit from a product or service can be emotional, experiential or self-expressive and should not be confused with attributes and features. It should also be clarified, that to create a benefit that is desirable to a customer it should have these three aspects: the benefit is essential to the customer, it is unique and competitors are not offering it. (VanAuken 2015.)

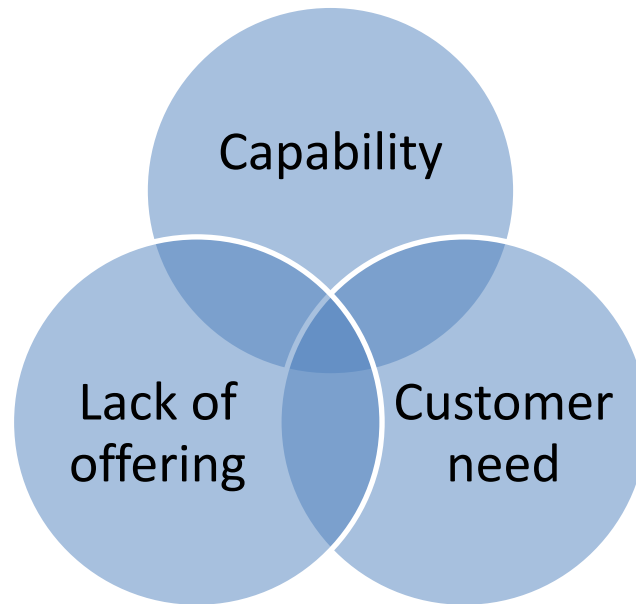


FIGURE 4: Brand promise illustration (VanAuken, 2015)

The greatest benefits are a mixture of a customer need, organizational capability and the lack of offerings from competitors. Finding this crucial point can be done by reviewing your offerings and analyzing all the benefits that a customer can gain from purchasing your product or service. (VanAuken 2015.)

3.7 Brand Identity

In simple terms a brand identity is the values, perceptions and traits that you want customers to associate with your brand. It is closely related to the value proposition of the company. The purpose of a brand identity is to help form a personal relationship with the customer. (Aaker 2002.)

Creating a brand identity is a multiphase process. The preliminary phase is a comprehensive strategic brand analysis that includes researching customers, competitors and analyzing your current brand situation (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000). This phase was described in previous chapters.

The next phase is creating the actual identity. A brand identity consists of three elements: a brand essence, a core that stays constant from market

to market and an extended part that brings complimentary pieces (Aaker 2002). Here are the elements introduced:

Brand Essence

A brand essence is the one and only basic principle that the whole brand is based on. A lot of characteristics are required from a great brand essence. Firstly it has to function as the spur for your value proposition and it has to create a positive response in customers. Additionally it has to differentiate your brand from others on the long term. A great brand essence motivates and creates excitement. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.)

Core Identity

Aaker (2002) explains that when you are forming the core identity you should seek answers to the following questions:

- What is the soul of the brand?
- What are the fundamental beliefs and values that drive the brand?
- What are the competencies of the organization behind the brand?
- What does the organization behind the brand stand for?

The goal is to create a core identity that stands out from competitors and is easy for people to create a relationship with. When the fundamental beliefs and values are aligned then the brand identity usually maintains itself. (Aaker 2002.) The function of the core identity is to help allocate the company's and the customer's attention in the right direction (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000).

Extended identity

The extended identity of a brand is formed from groups or individual elements that compliment the core identity. The core identity in itself does not always possess all the nuances to represent accurately all the values of the company. The extended identity offers tools to portray rest of the

values that the core identity misses. An example of an extended identity is a slogan; a catchphrase that bring out a message that the core identity simply does not cover. (Aaker 2002.)

A brand identity ideally consists of 6-12 dimensions so it can accurately describe what the objective of the brand is. Realistically it is impossible to include all dimensions in your brand identity. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.)

Different dimensions include perceiving the brand as a product, as an organization, as a person or as a symbol. If the brand is considered as a product, then the physical attributes qualities, users, country of origin and product scope is emphasized. If a brand is perceived as an organization, then organizational attributes and local versus global factors are highlighted. When brands are perceived as persons, then personality traits and customer/brand relationships are the most important dimensions. Lastly if a brand is perceived as a symbol, visual imagery and brand heritage are accentuated. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.)

