

The Process of Branding a New Independent Popular Music Artist on Social Media

Anna Reponen

Master's Thesis

Arts Management

Sibelius Academy

University of the Arts Helsinki

Spring 2020

ABSTRACT

Thesis

Title The process of branding a new independent popular music artist on social media	Number of pages 65 + Appendix
Author Anna Reponen	Semester Spring 2020
Degree programme Arts Management	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis examines the process of creating a new popular artist brand on social media. In the past two decades the music industry has gone through major changes and new technologies have enabled artists to emancipate themselves from labels, creating new means to generate income, distribute music and build a career. Social media has become an important tool to create artist brands and independent artists can utilize it to their benefit with very little resources. However, the branding process is not explicit and seems to vary from artist to artist. This thesis explores what is the branding process on social media, what factors influence the process and how artists perceive the branding process on social media.</p> <p>The research was carried out as a qualitative case study, where five individual interviews were conducted with new independent popular artists who are at the beginning of their careers. An important framework for the chosen artists was that they are independent, thus not having a contract with a major label. As a result of the study, it can be said that there is no clear formula to the branding process of an independent popular music artist. However, it seems that the artists personal values are in the core of the process, as they are affecting the decision-making on social media content as well as the artist's perception of branding.</p> <p>Social media content was also inspired by their music. Thus, it could be concluded that music is one of the main influences in the branding process. Another important influence was resources, such as money, time and knowledge, as independent artists do not often have the support of a label. Critically examining, five cases do not provide enough data to draw definitive conclusions of the topic. In order to gain more insight on the topic I would suggest a wider study to be conducted, where more artists could be involved. Thus, some more reliable and clearer ideas about the branding process could be formed.</p>	
<p>Keywords</p> <p>Social Media, Branding, Personal Branding, Marketing, Artist Branding, Brand Image, Independent Artist, Popular Music, Music Industry, Record Industry</p>	
<p>Additional information</p> <p>The thesis has been revised by a plagiarism inspection system 30.3.2020.</p>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.2	PROBLEM FORMULATION.....	8
1.3	AIM OF THE STUDY.....	10
1.4	RESEARCH APPROACH.....	11
1.5	STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS.....	11
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	12
2.1	MUSIC INDUSTRY	12
2.1.1	<i>The disruption of the traditional record industry</i>	<i>12</i>
2.1.2	<i>Music in Popular Culture</i>	<i>17</i>
2.2	BRANDING AND RELATED CONCEPTS.....	20
2.2.1	<i>From branding to personal brands.....</i>	<i>20</i>
2.2.2	<i>The process of creating a personal brand.....</i>	<i>22</i>
2.2.3	<i>Managing an artist brand and image.....</i>	<i>24</i>
2.2.4	<i>Marketing and the Arts.....</i>	<i>27</i>
2.2.5	<i>Social media as a branding tool.....</i>	<i>29</i>
3	RESEARCH METHOD.....	32
3.1	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE STUDY.....	32
3.2	DATA COLLECTION.....	34
3.3	DATA ANALYSIS	35
3.4	INTERVIEWEES	35
3.5	CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....	38
4	ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	39
4.1	PERCEPTION OF BRANDING.....	39
4.2	THE BRANDING PROCESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.....	43
4.2.1	<i>What is the branding process on social media?</i>	<i>43</i>
4.2.2	<i>Factors influencing the branding process</i>	<i>46</i>
4.2.3	<i>Creating content on social media.....</i>	<i>49</i>
5	CONCLUSIONS	55
6	DISCUSSION	59
6.1	FURTHER RESEARCH	61
7	REFERENCES.....	62
8	APPENDIXES	66
	APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	66

List of tables

Table 1	Overview of interviewees
---------	--------------------------

List of figures:

Figure 1	”The streams of rights and royalties in the traditional value-added network of the music industry” (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 15).
Figure 2	”The streams of rights and royalties in the new value-added network of the music industry” (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 16).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The music industry has gone through major changes in the past decade and the power relations within the industry have shifted drastically. The most significant cause for these developments is digital downloading and distribution of music. This has led to artists having to rethink their revenue streams, as they cannot solely rely on record sales. The new streaming services and online platforms have made it possible for anyone to promote and distribute their music. (Christian, 2011, p.6-7; Tschmuk, 2016, p. 13-14.) Furthermore, the industry is shifting towards a more DIY ("do-it-yourself") mentality, where aspiring artists have to put a lot of effort in developing their career before they can approach a label, manager or start making collaborations with other brands (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 14-15). Karhumaa (2018, p. 18) describes it footwork, which means that artists have to ensure first hand that their career is moving towards the desired direction. In this thesis the word 'artist' is used to describe popular music artists.

Establishing a career in the music industry requires an immense amount of work for an artist, which also includes keeping up to date with industry changes. The music industry has always been changing rapidly and the people working in the industry have had to keep up with the constant flow of new information (Baskerville, 1995, p. 5), which was already the case in the nineties when social media and most recent technologies were not yet even invented. Baskerville (1995) mentions that there is too little understanding about how the business works, which leads to people being incompetent in what they are doing. Although Baskerville is contemplating the situation in the nineties, it could be argued that the same situation more or less applies today. Especially new artists in the beginning of their careers, who do not necessarily have extensive knowledge on how the music business works.

There is an increasing number of independent artists trying to make it in the industry and they are all developing careers and brands for themselves. This has to do with the industry changes, where the role of record labels and managers has altered when it comes to

branding and artist career development. Record labels still have an important role in the music industry, but the Internet provides opportunities for artists to become superstars even without the help of a record label (Davis, Cochrane and Kettler, 2011, p. 86). Getting signed by a record label is not necessarily as desirable anymore for an artist, as it is possible to attract an audience, even the masses online and therefore create commercial value (Davis, Cochrane and Kettler, 2011, p. 86; Tschmuk, 2016, p.14-15). However, this means that artists choosing to stay independent are left building their career with their own resources and competence and acquiring help depends on themselves. Finding the right contacts can be a challenge, but so is attracting the right audience. Especially for artists who are in the very beginning of their careers, the challenge lies in building an audience and finding their space in the music market (Davis et al., 2011, p. 86).

It could be argued, that creating a story is one of the most important aspects of building an artist career and brand. According to Karhumaa (2018, p. 111) a story of an artist is narrated through their careers and achievements and it requires publicity to be noticed. At some point the story of an artist will have gained enough attention that it can continue to live on its own, without active narration (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 111). Communicating the story is an important part of narrating and these days everything that has to do with this occurs on different social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube. However, this means that it is also more difficult to stand out with a story, as the Internet and different online platforms are so accessible (Karhumaa, 2018, p.112). It seems, that the process of building an artist career has turned upside down. The artist has to start building themselves a brand and an audience on their own first in order to get noticed in the industry. Some years ago, an artist could more easily be signed to a label with no existing online presence or fanbase. Nonetheless, this happens these days as well, as long as an artist gains the interest of the industry, but many times an artist has to, but also has the opportunity to start on their own (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 14-17).

An artist's career could often be described as a personal set of goals, filled with possibly lifelong dreams. Creating an incentive for the people helping the artist is crucial, otherwise there is no reason for them to be working to further the artists career. A common mistake is to get a good start with skillful experts, who help the artist set up social media platforms and create content, but who drop out as soon as something else comes along.

In these cases, it seems that the experts have not been committed to the artist and their story. (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 18-19.) One reason behind this may be that the artist has not thought about their story thoroughly enough or has not been able to communicate it in an interesting and clear way. On the other hand, rarely does an artist have the resources to get expert help in the beginning of the career and they need to find people who support them with different incentives than immediate monetary compensation. I think the key interest in helping a new artist should be the personal commitment and interest towards the story and vision of the artist.

Popular music artists are considered to be a part of the commercial, entertainment side of the music industry, where creating monetary value with an artist brand and their music is often an important goal. Branding as a concept has been a part of the music industry for a long time, but there has been controversy in the use of the word, as it is heavily linked to advertising and products. However, the process of branding an artist seems to be vague and there seems to be no unambiguous way to approach the process. Different online platforms play a huge part in the process, as they are enabling artists to promote themselves freely online, however placing the responsibility of the branding process in the artists hands. Nonetheless, the different aspects of an artist career are being spread out and are not necessarily in the hands of one team, or one person. There is more responsibility for the artist to be in charge and have an overall vision of what they are creating. Furthermore, brand creation is a wholesome process, which includes many creative aspects of an artist's career.

I am personally interested in this topic as I have a background as an artist and have been a part of creating independent artist brands on social media for myself and other artists. Those experiences have made me realize that the branding process of an artist on social media can seem slightly random and there is no clear written down process to it. However, there are many theories and concepts of personal branding as well as some on artist branding specifically, but the application of those seems to be different in each case. I believe that everyone is already a brand and artists have to utilize their personal brand and develop it to their artistic use. In this development process, I believe that their music is in the core in creating an overall image and brand. Nevertheless, having a personal brand and distinctive music does not mean that artists are all capable of creating a story

that is communicated in a way that attracts the right audience and fanbase. Depending on the artist, their first goal might be to simply make music, only secondly is it to create an overall brand and concept around that music.

1.2 Problem formulation

Technology has made it possible for almost anyone to become a part of the music industry in one way or the other. The role of so called ‘gatekeepers’, such as record labels and publishers has diminished and music is more accessible than ever before. Most of the functions regarding music making, promotion, marketing and business are taking place online, which means that anyone with a mobile device or computer with a decent internet connection can get started. (Tschmuk, 2016, p.16.) Recording equipment is more easily accessible, which has led to artists being able to record quality sound with rather small investments (Karhumaa, 2018, p.14-17). However, creating music is one aspect, but distributing and promoting it can be considered just as vital. For an artist to get noticed, they need to start building an online presence, where creating an artist brand is in the core.