3.8 Brand Identity implementation system and tracking

Once the brand identity has been formed and positioning has been determined, the next phase is the creation of brand identity implementation systems. A common misconception is that this phase is all about advertising. In reality it is a lot more nuanced than that. Brand identity implementation systems take on several different forms such as: promotions, media publicity, direct marketing, packaging, social media and sponsoring. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.) From an artist's perspective the most relevant brand identity implementation system is social media. In this thesis the brand implementation systems are not covered further as it is not relevant. The following figure illustrates how a brand identity is formed and maintained:

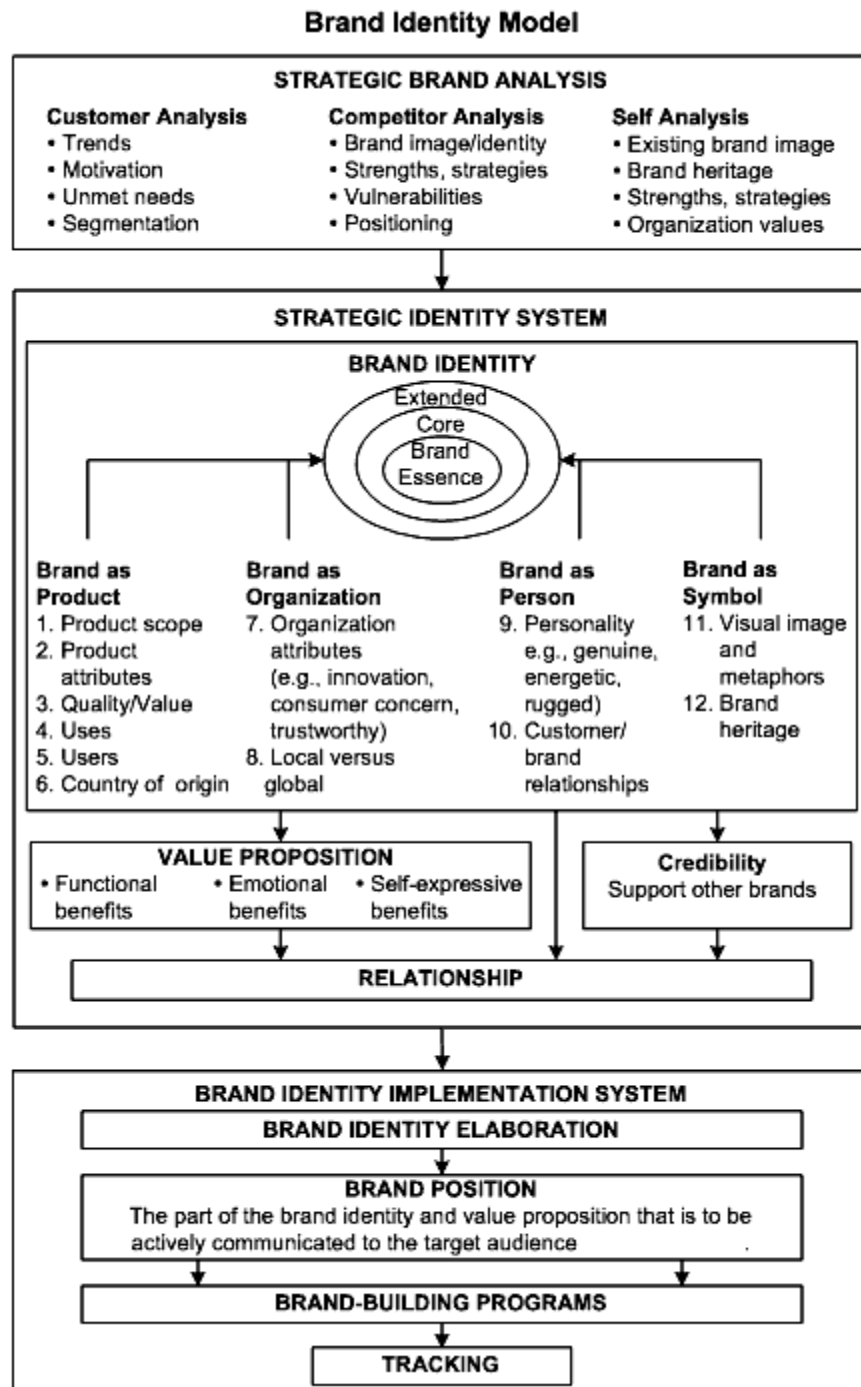


FIGURE 5: Brand identity model (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000).