It seems, that having an online presence is one of the most important aspects for a new artist. New talent is constantly sought after by managers, record labels and publishers and finding an artist online is one of the key elements in that pursuit. If an artist cannot be found online, they seem to not exist. In addition, having an online presence is crucial in order to gain the attention of fans and therefore building an audience. Social media are low-cost platforms, where an independent artist can get started, even with limited resources. Social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube provide access for anyone to post and promote their content. Artists can use these platforms to start creating their brands and promote their music. There are many examples of artists who have gained publicity through social media and even risen to stardom, one of the most well-known examples is Justin Bieber, who was discovered from YouTube by record executive Scooter Braun (Caplin, 2009). However, the more accessible a platform is, the more there is competition, thus standing out becomes an even bigger challenge.

For an artist who is very focused on their music, the business-related affairs might feel overcoming and tedious. Of course, this depends on the artist, as some are more knowledgeable about and interested in the business side than others. (Passman, 2015, p.3.) Artist branding is often handled by the record label, but in today's DIY culture an independent artist has the possibility to manage their business affairs, including the branding process themselves, giving them full control and artistic freedom. Social media platforms allow independent artists to express themselves in a manner most suitable for them. The brand creation process is in their own hands and they have the power to narrate their own story as artists. However, this also means they are rarely getting any help in creating that story, which exposes them to the risk of the story getting interpreted differently than how the artist had planned (Karhumaa, 2018, p.115). How does an independent artist create an artist brand on social media? What is the process behind it?

The main problem I am focusing on in this thesis is the branding process. The changes in the music industry have shifted some of the responsibility of artist career development from the record labels to the artist. This can have great benefits artistically, but the lack of resources and knowledge can place an artist in a challenging position with no clear strategy and steps to follow. Using social media can be natural for some artists and creating a brand for themselves can be something they feel comfortable doing. However, I claim that the process of branding an artist on social media is vague and there is not one formula to do so. Each artist has their own personality and that personality reflects on the artist brand, thus affecting the process as well. Popular music artists are creating music that often has a target of gaining immense popularity, reaching an audience as vast as possible. I believe creating a strong artist brand plays an important role in reaching that goal.

It seems, that it is not enough to have great music, but an artist also needs to have a strong brand to support the music. However, some artists might not even want to think of themselves as brands. How does a new popular artist approach the branding process on social media? What factors influence their choices as they post on social media? How planned and strategic is the process of creating a new artist brand from the artist's perspective? Artists are rarely branding experts, which can lead to a disorganized and unplanned process where the branding strategy has not been thought through. On the other

hand, the lack of an uncontrolled process can lead to more artistic freedom and make the artist brand more authentic and personal.

1.3 Aim of the study

In this thesis, I want to find out what is the process of creating a new artist brand on social media and what are the factors influencing that process. In addition, I am interested in knowing how new popular artists perceive the branding process. I want to know what influences the particular choices the artists are making during the process and if these choices are connected to a long-term strategy or vision? Any new artist can start creating a brand, but not all of them are experts in brand creation or familiar with theoretical processes or approaches. In addition, some artists might not want to think about themselves as brands at all. In these cases, it would be interesting to know how the artist creates a brand without actively thinking of creating a brand. I want to explore how aware new independent popular artists are of the branding process and how they perceive artist branding in general.

My research questions are:

1. What is the process of creating a brand for a new independent popular artist on social media?
2. What are the factors that are influencing the process of creating a new popular artist brand on social media?
 - a. How do new popular artists perceive the branding process on social media?

It will be interesting to see how the interviewed artists view the branding process, as well as to find out if they have knowledge and interest towards it. I believe that most artists are aware of a branding process, but do not necessarily know how to strategically grow their artist brand. In addition, I claim there will be contradictory opinions towards branding in general.

1.4 Research Approach

This research is a qualitative case study. The primary method of this research are five semi-structured personal interviews, which were conducted in January 2020.

The main part of the theoretical framework consists of music industry and branding related literature. In addition, I have combined the chapters with relevant literature on popular culture, social media and marketing related concepts.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of six parts.

The second chapter goes through the theoretical framework, which is divided in two parts. In the first part I will explain the structures of the music industry as well as introduce relevant concepts on popular culture. The second part will go through personal branding as an overall concept. I will then link this to relevant concepts of brand creation, artist branding, marketing and social media.

The research method will be described in chapter three, which is followed by the analysis of the data and results.

The fifth and sixth chapter consist of conclusions and discussion of the findings.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of two parts: music industry, branding and branding related concepts, such as marketing and social media. In the first part, I will explain the structure of the music industry, especially focusing on the disruption of the traditional record industry and to what it means for an artist's career and income streams today. In addition, I will go through basics on the role of music in popular culture to gain perspective on the importance of building audiences as a popular artist. The second part goes through branding and related concepts. Firstly, I will explain personal branding from a theoretical perspective, after which I will expand to artist brand management and go through some ideas on creating a personal brand. After this I will discuss marketing to gain an idea of the special traits that arts have in the traditional commercial setting. Lastly, I will go through social media as a branding tool to gain insight on its relevance in the process of personal branding today.

2.1 Music Industry

In this chapter I will define the structure of the music industry, what has changed in the past decades and how it has affected artists and their career development. I will also introduce relevant theories on popular culture, focusing on popular music and the perception of an artist in the popular music field.

2.1.1 The disruption of the traditional record industry

The record industry is often used as a synonym to describe the music industry, however there is a difference in terms of terminology. The record industry is a part of the music industry, comprising affairs related to recorded music, although the definitions of the terms and what they entail are not always that clear (Wall, 2013, p. 122). In an even wider context music industry can be considered a part of the creative industries, which are also referred to as cultural industries. Cultural industries are a part of a so-called new economy, which include industries producing various outputs that can be defined as cultural

products (Power & Scott, 2004, p.3). The term 'cultural industries' was coined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (Adorno, 1964, p.12). Adorno preferred 'cultural industries' to the term 'mass culture', as he saw that cultural products reflected on the interests of the industries producing them instead of being products of the people or the masses (Witkin, 2002, p.2).

Furthermore, at this point I find it important to clarify the relation between record companies, labels and corporations, as well as the difference between a major and independent label. Record companies are in the core of the record industry and they operate independently producing music releases under record labels, whereas the corporations own record companies, holding the majority of the shares (Wall, 2013, p.123-124). These relations are not always clear and there are many versions of them. The main corporations are Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group. These companies are called the major labels. (Wall, 2013, p. 123-125.) An independent label is defined as a record company, which is not directly owned by one of these corporations (Wall, 2013, p. 123-125; Passman, 2015, p.68).

The music industry has gone through various changes during its existence. The most significant change in the past decade, is the decrease of record sales and the rise of digital music distribution. (Christian, 2011, p. 6; Wikström, P., & DeFillippi, R., 2016, p. 1-4.) This has changed the perspective for artists' careers and emphasizes the career aspects that fall outside of record sales. Artists receive income from many revenue streams, such as performances, different royalties as well as possibly licensing their brand and name for different products (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 15; Tessler, 2016, p.35-36). Furthermore, how the income from these different revenue streams is generated keeps changing. New technologies provide new ways to distribute music, thus new means to create sales. However, the decrease of physical record sales has made it more challenging for an artist to make an income solely on record sales. Online streaming services provide an excellent platform to distribute and promote music, eliminating the need of having a record label or music publisher in between. (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 28-29.)

Record labels have made record deals with artists for a long time, and those deals have been changing as the industry has changed. It could be argued that record deals have

gotten looser and the power of the labels has somewhat diminished. It could be claimed that one of the most well-known record deals is the so called 360-degree deal, meaning that the label takes care of all the aspects of an artist's career; recordings, publishing and touring, in return for a certain percentage of the revenue (Tessler, 2016, p.34-35; Passman, 2015, p.102-103). Less than two decades ago 360-degree record deals were considered a fair deal, but those deals have become less desirable for artists, as they have many other possibilities to take care of the different aspects of their career and therefore have an effect on their income streams as well (Tessler, 2016, p.34-35). Nowadays record deals have evolved and are more flexible, as there are more independent labels in addition to the major ones, but these days labels aren't the only way for an artist to get their music distributed. Although, it cannot be denied that major record labels especially have a lot of resources to advance an artist's career, the revolution of digital distribution services has enabled artists to emancipate themselves from record labels.

The shift from physical record sales to digital distribution has had many phases. The first one was file-sharing service Napster, which managed to disrupt the revenue logic of the entire music industry. Since then many different services and platforms, such as iTunes Music Store and Spotify, emerged and took advantage of the new technologies to share music. Some examples are online retail outlet iTunes Music Store selling music by song and music subscription service Spotify providing a monthly-fee for listeners to access an unlimited amount of music. (Wikström, P., & DeFillippi, R, 2016, p. 1-4.) It seems that it is made sure music is available to listeners, but these platforms and services have caused several issues that affect the creators of music. These issues have mainly to do with revenue distribution and whether that is performed in an equitable manner (Wikström, P., & DeFillippi, R, 2016, p. 4).

Intellectual property can be considered one of the most important aspects of the music industry, at least what comes to monetizing music (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 13). Copyright was initially established to protect written works, which meant that the copyright owner had the right to control the copying and dissemination of certain works and could also charge a fee for copies (Demers, 2006, p. 14). Until this day, the person controlling the copyright, which is not always the owner of the copyright, is in control of how the work is used in public (Demers, 2006, p. 14). Furthermore, the copyright owner can also grant someone

else the right to control their copyright, for example an artist making a deal with a music publisher. However, digital distribution methods have given artists more freedom when it comes to music distribution, as they are less dependent on record labels and music publishers and can now collect royalties even without these gatekeepers (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 14-16).