The last phase of creating a brand identity is tracking. Essentially at this phase the main objective is to track brand performance by the use of several different quality indicators. Most important factors to track are the following: customer loyalty, brand quality experience, brand leadership and brand recognizability. When all of these factors are monitored, the end

result is an active system, which ensures that all the brand elements are functioning as intended. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2000.)

3.9 Brand Equity

Brand equity can be considered as a total amount of positive associations that have accumulated in the customer's mind over time. The more equity you have, the more space you have for mistakes (VanAuken 2015). Brand equity is a total sum of four different assets. If correctly managed, it will translate into revenue and bring customer satisfaction. These four assets are: brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand associations. Each asset brings value in several different ways and knowing the function of each asset is paramount in gaining and maintaining brand equity (Aaker 2002.) The following figure illustrates how brand equity is formed and how it directly translates into customer satisfaction and revenue

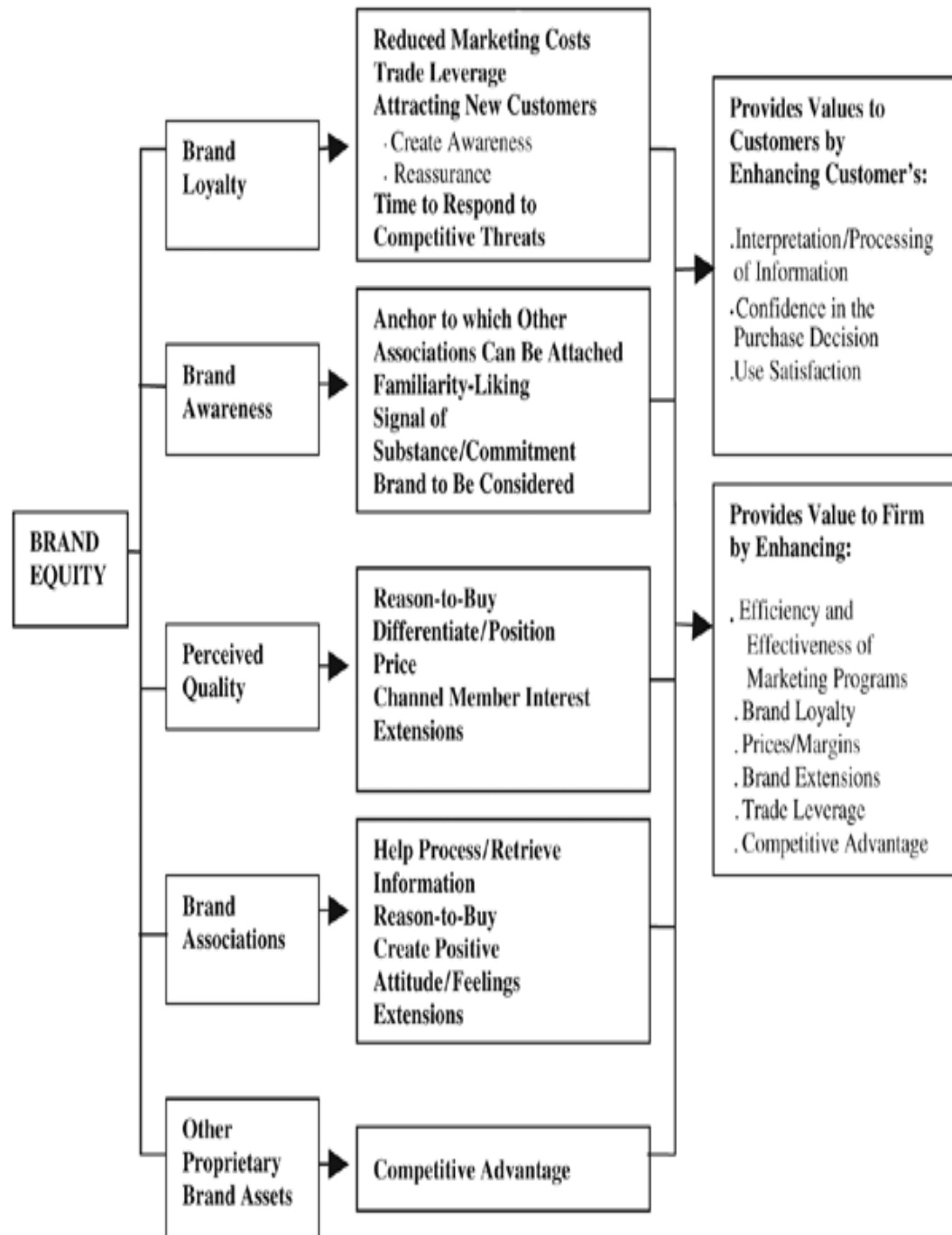


FIGURE 6: Brand equity model (Aaker 2002).

Brand awareness means how aware the customer is of your brand and how well he or she is able to recognize it. It is not enough for the customer to only recognize your brand but to also recognize it for positive reasons. This asset acts as a tool to hitch other brand associations and creates familiarity. (Aaker 2002.)

Brand loyalty translates into how willing the customer is to switch to a different brand or how much effort he or she is willing to go through to get your brand. Loyal customers are a constant stream of revenue and they are often overlooked by companies. This asset brings in new customers, cuts down marketing costs and creates leverage. (Aaker 2002.)

Perceived quality means how people view the quality of your products. It is a mixture of actual quality and perception of quality. It is important to manage this asset correctly from the beginning, as already established perceptions of quality are hard to change. This asset gives leeway to charge a price premium and gives customer a reason to buy your product. Brand associations are the values people attach to your brand. It is formed through the brand identity. This asset makes the buying process simpler by making product information easier to process. (Aaker 2002.)

4 INTERVIEWS

The goal of these interviews is to gather data to answer research questions and confirm the information that has been gathered from literature sources. Qualitative research methods will be used. The main priority is to get an in depth view of the artworld from operators that work in the field everyday and get their feedback on how they see their place in the system. Secondary goal is to hear their experiences with branding and how it fits the world of art.