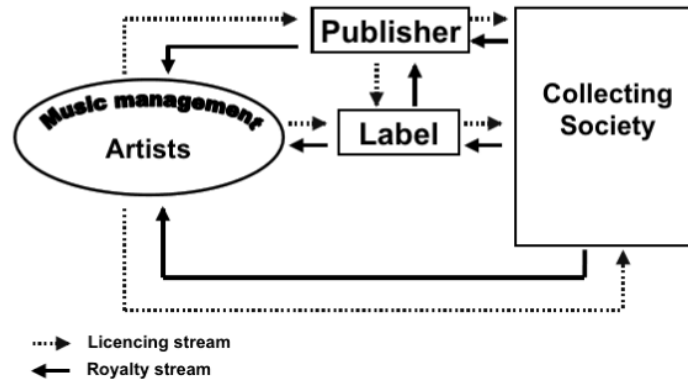


Figure 1. *"The streams of rights and royalties in the traditional value-added network of the music industry" (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 15).*

According to Tschmuk (2016, p.15) music distribution has traditionally been linked to the business logic of record sales (Figure 1). Labels and publishers were in the middle of the rights and royalty streams, therefore interfering with the process in all directions and presumably also taking a share of the royalties passing through. These days however, an artist can produce a record in a home studio with relatively low cost and distribute it online through streaming and download services. In addition, artists are not dependent on collecting societies, as they can control their copyrights through creative common licensing. (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 15-16.) It could be argued that intellectual property is the most valuable asset to an artist and now the new technologies allow them to fully control the use of their copyrights and monetize them independently.

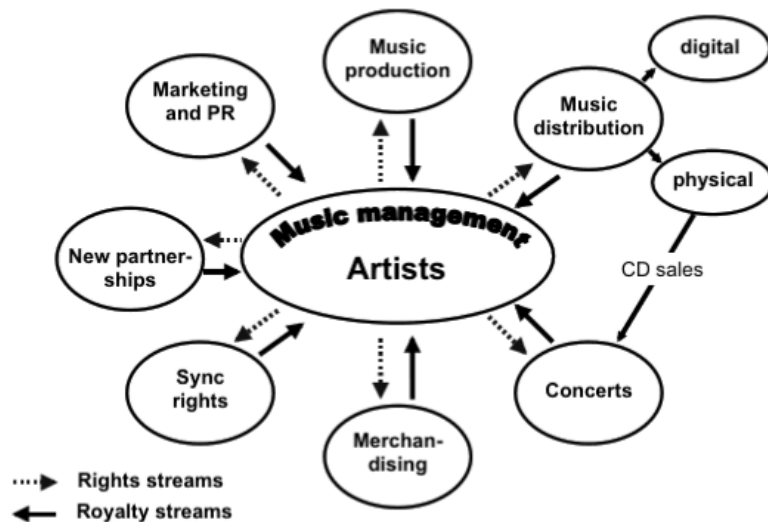


Figure 2. *"The streams of rights and royalties in the new value-added network of the music industry" (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 16).*

The fundamental changes in the music industry have shifted the power relations in a manner where the artist has become the centre of the value-added network (Figure 2). In addition, intellectual property is in the core of other income possibilities as well, such as licensing the artists name and brand for products or making deals with other brands. (Tschmuk, 2016, p.16, 28.) This new artist-centric industry structure allows artists to utilize the possibilities of intellectual property more freely and diversely. Even in the very beginning of an artist career, it can be beneficial to think about future possibilities in creating income streams using intellectual property related to the artist brand. For instance, an artist can think about which brands they want to be associated with that could enhance their brand image, as well as profit financially through collaborations. It could be argued, that an artist brand is created mostly online on different social media platforms where also many other brands operate, lowering the threshold for collaborations.

Artists have always been in the core of the music industry, but there is no arguing that in order to establish a successful career, an artist needs to build a team around them. Even at the very beginning of their career they usually have friends and other contacts to help them piece things together. Many times, the first manager of an artist is an enthusiastic family member (Passman, 2015, p.16). Of course, some artists might be willing and capable of accomplishing many things on their own, but as they gain recognition, they

simply do not have the resources to do everything alone. Ultimately, most artists prefer to focus on their music, instead of handling administrative tasks. Also, focusing on the business side of things is not necessarily the best use of an artist's time (Passman, 2015, p.11-12). Ideally an artist could have professionals working on every aspect of their career from the beginning on, but in most of the cases the lack of resources prevents this for a starting artist (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 18-19). As the artists career develops and income is generated, they are able to build a team that includes many professional people. Depending on the market and scale of the operations they will need a manager, lawyer, agent and a business manager (Passman, 2015, p.11).

Like in any other business, the team needs to be committed to what they are doing. In the music industry the business is focused around the artist, who often has a vision of what their career would look like. Getting others to believe in that same vision can be a challenge (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 18-19). I believe that not having many resources can help in getting the team committed. Getting the help of people who believe in the artist and their career can be far more motivating than hiring people who might have other incentives to work with the artist. In the best case, an artist would be able to hire people who love to work with them. As it seems, new independent artists often have friends or acquaintances to help them out, some doing it as a favour. Although, some of them can also get one step closer in furthering their own career, as they get to practice their skills while helping out the artist (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 20). Later on, if the artist becomes a well-known name, they will have a great reference.

2.1.2 Music in Popular Culture

Popular culture as a concept has been around for decades and theories of it have been explored by many authors and academics. Popular culture seems to overrule other areas where culture is produced in terms of popularity, as is also suggested in its name (Peterson, 1977, p.395). Popular culture is targeted to the masses; therefore, popularity is determined by exposure. "Popular culture is explicitly created to fill a market demand, rather than created in part out of a commitment to some external goal such as knowledge, truth, beauty or justice." (Peterson, 1977, p.395.) Therefore, it could be argued that the

main goal of popular culture is to monetize art through popularity, instead of merely focusing on the intrinsic value of the art. In popular arts the conflict between creativity and commercialization seems to get undescored, as the creative artists are seen as heroes, whereas the industry is the villain (Negus, 1996, p.45-46).

Popular arts can be categorized in many ways. One way to categorize it is within the term 'creative industries', which has expanded the traditional perspective by including other areas such as design, pop music, video and advertising (Chong 2002, 9). Within these realms, popular arts, this also including popular music can be considered as a part of the creative industries. It could be argued that the areas included in the creative industries have a strong emphasis on commercialization and therefore greater goals also in terms of popularity. The word 'popular' in popular music has several meanings, starting from the simplest definition "widely liked" (Wall, 2013, p.144). Other meanings are related to the industry structure, to major and independent record labels. In one sense, popularity is understood as music having poor cultural value if it is produced by a large corporation with a strong commercial aspect. In another sense, popularity is the perspective of independent and DIY artists and labels, where music production and consumption would be considered to belong to the masses. (Wall, 2013, p.144.)

The discussion around independent actors and corporations, as well as the cultural value of popular culture seem to create a dichotomy in the creative industries. The role of an artist in the creative industries has become twofold, at least when it is viewed from the perspective of the entertainment industry.

"The television, film and music industries center around Hollywood where two powerful narratives of celebrity exist – the Romantic notion of the authentic artist with natural talent who gets discovered, and the business savvy impresarios who construct stars out for ordinary people." (Vance, 2011, p. 55.)

It seems that an artist can be constructed or they are born to be artists, regardless of which, efforts have to be made in order to make an artist popular. It could be argued that technology has had a tremendous impact on the possibilities to achieve popularity.

New technologies have made it possible for anyone to record music at home and distribute it. The artist is no longer an odd genius, instead everyone can be an artist (Groys, 2016). For instance, the number of good quality home studios are increasing and one does not need much more than a microphone and a computer software to record a song. I believe this turns the valuation of art upside down. These days, music is produced in a higher quantity than ever and there is more supply of songs than anyone has time to listen to. The competition of listeners and audiences is intense, since anyone who has decided to become an artist is trying to get their music heard. It can be claimed that in popular culture what is popular becomes valuable, as the target audience are the masses who then decide what to consume. However, there is a battle between creating art that is valuable to the artist and at the same time offering entertainment that will sell tickets (Klamer, 2017, p. 23).

Music is hardly ever the only focus when it comes to music in popular culture. There are several meanings attached to music, depending on the artist as well as where and how the music is displayed. (Vance, 2011, p. 52.) Seeing a live show or listening to an individual song from Spotify can evoke very different images and thoughts about the artist, which all add to the layers of different meanings. Vance (2011, p. 52) says that there are even more layers when the artist is a female. Faludi (as cited in Vance, 2011, p.56) takes Madonna as an example on female representation in popular music. Madonna exploited female sexuality in a way no female artist had done before, using it as a way of empowering women. Her hypersexuality was considered to have influenced the backlash against feminism, who were trying to part themselves from male domination by eliminating female sexuality as the main source of power. (As cited in Vance, 2011, p.56.)

Another notion to artists in popular culture is age, as in popular music especially artists have started their careers very young, often as mere teenagers. A pop star, such as Madonna has been able to build a long-lasting career well into her 50's, but I wonder if she would have become such a megastar had she not started her career in her early 20's. It could be argued that youthfulness has often been considered an essential part of the brand image of an artist in popular culture. In today's world aging has become something to avoid and marketers use images of young people to advertise to young people (Vance, 2011, p. 54). In many ways, it could be argued that the glorification of youth is a topical

phenomenon in our societies that reflects on popular culture, hence reflecting on what an artist should represent and be like.

Looking at the roots of popular culture from a historical perspective, it is evident that popular music does not only have to do with different music styles. Music styles are a representation of its time and reflect on wider cultural practices and the different world events and happenings of a certain time. (Wall, 2013, p.23.) Popular music includes many different styles of music and each of them is a representation of its time. No one can predict the next popular music style, but in retrospect different influences and sounds in popular music convey something from a particular time. Furthermore, defining popular music can be complex, but in its simplest definition “popular music is music that is popular” (Wall, 2013, p.ix). The complexity of the definition is an issue of how one defines the word popular and that also reflects on how different people define and discuss popular music and culture (Wall, 2013, p.ix). Thus, popular music, its different styles and meanings can be considered rather ambiguous and are therefore open to interpretation.

2.2 Branding and related concepts

The second part of the theoretical framework is about branding and related concepts. I will define branding and personal brands as concepts as well as go through the specifics regarding artist brand management and the personal branding process. After this I will explain some key elements of marketing and the arts from a theoretical perspective, mainly to gain insight on arts as a product. At the end of the chapter, I will discuss social media as a branding tool, bringing forward its relevance in the personal branding process today.

2.2.1 From branding to personal brands

Gronlund (2013, p.1-12) claims that branding is often misunderstood by business managers. Ever since branding became a trend, everyone seems to incorporate it in their vocabulary, but often confuse it with other marketing and communications efforts, such as building awareness or reaching a certain audience. The word brand stems from a time

when man marked their livestock. However, nowadays a brand can be considered an identifiable name or design, that's value is determined by how people perceive it (Gronlund, 2013, p.1-3; Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008, p.9). Branding is not about selling products, it is a tool to make a connection with the customers. People buy products, because they can relate to them and feel a connection to the brand, therefore it can be argued that people are buying for emotional reasons, rather than rational. (Gronlund, 2013, p.1-3.)

From a business perspective a brand can be defined as what makes the business unique. A brand is an identifiable whole, which includes the name, logo, pricing and other components. (Strauss, 2005, p. 99.) According to Strauss (2005, p.99) it is crucial to think about whose attention you are trying to get; it is therefore important to build a brand no matter what size the business. "Without a brand, you may find that instead of being all things to all people, you are nothing to no one" (Strauss 2005, p.99). People connect with brands through their thoughts and feelings, therefore the brand image cannot be separated from the product (Christian, 2011, p. 15). However, it is good to remember that "while a brand is a product, a product may not necessarily be a brand" (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008, p.10).

Personal branding is a fairly new concept in literature, but it has already been defined in literature in many ways. It is described as a perception of who a person is and what qualities and values that person has. A personal brand has the power to influence other people's associations and perceptions of a person. (Rampersad, 2009, p.5.) Everyone has a personal brand, but how you manage and develop it is the key to benefit from it (Peters, 1997; Keller and Lehman, 2006). It seems that people fail to realize that even ordinary people have a personal brand. Personal branding is often associated with well-known people, such as athletes, politicians or artists, but even the common person has a brand they can develop (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011). Most people are not aware of having a personal brand, thus fail to strategically and effectively manage it (Rampersad, 2009, p.4). Furthermore, it is crucial to note that a brand, more specifically a brand identity differs from the brand image. A brand identity is something a person or company can manage, but the image is the perception that other people have of a brand, which is difficult if not impossible to control. (Bhasin, 2019.)

Personal brands have become a normal part of our vocabulary only recently. Nowadays it seems that every person is a brand or is trying to be one. We all need to try and stand out as ourselves, whether it is for a job opportunity, finding a significant other or gaining visibility for our idea. Mere two decades ago Tom Peters (1997) was the first to introduce the personal branding movement (Rampersad, 2009, p.3-4; Chen, 2013; Labrecque et al., 2011; Gehl, 2011) and he explains personal branding as a way of standing out. He says everyone has a brand and can use it to their benefit. According to Peters (1997), at the time the principle of branding had been used with companies for a long time, but he suggested it should be applied to people as well. It seems that personal brands have existed for a long time, but only Peters thought of making personal branding a systematic effort for an individual.

Peters started the conversation on personal brands before the turn of the millennium, when the Internet was just becoming a part of our daily lives and routines. In terms of career building, the Internet has played a big role in the growing need of personal branding (Groning, 2013, p.88-89). It could be claimed that most of the available job positions can be found online, which means that people need to build an online presence for themselves as well. In order to do so, a person needs to be aware of their personal brand and think about how they present themselves on the Internet and which things they want to associate with their personal brand. Therefore, it has become almost imperative for even the common person to brand themselves, not only celebrities or world leaders (Groning, 2013, p.88-89; Labrecque et al., 2011).

2.2.2 The process of creating a personal brand

Personal branding is a relatively new concept in academia (Chen, 2013), therefore there is still very little literature about the concept or the process of creating a personal brand. It seems that many theories of processes are based on the more well-known process of corporate branding and the traditional product settings. In personal branding the core focus is on the person, a living and breathing being, with their own values, beliefs and opinions. Creating a brand around a person could be considered to be far more complex than creating a brand around something inanimate. In literature, personal branding is often

linked to the job market and the process of self-branding is treated as a tool to grow social capital (Gehl, 2011).

Some traditional branding processes can be applied to personal branding or self-branding, both terms referring to the same process. Peters (1997) compares the self-branding process to the way companies brand themselves, giving concrete examples on which questions to ask yourself and how to evaluate yourself as a brand. We all have certain thoughts that come to our mind when we think of certain brands, whether they are products, artists or company names. These thoughts are key when creating a brand. Strauss (2005, p. 87-88) encourages to answer the question of what they want people to think about, when they think of their brand. He (Strauss, 2005, p.88) also argues, that branding is not only something big companies or players should do, but also small businesses. An artist could essentially be considered a business, which would mean that the some of the brand creation processes could be applied to them as well.

A part of the branding process is connecting one's brand to other brands; which clothing brands one uses, what foods and drinks they have or which car they drive are all part of the personal brand. For artists, a part of the branding process is collaborations with other brands and merchandising deals for products associated with their image (Harrison 2003, p.150). I believe this is an important notion to make in the very beginning of the branding process. Even if an artist for instance would not be making collaborations with other brands just then, it is important to think about what kind of brands an artist would like to be connected with and what kind of associations they have when thinking of other brands and whether they are aligned with their artist brand.

Personal branding has to do with the personality of the person that is in the core of the brand. It could be argued that it would be very difficult to create a personal brand that has nothing to do with some of the authentic personality traits a person has. Rampersad (2009, p.9) describes an authentic personal branding process, where he emphasizes the importance of knowing oneself and using the authentic attributes and characteristics in the branding process. Everyone already has a brand, which means they do not have to invent one (Ramperstad 2009, p.9). In order to create a functional personal brand, one has to be authentic and use and emphasize the characteristics they already have. "If you are

not branded in an authentic, honest, and holistic way, (...) and if you focus mainly on selling, packaging, outward appearances, promoting yourself, and becoming famous, you will be perceived as egocentric and selfish.” (Ramperstad 2009, p.9.)

There are several branding experts and authors that seem to have created their own formulas on how to create a personal brand. They are suggesting certain steps to take and pose a variety of questions in order to establish the desired goal of having a personal brand. (Gehl, 2011.) For instance, Wilson & Blumenthal (2008) describe seven steps to creating a personal brand for oneself, also in their words the most successful version of oneself. These steps include among other things assessing the current situation, thinking what are their unique characteristics, what kind of brand image they would like to have, setting a strategy and following that strategy. In my opinion, the formula seems vague and creating a brand for oneself can be challenging as one can rarely look at themselves objectively. It seems that creating a personal brand has become a concept that can be applied to anyone, but especially in the business world and job market one needs to be able to stand out as an individual and market themselves as a brand. As Peters (1997) says: “To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You”.

2.2.3 Managing an artist brand and image

It can be argued that artist brands and images have always existed, but developing and creating them with an intention sometimes surpassing the music itself, has come to the front in only the past decades. Technology has played a big part in this development. Videos became a part of music production in the 80’s and creating an image seemed to have become more important than the music itself (Negus, 1996, p. 87). Since the emergence of social media, creating personal images has become important and imperative for an artist’s career. It seems, that sometimes the importance of music has been underscored so much that there have been attempts on building artist careers prioritizing the construction of a brand image. Nonetheless, the impact of an artist’s brand image should not be undermined.

Harrison (2003, p. 151) considers it important to build a brand for an artist, as the public will always be interested in the stories of artists. An artist brand introduces you to the inside story and takes you behind-the-scenes. However, she notes that the idea of branding themselves is repellent to some artists and they would rather just make their music. On the other hand, even the artists who are not keen on the idea of branding realize they have to build a name and reputation for themselves in order to attract listeners and create revenue through their music. (Harrison 2003, p. 151.) After all, an artist needs to be able to stand out and get people's attention. Although, the use of the word branding could be reconsidered and telling the story of the artist might be a better approach to some.

Artist branding is often viewed from the perspective of new, young artists. Furthermore, social media has provided an opportunity for anyone to start a career as an artist, but artists and bands that existed before the social media era have had to master the new communications platforms to stay relevant. Staying relevant has become something to think about for many artists (Christian, 2011, p. 6). Even old well-known rock bands have to think of new ways to present themselves as artists and learn how to use digital platforms to their benefit and to attract new younger listeners. New artists on the other hand, do not have the luxury of an existing brand name, but have to figure out how to stand out and more importantly how to stay in the limelight and not become a one-hit wonder. (Christian, 2011, p. 6.) Therefore, older artists have to think about managing their brand in a new way, as they cannot solely rely on methods used before social media.

Social media provide many possibilities for self-branding with very low cost. In the beginning of the process it can seem like an endless pool of opportunities and creating a brand for oneself can be enjoyable and fulfilling. However, online platforms, such as social media, are open to everyone and it is relatively impossible to control how other people operate on such platforms (Labrecque et al., 2011). Therefore, at some point of the process the information a person has provided of themselves is subject to other people's interpretation and comments, without the author's explicit permission (Labrecque et al., 2011). Behind every brand is a story, which begins from the author of the story, but when the story has gained enough attention it can continue to live on its own (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 111). The author may not be able to control in which tone the story lives on or if it is developing in the desired direction.

The story can start living on its own at very different points of the brand creation process. Attention can be caught early on, but also lost as fast as it was caught. Nevertheless, when enough attention has risen, the brand creation process turns into brand management. The story behind the brand does no longer require meticulous narration, rather than steering in the right direction and keeping it aligned with the brand image. Gheder (2015, p. 22) introduces impression management as an art of managing personal brands and explains it as an activity to control information. Personal brands depict a certain image, which is expressed through different pieces of information that are communicated through that brand. Impression management is an activity that aims to influence the audience's perception of a person (Gheder, 2015, p.22). Thus, impression management can be considered a part of brand management, albeit the brand image is more difficult to control than the story behind the brand.