4.1 Interview method used

Conducting interviews in order to collect rich qualitative data is a task that requires thorough understanding of the methods used and substantial preparation. Qualitative interview designs can be divided into three different categories, which are the following: informal conversational interview, general interview guide approach and standardized open ended interview. (Turner 2010.) Considering the topic and the data that had to be gathered, the best method to use is the general interview guide approach.

The general interview guide approach emphasizes open ended questions that are structurally the same for each participant. The problem with this method is that answers might not be consistent depending on how the interviewer asks the question. The strength of this interview method is that it gives the interviewer freedom to control the interview and for example ask follow up questions. A good interviewer can make sure that the related topic is covered from several different angles. (Turner 2010.)

4.2 Sampling

In order to seek out the most credible source for interviews it is advisable to select the appropriate sampling method. Additionally when choosing candidates it is important to verify that the interviewee is willing to openly share information and experiences. (Turner 2010.)

Qualitative data collection is mainly about purposefully selecting small samples that offer rich and diverse data (Patton 1990). In this thesis I have decided to use critical case sampling.

Critical case sampling is a qualitative data sampling method that is based on choosing candidates that have a vital role in relation to the topic. It is commonly used when resources are limited. An ideal candidate in this sampling method is somebody who yields enough information in order to make logical generalizations. (Patton 1990.)

The candidates that have been chosen are a gallery owner, an artist promoter and a working artist. All candidates are operators that work actively in the field of art and fulfill the criteria of being a critical case sample. They all offer distinctive views on the topic of branding artists and because of that they can offer rich qualitative data. All interviewees wished to stay anonymous.

4.3 Interview questions and answers

Before starting the interviews, the background of the thesis and goal of the research was explained. The interviews were conducted either in person or by phone. The questions and answers are written out in order to reach clarification. The author wanted to make the interview process as transparent as possible, so that the conclusions drawn from it were clear and precise.