In the age of social media, brand management has to do with averting infringement of intellectual property. When a certain amount of publicity and popularity is gained, there are infringement concerns to a brand, such as fake social media accounts and the illegal distribution and use of songs. It can be argued that fake social media accounts can be harmful if they include the name of the brand and are using the brand to market their own content, which can potentially be damaging to the brand image of an artist. According to Harrison (2003, p. 150) artists should always look after their brand. As an artist gains recognition, people are going to want to acquire things associated with the artist, hence the artists brand. She says that being a brand is a part of being a successful artist, and that also means having to protect your brand. (Harrison, 2003, p. 150.) For an artist this means thinking of the legal aspects of their brand from the beginning on, for example if they can get their name trademarked (Harrison, 2003, p. 150).

On certain social media an account can be verified by the social media platform. For instance, Twitter and Instagram accounts can be verified by request, after which a verified badge will appear on the account's name (Instagram, 2020; Twitter, 2020). Verification of an account depends on the public interest of the account and usually verification is used to confirm the account of a certain public figure, such as an athlete, politician or musician (Instagram, 2020; Twitter, 2020). For an artist verifying their social media account as early as possible can be useful, as people can find them more easily and it can

also have an impact on the reliability of an artist.

2.2.4 Marketing and the Arts

In the arts and cultural field there are many actors who fall into the category of creators (Colbert, Nantel, Bilodeau & Poole, 1994, p.4). Therefore, it could be claimed that popular artists fall into that same category. Cultural enterprises need many kinds of artists, but also other enterprises and companies in different industries need artists, for example to shoot commercials (Colbert et al., 1994, p.4). It could be argued that artists are indispensable and needed regardless of the industry, the difference seems to be if they are used directly or indirectly. In my opinion it depends whether the arts are used to market a product or if the art work or the artist is the subject of the marketing efforts. I believe that the arts are present in most marketing efforts, but as said the subject that is marketed varies and if the subject is arts, the marketing model needs to be modified as well.

The traditional marketing model is often used by industrial and commercial companies, who use marketing tools to fulfil customer needs selling a certain product. The key element of this model is that the starting and finishing point of the marketing efforts is the market, not the product. However, in the case of marketing the arts the starting point is the product, the art work or the artist, after which the potential market segment and customer base is identified and targeted. On the other hand, an industrial company could apply the same non-traditional model if they create a new product and try to find the right customer segment to introduce the product to. Although, in this case the overall goal is still measured through financial means, whereas in cultural enterprises the ultimate goal remains artistic. (Colbert et al., 1994, p. 15-17.) Furthermore, these models and approaches may also be mixed within a company and are not necessarily used in isolation.

Another approach to marketing models and arts is integrated marketing communications (IMC). As opposed to traditional marketing concepts, such as product, place, price and promotion, IMC focuses on promotion. IMC focuses on creating a relationship with the consumer and includes all the aspects of a brand message in all marketing efforts. It is an overall approach to advertising, where the brand message is communicated consistently

at every point of the marketing process. In order to have a successful brand, the brand image needs to be integrated in all points of contact with the public. (Christian, 2011, p. 15.) IMC is not a new concept in the marketing and advertising world, but the use of it in the music industry is fairly new. In fact, “KISS did it first – and incorporated it first – in the music industry” (Christian, 2011, p. 15).

According to Christian (2011, p.16), Kiss was the first rock band to realize that their brand might be even more valuable than their music, at least in terms of influence and monetization. It seems that branding an artist has more to do with the overall feeling it creates to the customer. People listen to the music, but if the strategy is taken further, people want to be a part of something, regardless of what the starting point of the brand was. For example, rock band Kiss has managed to create a whole family of products associated with their brand, people buy them, even if they have nothing directly to do with Kiss’ music (Christian, 2011, p. 16). Kiss has managed to create a substantial business by licensing their brand and according to Christian (2011, p. 20) they have the most licenses compared to any other bands. As Strauss (2005, p. 87) puts it “having a band is great, but it’s the brand that pays the bills”.

Kiss managed to create customer interest towards products using their brand value and it can be rather hard to explain why people are willing to buy seemingly regular products just because it has a certain brand on it. Even the simplest product, such as a t-shirt can be more attractive to a customer if it has a Kiss logo on it, instead of a plain shirt. Furthermore, the definition of a product can be vague and sometimes categorizing a certain product challenging (Colbert et al., 1994, p.30-31). A cultural or artistic product is often listed under specialty goods, which are considered to cause consumers to make serious efforts in obtaining that product. Consumers want to see a certain concert, film or buy the art work of a particular painter. (Colbert et al., 1994, p.30-31.) It could be said, that consumers are choosing a certain brand. There is a difference between buying a t-shirt with a Kiss logo as opposed to a t-shirt with no logo. Therefore, it could be argued that artistic and cultural products are brands and in terms of marketing them, brands are important and affect consumer behaviour.

The attitude towards marketing artistic and cultural products seem to vary depending on the art form, but also on the artists themselves. According to a study lead by Sara Cohen (as cited in Negus, 1996, p.46), artists often fall into two categories in the music industry: the ones who oppose to anything commercial, claiming it will corrupt their music and the ones who are trying to make music in hopes of filling a certain gap in the market. Although Cohen conducted her study almost three decades ago, it can be argued that the same dichotomy still applies today as artists are struggling with the notion of ‘selling out’, whereas others are willing to ‘sacrifice their artistic integrity’ in order to create commercial value. Nevertheless, I believe that all artists have their own beliefs and ideas about this notion and none of them are right or wrong. However, as long as we live in a world run by capitalism, there is no escape in having to think about the instrumental value of arts.

2.2.5 Social media as a branding tool

It can be claimed that social media have become a key concept when it comes to branding and marketing in the 2010’s. It is nearly impossible to imagine a branding let alone a marketing strategy without the influence of social media. In terms of branding, social media has become a mandatory channel when promoting and creating a brand image, whether it is for a company or a person. However, the definition of social media is not as straightforward as one might think, although it depends on the perspective.

Social media have had a tremendous social and financial impact, as they have affected our social networking possibilities, but also created multinational corporations (Obar & Wildman, 2015). To put it simply, social media are virtual spaces allowing users to create content and interact with each other, as well as connecting these virtual spaces together to create virtual networks. Some of the most leading and active social media are for example Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Twitter. The difficulty of defining social media lies in the frameworks under which it is defined; whether it should be defined by the technology behind it or how people behave on different social media platforms. (Obar & Wildman, 2015.) Kaplan and Haenlain (2010) argue that it is more about the ideology than the technology itself. Nonetheless, technology is evolving so rapidly, that definitions

and concepts are hard to keep up to date (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

Regardless how one defines social media, it has become an important part of people's lives and can hardly be avoided. Especially in business and employment, social media have become a tool to promote and market oneself and their business (Labrecque et al., 2011). Even the world's leading CEO's of multinational companies shouldn't overlook the power of social media as a personal branding tool (Dutta, 2010). Social media provide a low-cost tool to build and enhance one's personal brand and create channels to interact with various stakeholders. In addition, social media allow one to get feedback quickly and react to it, enabling constant development for a brand and related functions. Promoting one's personal brand actively on social media can enhance the chances to fulfil professional or personal goals. (Dutta, 2010.)

According to Chen (2013), self-branding or personal branding is evolving into a business and most of the branding is happening on social media, such as YouTube. Social media allow individuals to create their own strategies and approaches to promote and brand themselves, setting themselves apart from the traditional marketing strategies (Chen, 2013). Different social media platforms give an opportunity to express oneself freely, without having to follow any explicit rules or guidelines, which makes the process also more complex (Labrecque et al., 2011). It can be claimed, that these virtual networks are giving anyone the possibility to create a brand of themselves in whichever way they desire. However, as there is no clear formula to branding oneself on social media, the task can become rather disorganized and less strategic leading to vague personal brands with no clear impact or value.

Nevertheless, some suggestions have been made in order to utilize social media as personal branding tools. Dutta (2010) explains how important it is to think about what one wants to achieve by branding themselves on social media and whether the goals are professional or personal. In order to create a feasible social media strategy, one needs to think if their professional and personal goals are contradictory, but more importantly if their online activities reflect on what they are doing offline, in the 'real world'. (Dutta, 2010.) Social media are full of profiles and personal brands depicting a certain image

intentionally or unintentionally. However, it seems that an online presence can be technically executed however one desires, but the motivations behind the execution and how they reflect on the authentic person behind the personal brand is what needs to be accounted for.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter will go through the research methods and grounds for choosing the methods. I will also explain the content of the data, data collection and analysis. At the end, the chapter includes critical assessment of the research process and its validity.

3.1 Methodological Approach of the Study

The study was conducted as a qualitative case study with five semi-structured personal interviews. This methodological approach is suitable as I am investigating a process that is in the hands of individuals. In qualitative research the information is gathered in a non-numeric form (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2010, p.65), which applies to this study. The philosophical approach that I have chosen is interpretative, which focuses on understanding and explaining certain concepts (Blaxter et al., 2010, p.61). In this thesis I am focused on finding out a particular process and therefore an interpretative approach is appropriate.

For this research, I have conducted five personal interviews. I have sought out five popular artists, who are in the beginning of their career. The beginning of the career in this study is defined by the start of a new artist brand. The artist may have been a part of other musical groups, or had other musical affiliations and even artist brands before the current one. In addition, an important framework for the chosen artists is that they operate independently, thus not having a contract with a major label.

I have chosen the term ‘popular artist’ to categorize the genre of the artists, as it is a commonly used term to describe artists who perform popular music. Popular music includes many genres and each artist taking part in this study falls under this overall definition, however they may describe their own genre even more specifically. In addition, there are many popular artists that do not have a formal music education, as opposed to many classical vocalists. Some of the interviewees describe their genre more specifically from folk, indie pop to blues. Nevertheless, in this study a popular artist is an overall descriptive term that includes many genres, as popular music often includes

crossovers from many genres. Therefore, I found it unnecessary to define more specifically the type of artists I should interview.

The interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling, where samples are gathered through informants (Blaxter et al., 2010, p.170). I used my personal contacts who are active in the popular music field in Finland and globally. From my contacts I asked directly for names and Instagram handles, so I could see if the suggested artists are suitable for my study. I created certain parameters to narrow down the pool of artists. The parameters were that the artist has released at least 1 song and has at least 20 posts on their Instagram feed and a maximum of 1500 followers. The reason behind this is that I needed to be able to compare the artists somehow and get an idea of their brand creation through the posts. Also, I needed to restrict the scope from the other end as well and chose to put a limit to the number of followers to keep the pool smaller, but also to make sure the artist really is at the very beginning of the brand creation process. One song already indicates the artists musical style and artistic direction. I did not want to restrict artists with a little number of releases to participate in the study, as it is more about their social media feed than the released music. Furthermore, 20 posts are enough to give an idea of the visual concepts of the artist brand.

I am personally familiar with the popular music field especially in Finland and globally, as I have been part of music groups in the past and have created artist brands for myself and others in Finland and abroad. The context of my study is not restricted by country, but I have chosen artists that are based in Finland. The main reason behind this is, that I wanted to meet each one of them personally, as I feel the interview situation is more relaxed and I can get a feel of them as persons more easily. Nonetheless, the artists are all performing in different languages, which in itself does not restrict them to the Finnish music market alone. In addition, social media are global platforms and I did not feel it was relevant to exclude certain territories.

3.2 Data Collection

The data collected for this study is qualitative. The data consists of five personal semi-structured interviews. I chose semi-structured interviews as my data collection method, as I found it most suitable to gather information about a particular process. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to respond in a distinctive manner, even though the interview is controlled by the interviewer (Walle, 2014, p.72). The aim of semi-structured interviews is gaining certain information and the style is a more structured conversation, as opposed to an unstructured interview (Walle, 2014, p.72-73). I wanted to keep the interview situation more casual by semi-structuring the interviews, enabling the discussion to develop more freely and having the chance to change the order or adding questions if necessary. However, I also wanted to control the situation enough to gain the information needed.

To gather background information on the interviewees, I went through the social media accounts of the artists. The social media accounts I went through were the Instagram accounts of the interviewees. Instagram is a social media platform, where users can share content through photos and videos. I am personally very familiar with the platform and find it the most relevant from an artist branding perspective. Furthermore, Instagram was the most actively used social media platform for the interviewees. In addition, going through their other social media accounts would have been time consuming.

I approached each interviewee on Instagram, as I thought it was the most suitable channel considering the topic of this study. Overall, I got 12 suggestions for interviewees, but only eight fit the parameters I had set. The rest had too many or little followers or were signed to a major label. I sent a message on Instagram to all eight artists and got a positive response from five. All the interviews were conducted in January 2020 and the interviews lasted 25-45 minutes. I met with four of the interviewees in person at different cafés in Helsinki, Finland. One interview was conducted via phone. The interview situations were relaxed, almost like having a conversation with a friend. Personally, I found it very interesting to listen to the artists and their views on the topic and felt that I got a lot of new thoughts and insights on the topic.

3.3 Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. In addition, each interviewee was informed about how long the recordings were going to be saved and how the material was going to be used. After the interviews the recordings were transcribed as a whole, after which it was easy to detect relevant data to analyze and choose relevant quotes. I conducted the interviews in Finnish as all the participants were Finnish speaking. The reason behind this is, that I feel people can express themselves more freely when speaking in their mother tongue, but I also think that it made the interview situation more comfortable. However, this means I had to translate all of the quotes from the interviewees from Finnish to English. The quotes have been reviewed by the interviewees to make sure there are no misinterpretations due to translation.

After gathering the data, I started analyzing the interview data by structuring it. I used an approach ideal for small-scale work, where responses are grouped in order to compare the answers of different interviewees (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003, p.63). I used an excel spreadsheet to group and thematize the interview data. The themes became the guidelines under which I chose appropriate quotes as well as structured the analysis chapter accordingly. The writing of the analysis happened partly while organizing the interview data, as ideas and thoughts surfaced during the process. In qualitative research analyzing the data and writing can happen simultaneously, as reading the data often arouses thoughts and themes that are organized and written out (Silverman, 2008, p.52-53).

3.4 Interviewees

I have chosen to keep my interviewees anonymous and will be referring to them as artist 1 - 5. The numbering of the artists is completely random and does not include any ranking or classification. I may also be referring to the artists as interviewees. I have gathered some data from each artist's social media account, from which the artist may be recognizable. However, I do not consider this an issue, as I discussed this with each artist who have agreed to this and are aware of it. The reason behind anonymizing the

interviewees is, that I did not think publishing their names would have given any additional value to my research. In addition, the views presented are personal opinions on the topic and can therefore be considered somewhat sensitive. Furthermore, in the field of popular music an artist can gain publicity and popularity fast and I would not want the responses to possibly affect their present or future public reputation.

I have presented an overview of the interviewees in Table 1. This information is available online and is gathered through inspection of the artists' social media accounts. I found it relevant to present this information to be able to compare the interviewees and provide basic background information on the interviewees. Number of followers is provided from each artists' Instagram accounts, as that seems to be the most relevant social media platform in terms of branding.

Artist	Genre (self-defined)	Released music	Social media channels (where they have an artist profile)	Number of followers on Instagram (27.1.2020)	Number of posts on Instagram (27.1.2020)
1	-	Album (13 songs)	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat	271	45
2	-	1 song	Instagram, YouTube	185	49
3	Soul	2 songs	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat	1357	172
4	Alternative pop/rock/folk	1 song	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube	263	19
5	-	8 songs	Instagram, Facebook, YouTube	904	476

Table 1. *Overview of interviewees.*

1.4.1. Artist 1

Artist 1 is a solo popular music artist, but does not define their genre more specifically. Artist 1 singing language is Finnish and they have released an album, which includes 13 songs. Listening to the music it could be defined as folk pop. The artist has an artist profile on Facebook and Instagram. On Instagram the artist seems to post on a regular basis 1-2 times weekly. Posts main content is photos of the artist, pictures promoting gigs and the

albums as well as some videos of music making.

1.4.2. Artist 2

Artist 2 is a solo popular music artist singing in English. They do not specify their genre more accurately, but listening to the music it could be described as dance pop. Artist 2 has released one song as a single. The artist has an artist profile on Instagram and YouTube. On Instagram the artist posts irregularly, sometimes multiple times per week and sometimes every other week. The main content of the posts are selfies and empowering quotes.

1.4.3. Artist 3

Artist 3 is a solo popular music artist who defines themselves as a soulsinger. The singing language is Finnish. Artist 3 has released 3 songs and has artist profiles on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat. On Instagram the artist posts irregularly, a few times per month. The main content of the posts are selfies and pictures of the artist in different situations and events.

1.4.4. Artist 4

Artist 4 is a solo popular music artist singing in Finnish. The artist describes their music as alternative pop/rock/folk music and they have released one song. Artist 4 has an artist profile on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube and they post on Instagram irregularly once a month or less. The main content of the posts is promoting the music with cover art.

1.4.4. Artist 5

Artist 5 is a solo popular music artist singing in Swedish. The artist does not define their genre more specifically on their social media channels. Artist 5 has an artist profile on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube and they post on Instagram irregularly a few times per month. The main content of the posts are selfies and pictures of the artist in music related events and other situations.

3.5 Critical Reflections on the Research Process

The validity of the research process in this thesis is determined much on the selected study cases. The subjects were chosen using snowball sampling, however the first case was chosen through the researcher's personal network. Thus, it is a concern that the researcher has not been able to objectively choose that particular interviewee and might have biased ideas about their thoughts on the topic. On the other hand, the validity of the study is increased, since the researcher is familiar with the music industry and the popular music field and therefore has insight on who could provide suitable information for this study. This also means that the researcher has carefully thought of the interviewees, considering their background and professional orientation.

Critically examining, five interviewees do not provide enough data to draw definitive conclusions about the topic. The study examines the perception of individual artists and no matter how many individuals one interviews, they all still remain unique. It could be said that any artist might feel differently about the topic, which means, no conclusive result could be drawn even if the study would be conducted with a quantitative approach.

However, when comparing the data to literature, it is clear that there are connections between previous studies and the newly collected data provided by this thesis.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter of the thesis I will go through the analysis and results of my research. I have divided the chapter in two parts, according to the findings I made from my interview data. The first part goes through the perception of branding on social media as a concept and in relation to artist branding. The second part goes through the thoughts on the branding process, what the process is, what influences it, as well as the contents posted on social media and the decision-making behind them.

4.1 Perception of branding

Branding as a concept seemed to be clearer to some of the artists than others. I got the impression that some of the interviewees were not entirely sure how they would define branding and how they should perceive it. Artist 1 says “I am aware that what I am doing on social media, what I am promoting, is branding in a certain way, but it’s not the first thing on my mind”. On the other hand, some of the interviewees had clearly researched the topic or otherwise had background knowledge, as they seemed to have a clear idea on how to define branding.

“I think it is a good way to summarize the message of a product or personal brand and what you want to communicate. In a way, I think it brings forward what the thing (product or brand) is about.” Artist 2

It was evident that all the artists had some kind of a perception of the topic, but it was mainly thought of some necessary thing that they have to do. It was connected to the modern world, something you simply need to do, as Artist 5 says “important, mandatory evil”.

The more knowledge an artist had on branding, the more confidently they were discussing about it. Those who seemed to lack basic terminology and knowledge, often also lacked interest towards the topic. It could be claimed that the artists personal interest level towards branding has a lot to do with how they perceive it and how relevant they find acquiring information about the topic.