Interview with the artist

- How does personal branding fit in the Finnish art world?

The artist explained that branding or anything business related issue always has a negative connotation in the Finnish art world. He remarked that amongst certain artists there is a prejudice that active marketing or selling somehow diminishes the value of the art. The interviewed artist had an experience that a lot of artists feel that art should only be created for the sake of creating art and making a profit and making a personal artistic

brand has no space in the equation. He personally had not practiced any branding methods during his career but he could name several artists who had and continually do so.

He concluded the discussion by stating that branding can work if it is done the right way, which is to use it as an instrument to find customers who are interested in your type of art.

- Do the economic factors or the economic situation directly affect the quantity of works you sell?

From the artist's experience the economic situation has a direct impact on the quantity of the works he sells. He explained that in the 80s the Finnish art market was booming and there were some artists who sold their work even before they were finished. After the 90s depression the Finnish art market never really recovered. When he was in art school, the teachers would tell students to prepare for a tough future after graduation. A majority of artists either work a job that is totally unrelated to their education or have to rely on the social security and benefits from the government.

- Have you had your works in a gallery? How has it uplifted the perceived value of your works?

According to the artist he had several of his works displayed in galleries through his school and through personal connections. He explained that there are several different types of galleries; some where the artist has to pay in order to rent out the room or others where he or she agrees to give out commission on the art works sold. Additionally there are galleries that are maintained through voluntary work by a group of artists that take turns to have works displayed in the gallery space. These tend to be less renowned.

Having art works displayed in the gallery certainly brings recognition and awareness, but at the same time it is financially challenging to have them

continually on display. It is hard to quantify the perceived value you get from having your works displayed.

Interview with the gallery owner

For clarification the Gallery Owner is referred as GO. The questions asked from the gallery owner and the answers were the following:

- Can branding work in the world of art?

The GO told me that branding can work, but a lot of artists are against it. The GO had rarely seen artists who actively brand themselves but did not deny the possibility of it working. One reason branding is so uncommon amongst artist is that they worry that it might somehow compromise the perceived value of their work. The risk is over-commercialization.

- Galleries are one part of the network in the Finnish art market.
How do you see your role as an owner of an art gallery?

The function of a gallery is to offer artists the opportunity to showcase their work and bring their name out. For an artist it is one of the most effective and vital ways to market your work. Especially in the Finnish art market, where art collectors and art critics have a lesser role.

- How does the economic situation affect the sales of art works?

The GO explained that economic situation affects the sales tremendously. Works are rarely sold from exhibitions. Artists always struggle to sell their works and it is especially true during an economic depression. People feel apprehensive when buying works and feel that buying art is something that requires either economic expertise (buying art as an investment) or expertise in art. Maybe branding could be used as a tool to lower this apprehension. Branding could make art easier to understand and therefore easier to buy.

- How much perceived value does displaying an artwork in a gallery bring to the artist's name?

The GO expressed that it is impossible to quantify the amount of value or recognition that displaying an art work brings to an artist's name. However there are factors and situations where a showcase can bring more recognition. The defining factor is how known the gallery is and which artist's have had their work previously displayed in the gallery. It is also important to remember that the Finnish art market is relatively small and a lot of gallery owners and artists tend to know each other.

Interview with the artist promoter

For clarification the interviewee will be referred as AP. The questions and the answers were the following:

- Can branding work in the world of art?

The AP told me that branding can work in the world of art. It is not against the values of the art world, if the artist or gallery owner can utilize it in the right way. The AP explained that nowadays it is extremely important to make the art world more accessible and diminish the perception that it is a closed world reserved only for the elite. The average person has a very stereotypical view of the art world and branding can help to remove this perception and make it more accessible.

- How do you see your role in the Finnish world of art?

The AP's role in the art market is unique as he only charges commission and only works with young artist. The objective is to promote the artist without interfering with the artistic process. The AP essentially works as the artist manager by selling or renting their work and simultaneously searching for new opportunities to promote them.

- How does the economic situation affect the sales of art works?