In addition to the level of interest, it seemed that the level of experience and knowledge on branding and marketing had an effect on how the artist perceives branding as a concept. Those interviewees who had the most experience on the topics, seemed to also perceive them in a more positive way and evaluate their importance higher. However, I felt like the perception of branding was also closely connected to the values of each artist. This was something I noticed from the way they were speaking about branding, as it seemed that the artists with very little knowledge and experience saw that branding could be important, but they did not feel comfortable with the concept as it felt restrictive.

“As a songwriter, if you are an independent writer, you have the possibility to determine how much you bring your own identity into the mix and how much you are willing to give of yourself. But if you think of yourself more as a brand or product, then you would have to think a lot more and it (being on social media) would not be so free.” Artist 1

It could be argued, that rationally branding was considered important and useful, but personal values and feelings towards the topic interfere whether an artist chooses to make branding themselves a priority. Branding on social media can also feel rather personal, which adds its own limitations to the perception of branding, as some artists may not feel comfortable showing a lot of their personal selves online. Nevertheless, having little knowledge about the topic limits the perception and ideas on how branding could be beneficial to their artist career. Thus, acquiring knowledge on branding could reveal new ideas and perspective about the topic, perhaps even change old conceptions.

Furthermore, when asked if they want to be an artist brand, it brought out very different responses. Some thought they were already a brand as artists and some clearly connected an artist brand to superstardom or something they can choose to be. Two of the responses were clear, Artist 3 responding “Yes” and Artist 4 responding “No”, respectively. The other three responded in a way that conveyed they had mixed feelings towards the topic. Artist 1 said “I have contradictory thoughts towards the word brand”. It seemed that being an artist brand is something they might have to be, but they were not sure if they want to be.

“Well, I don’t think of myself as a brand, for instance if you think about someone like Lady Gaga, I think she is a brand because everyone knows her and it immediately evokes strong images. In that sense I do not think I am a brand, it is more a kind of tool when you are working on your own personal brand.” Artist 2

“I think that I am a person who makes art, or is an artist, I don’t think that I am a brand.” Artist 4

However, Artist 1 responded very promptly stating “it is something (artist branding) that does not fit my image”. I found this response rather contradictory, as the artist was using the word ‘image’, which is a key term related to branding. It could be argued that the artist may not have a lot of knowledge on branding in theory and was therefore using the word carelessly. Nevertheless, using the word ‘image’ does suggest that the artist cares about how they are perceived, which could indicate they have some level of interest towards controlling that perception. Thus, it could be claimed that controlling and taking care of the branding process is something Artist 1 is very careful about, even if they do not think about it as branding.

This thesis studies branding on social media, which are a key instrument of branding in these cases. The interest towards social media varied a lot between the different artists I interviewed. This is not a surprise as they all have different levels of personal interest towards social media platforms. Social media were seen as tools to promote their music and to build their artist brand, but it also seemed that none of the artists wanted to spend much time on social media, thus limiting how often they post and even how often they open certain social media applications. For instance, Artist 1 stated “I try to be as little as possible on social media (...)”.

Social media was clearly viewed as a tool to promote their music. However, I got the impression that some of the artists would rather not be on social media and would rather simply focus on making music. Nonetheless, the interviewees understood that social media is an inexpensive marketing tool and a necessity today, and it is difficult to be an artist without having an online presence.

“I am there (on social media), because I like to spend time on social media a bit and also because it is kind of a necessity these days.” Artist 1

The artists core interest is for people to find their music and listen to it and eventually come to their concerts. Without social media promoting themselves can be more challenging and costlier. On the other hand, social media was also perceived as a way to connect with audiences and discuss topics that are important to the artist. Some of the interviewees mentioned that social media gives them an opportunity to express their opinion on certain issues or to give advice and encouragements to their fans. Social media was not only used for music promotion, but for influencing and participating in societal conversation.

In general, social media was seen as a useful but mandatory tool, which was perceived as work and if possible would even be outsourced for someone else to deal with. However, the interviewees seemed to need help mostly in desinging and creating content and having someone who could consult them on how to handle their social media as a whole. All the artists had their own interests and strenghts regarding social media, which correlates to how much help they need. In addition, their personal idea of the signifigance of social media also affected the urge for help.

“I haven’t had enough interest towards it (social media) and it would maybe be a thing that I would have to hire someone for a while, to tell me what I should do.”
Artist 5

“In principle it would be nice if someone did (take care of social media), but I am a bit torn how important social media is to me personally, how important in regards to the music.” Artist 1

It seems that all the interviewees were aware that branding could have a positive effect on their artist career. Although, branding on social media was generally also perceived as time consuming and not in the core competences of an artist. Depending on their background, most of the artists had limited or no knowledge of branding as a theoretical concept. It could be said that creating an artist brand for themselves is challenging, if they do not have a clear idea of what the concept of branding actually is.

4.2 The branding process on social media

4.2.1 What is the branding process on social media?

There are some theories on the process of branding and knowing these processes often depends on a person's level of interest in finding them out. The interviewees seemed to have very different levels of knowledge on branding processes in theory. Some had none and some had read something on their own or heard something from their friends. Those who had read something tried to describe the process, although it still remained rather ambiguous.

"In a way, in that book about personal branding, one has to make clear to themselves what is important to them and what are the values that you want to bring forward. It was about clarifying and reflecting your soul to others. It is not something invented. But somehow strategically bringing out those strengths and things that you want to bring out and that matter to you." Artist 2

Artist 2 describes that the branding process is not something invented, that the brand stems from yourself as a person. I believe, that in the case of an artist it is important to recognize the difference between the private person and the artist. Especially in the long run, if an artist gains recognition, they may want to choose to show only certain sides of themselves and keep other sides private. One of the interviewees for example said they do not discuss their family on social media, that being a parent is not a part of their artist image. Other artists however, might find that a relevant part to show on social media, a part of their brand image.

"Although the idea is that the (Instagram) page is an artist page, it also has to be my page, that is why there's also things that I feel that give an impression of what I am like as a person." Artist 1

Based on the answers there were some similarities and themes that emerged regarding the branding process. It seems, that the branding process at least starts with thinking about your values, as well as what, why and to whom you want to communicate. Artist 3 describes the process as "getting to know yourself". Therefore, it could be argued that the

artist branding process is really the process of the artist getting to know themselves as a person, their values and beliefs and what they want to communicate to the world.

Furthermore, none of the interviewees admitted to following any particular theoretical branding processes. In most cases the reason was the lack of knowledge. “I don’t follow (a certain theoretical branding process), because I don’t know what they are” (Artist 5). Some of the other artists said they had looked at other artist profiles and used them as examples, following along the lines what others do and created content accordingly. I got the impression that theoretical branding processes were not clear to any of the interviewees and most of them did not seem very interested in them either. Furthermore, it seemed that following a certain theoretical branding process was connected to being unauthentic, to creating something fabricated, which all of the interviewees seemed to be keen on avoiding.

All the artists had done some amount of benchmarking, although not necessarily in a systematic manner. All the interviewees had looked at other artists profiles to see what kind of content they have on social media and therefore determined how they would like to present themselves as artists on social media. It seemed that making comparisons to other artists happened while they were spending time on social media and happened to come across accounts they are following. Also, as artists they have a lot of friends who are artists and as they follow their social media accounts, their posts are automatically in their social media feeds. Looking at other artist accounts and profiles seems to lead the artists to thinking about what they want and don’t want to do on social media. It could be argued that one part of the branding process is comparing yourself to others and determining which things you want and don’t want to include in your own brand.

Each interviewee approached the branding process in a different way. Everyone mentioned values at some point of the interview, but visual elements and colors arose as important aspects as well. Visual aspects have a special importance when branding on social media and for example on Instagram the whole idea is to post pictures. Therefore, it could be argued that visuality is a crucial part in the branding process on social media. All of the interviewees discussed visuality in some way and some found it more important than others.

"I have not intentionally thought of doing branding, but the things I like, for example that colors are matching (on social media) and these kinds of things, like if I am releasing a single, that those materials I post beforehand it are matching."
Artist 4

This seemed also to depend on personal interest and perception of 'being a visual person'. In addition, thinking about color schemes and overall visual layouts was natural to some of the artists, but they had not necessarily thought of it as part of the branding process. Others however, were very concerned of the overall visual layout and how they could make it as a unique as possible. It could be concluded that having an overall vision of the visual elements of an artist brand on social media is a very important part in the branding process. However, having a vision and executing it seems to depend on the artists personal interest and tendency towards visuality.

Visions and strategies are an important part of the branding process and when asked if they have an overall vision or strategy of their social media plan, the answers were very different. Some interviewees were answering more in regards to posting on social media and others of their overall social media presence. I believe the differences in the answers have to do a lot with how much each artist has thought about the process and their social media presence. Some artists seemed to have a very clear idea of what they would like their social media to look like visually, but some had not thought about those aspects before. Others responded from a more technical point of view, thinking about how often they should be posting and what kind of resources they have. All artists seemed to be using social media inconsistently and were not concerned about long-term strategies. One thing I noticed was that all the artists wanted their social media to 'look like them', when I asked what that means it was often very hard to describe. Artist 4 says "It is clear that it has to look like me and feel authentic". Therefore, it could be claimed that one of the major issues in the branding process is verbalizing the vision if there is one.

Some artists mentioned they have a strong overall vision of their artist brand and what they would like to communicate through music and social media. Artist 2 says "I have a pretty clear vision of what I want and my mission." Most did not seem to have an overall idea of what they would like to do as artists or how they would like to build their artist brand on social media.

“When these days it (creating music) has been more professional, so that I have been working with different music creators and through that have thought more about everything as a whole. That I really think about my sound and what my physical appearance conveys and what my Instagram looks like.” Artist 5

Overall, the ideas of each interviewee differed a lot and I felt that even using the words strategy and vision caused different reactions when posing the questions. Strategy seemed to evoke more negative and opposing reactions, which I believe stems from their personal connotations to the word. I believe this has to do with strategy often being linked to a long-term organized planning process, which is not something that everyone can relate to or has the skills or desire to plan and execute. Vision however, seemed to evoke thoughts on visual appearance and the more creative side, which can be considered to be more easily connected with music.