The AP explained that the economic situation does not affect the sales of art drastically as you can always buy or rent art with little expenses. People who are interested in art will always buy art. There are also people

who are interested in buying art but do not know where to buy it and what kind of art to buy.

- How often do you meet artist who actively try to brand themselves?

The AP informed me that artists that actively brand themselves are rarely met. Any branding that is done is more discreet than in the business world and is not so apparent.

4.4 Conclusion from the interviews

The interviews mostly confirmed the data that had previously gathered and answered the research question of how branding is perceived in the Finnish art market. Branding is not commonly practiced and it is seen as something unfamiliar. This does not however mean that it cannot be practiced. As the artist promoter said, it is not against the values of the art world if it is done the right way. Branding has potential to make the art world more accessible and easier to understand.

TABLE 4: Interview table

Date	Who was interviewed	Method used
20.10.2015	Artist	General interview guide approach
25.10.2015	Gallery owner	General interview guide approach
6.11.2015	Artist promoter	General interview guide approach

The gallery owner and the artist both endorsed that having your artworks displayed in galleries add to the perceived value of the artist's brand. Specifying the roles of the artist promoter and gallery owner confirmed the

artworld operator network introduced in chapter two. The table above illustrates the date the interviews took place, the people who were interviewed and what interview method was used.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to recount the information that was gathered and analyze how the research questions were answered by this data.

Additionally the reliability and validity of this thesis will be examined and suggestions for further research will be presented.

5.1 Answers to the Research Questions

Branding is an uncommon practice in the Finnish art market. This however does not mean that there is no use for it. Branding can offer artists a tool to reach new customers and make their art more accessible. The following table illustrates the research questions and how they were answered:

TABLE 10: Research questions and answers table

Question	Answer
What are the biggest challenges for artists to brand themselves in the Finnish art market?	The biggest challenge is the risk of over-commercialization, which diminishes the artistic value of your work. Additionally some of the traditional branding methods do not fit the art world (e.g. positioning).
How is branding perceived in the Finnish art market?	The word "brand" has a negative connotation in the Finnish art market. However, if branding is done to reach customers who are interested in your type of art, then it is considered more acceptable.
How can artists brand themselves in the Finnish art market?	By using the tools introduced in this thesis and creating a brand framework that stems from the values and identity

	of the artist himself.
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5.2 Reliability and validity

The two phases of data gathering: the desk study and interviews supported the case study that was conducted later on. The people that were interviewed for this thesis were all picked due to their positions in the Finnish art market. This ensured that the data gathered was rich and diverse, relevant and based on personal practice and experience. All research data was reliable and gathered from trusted sources. The branding tools used in the case study were cited from an internal document that was received by permission from an established brand design agency. The main and sub research questions were all answered. In conclusion, this thesis achieved validity and reliability.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

This thesis does not fully cover brand identity implementation systems and customer data gathering techniques. Further research should be conducted on how artists can gather data from customers to further support and develop their brand and which customer channels should they use to reach them.

Research should be conducted on what brand identity implementation systems and customer data research techniques are considered acceptable in the Finnish art market. Additionally, research should be conducted on the visual part of the brand as this thesis does not cover it.

6 SUMMARY

In chapter 1 the thesis background, research framework, research questions and data gathering methods were introduced. The purpose of this chapter is to establish what the thesis is aiming to achieve and how it will be executed.

In chapter 2 a brief introduction into the economic side of the art is given. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a basic understanding of contemporary art world operators and what determines the prices of art. Additionally the effect of some macro economic factors to the price of art is examined.

In chapter 3 the theory of what a brand is and what elements it is comprised of is delved into. The goal of this chapter is to establish a theoretical network framework that will bolster the artist's brand's credibility.

In chapter 4 the empirical data gathered in the form of interviews is introduced. The purpose of this chapter is to verify the previously gathered theoretical data and achieve insight from operators inside the Finnish art market.

In chapter 5 a case study conducted with an actual artist is examined. Branding methods used in an actual brand design agency and the theory previously gathered are both utilized to create a personal brand for the artist.

In chapter 6 the main and sub research questions are answered. Additionally the reliability, validity and suggestions for future research are examined.

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