4.2.2 Factors influencing the branding process

There are many factors influencing the branding process. One big part seemed to be values, which are affecting the artists’ decision-making when it comes to their brand and image. All of the artists used the word ‘values’ multiple times during the interviews. Values seemed to be a very important factor in the branding process, when thinking about what kind of content they post and what they want to communicate to their audiences. Most of the interviewees mentioned environmental friendliness as one key value. However, it would have been interesting to ask about their other values and see if they could verbalize them. It is easy to say you want to act according to your values, but it is another to distinguish what those values actually are.

I believe that each artist’s personal values have a great effect on their music, and music is why they have set up an artist profile on social media in the first place. However, music seemed to have a different level of influence on the branding process. Only three of the artists mentioned directly that their music is influencing the process in a major way, but I it could be thought that music has a big role influencing the process for the remaining two artists as well. Music seemed to mainly influence the themes and visual elements of their artist brand. For example, Artist 2 had an overall vision of encouraging people to

follow their dreams and this was a theme for one of their future releases as well. This vision is influencing the artists entire brand image on social media.

Another interesting aspect to music influencing the branding process is that music seemed to be the priority to all of the artists. Social media was considered a tool to promote their music and the ultimate goal was to get people listen to the music and come to their concerts. Furthermore, most of the artists seemed to want the audiences to find their music, only secondly follow them on social media. Artist 3 says “I want to believe that people fall in love with the music first and only later with the artist”. This statement reinforces the idea that music is a priority, only then everything else regarding the artist, such as branding and social media. Therefore, it could be argued that music is a major influence in the branding process, as the artist often start with making music and construct the brand around it.

Making music is a passion and if the artists had the chance, they would solely focus on the creative side of their artist career. However, as independent artists they do not have the luxury to do so, since they have no full-time team around them to take care of all the other aspects of their career, such as branding. Branding on social media seemed to be of very different interest levels for the interviewees. This level of interest seems to be a key influencer on the branding process. It seems that the more interested the artist is in the branding process, the more positively they think about branding and the more efforts they are willing to put in the process. In addition, those artists who were less enthusiastic about the branding process also seemed to see less value in it.

It also felt that there is a need for artist branding tools and help in the process itself. There is no one clear formula to the branding process, but especially independent artists who want to get their music heard there is a lot to deal with. In relation to this, I got an impression from some of the artists that there are many business-related things they have to think about, but do not really want to or do not necessarily know how to manage them. Making music seemed to be in the core interest for all of the artists, but as independent artists they are forced to take care of other aspects of their careers as well. Depending on their goals and visions for their career, some seemed to have a higher level of interest towards branding and managing their career than others. The interest towards or lack there

of can arguably have an effect on the branding process, either advancing it or slowing it down.

“(..) it (branding) can take so much time away from making music, sometimes I don't feel like thinking about it so much.” Artist 5

“I think that time should be used for something else, for example making music, instead of thinking a lot about social media.” Artist 1

It is interesting to me how new independent artists are coping with the challenge of creating music and managing their career at the same time. Creating an artist brand requires time an effort and the lack of resources was mentioned as a big challenge, since building an artist brand does not guarantee an income. The main resources they were lacking were time and money. In order to support themselves, all the interviewees mentioned doing other jobs, which take up time from their artistic work. In addition, managerial work, such as branding requires time that is also away from creative work. Money as a resource is needed to invest in their career, however at the same time they need to be able to take care of their personal finances.

“I have intended to create a page on Facebook as well and technically I have created it already, but I haven't had time or resources to devote to anything else (than Instagram).” Artist 2

In addition to time and money, connections and knowledge especially on the managerial side are resources that seem to be a scarcity among all the artists. As independent artists there is no major label behind them providing help, leaving them to arrange and manage everything themselves. It seemed that everything that has to do with managing their brand and career seemed somehow unclear and there were many things the interviewees had not thought about. Of course, there are differences between the artists, as each of them has a different amount of experience, knowledge and interest towards branding themselves and managing their career. One of the interviewees seemed very on top of the management related matters in terms of branding, but they also had the most experience from the music industry. Therefore, it could be claimed that the amount of resources is significantly influencing the branding process. Independent artists have to acquire resources themselves and do not necessarily have an equal stand, as some might have a stronger financial situation, some more time and some better personal contacts.

It could be claimed that a new independent artist starts their branding process on social media by creating a social media profile for themselves. However, at some point of the process they might need to acquire resources to assist them with various tasks, such as taking photos or creating visuals. All of the interviewees had used a friend or an acquaintance to take their picture and most of the artists had used their friends to create visuals or give them business advice. Artist 5 says "(...) I use a lot of my friends who are experts in it (branding and marketing) and exchange thoughts and discuss a lot with them." It seems evident that having personal contacts is crucial for the branding process on social media. In order to fulfill their vision, the artist has to find the right person to help them out. New artists often have scarce resources and might not be able to compensate in the way they would want to, which highlights the requirement for strong personal contacts.

"That has exactly been the problem, that I somehow cannot independently (think about the overall vision). It starts with for example what I am wearing and of course it has to do with what kind of pictures I am posting and maybe it is also a bit of a financial question. It would take a lot of planning." Artist 5

Artist 5 mentioned discussing her vision and career related matters with a person close to them, but did not always agree with them on their thoughts. I would think that when for example discussing artistic visions, the friend or acquaintance helping them out will have an effect on the outcome of that vision. For example, using a certain graphic designer will most likely result in an outcome that depicts the designer's vision as well. In that case, it could be argued that the work of the graphic designer is influencing the artist's brand, thus the branding process as well. It seems that finding the right people, who can conform to the vision of the artist, whilst bringing in their own ideas to support the overall vision can have a tremendous effect on the overall branding process.

4.2.3 Creating content on social media

There are many different social media channels to choose from and as I inquired the artists in which channels they have an artist profile, the channel above all others was Instagram. Some of the artists also had artist profiles on Facebook, YouTube or even Snapchat, but

Instagram was considered the most important channel. I must admit, this was anticipated and I was expecting for the artists to respond this way. In addition, the reasoning behind it was interesting, yet not unsurprising. Most interviewees explained that Instagram is easy to use, most familiar to them and that there is a huge user base to attract an audience.

“Maybe Instagram is a bit more important, you can put things there, like (Instagram) stories for example. You can put info there more frequently, whereas Facebook is more for posts such as ‘new release coming out’, not so much for posts where you are recording a new song for example.” Artist 4

It could be claimed that using a certain social media platform can have a great effect on the branding process in terms of content. Instagram for example, is based on posting pictures and videos, which forces the user to think about their content visually. It could be thought that thinking visually would somehow be natural for all artists, but some of the interviewees mentioned having no interest towards the visual aspects and felt they did not have an overall vision of the visual layout of their social media feed.

“I do notice that okay, that person has a certain colour scheme and then I am like, I don’t. Maybe I am just not such a visual person.” Artist 5

Thus, it could be claimed that this puts artists in an unequal position as social media users in a certain way, as their personal tendencies towards visuality are affecting the way their brand is taking shape on social media. Those who are lacking visuality might end up with a less coherent visual layout on their social media feed and therefore lack a clear brand identity. However, it must be noted that there is no evidence that audiences follow a certain artist based on the visual layout of the artist’s social media feed. On the other hand, those artists who find themselves having natural tendencies towards visuality and even think about their music visually can easily thought to be profiting from a platform that is designed to create visual layouts.

All the artists had their own thoughts on what kind of content they want to post on social media. Every interviewee mentioned that the content must be something that they themselves like and that is pleasing to their eye. What the artist likes can be obvious to themselves, but not necessarily to the audience. It seemed to be very hard for the artists

to describe or explain what it actually is that makes their social media feed ‘look like them’. What are the special traits that makes the content recognizable and makes it depict whatever they want to convey through their social media. Nevertheless, it seems that most of the content was mostly created around the next release.

“I think it is created pretty much based on the music, sort of from the next release.” Artist 4

“My last few releases have had a quite clear color scheme. Or when I had two releases last Spring and it was quite clear what they look like.” Artist 5

Another example of music inspired content is from Artist 2, who said they have a song they are going to release, which has a strong idea behind it. The idea behind that song serves as inspiration for future social media posts and determines what kind of content, pictures and caption texts they are going to create. It seems, that it is very important to have a vision and overall idea of the brand in order to create cohesive content on social media in the long run. In this case of a popular music artist, it would be rather obvious to create a vision around a song and draw inspiration from music to create content on social media. Music seemed to serve as inspiration to the social media content with other interviewees as well.

In general, it seemed that the interviewees are creating content irregularly and mainly when they have something to say. Choosing the exact content, what to post and when seemed to be dependent on the information or message they want to send out to the audience. Artist 3 says “I decide (what to post on social media) depending on what I want to tell about myself”. Artist 4 on the other hand says “Well, I choose (content on social media), according to what I am releasing. I haven’t thought about this before. It depends on the situation.” For some of the interviewees verbalizing the motivations behind their posts seemed to be very difficult and Artist 4 for example hadn’t thought about it at all before. Thus, it could be claimed that the decisions-making behind the content created on social media by independent artists is more intuitive than strategic.

Some of the artists also talked about conveying a certain message to the audience through their social media content. It seemed very important in the overall vision to think about

what they want to say to their audience. Artist 2 says “I have had to think a lot about what my personal brand is and what it’s about, what is my message”. It felt that it goes beyond their music, that the artist could use their brand on social media to convey certain opinions and thoughts, even take a stand on some current issue in the world. Artist 3 for example does not want to post anything without a meaning and says that they rather not post than just put out something. Both artists said they want to post content that could be of use to the followers, whether it is advice or words of encouragement. It seemed important to all of the interviewees to post only when they have something to say not just to keep their social media feed busy.

“(...) I have noted that I want to post only when I have something to say. I do not want to do it in vain, although I understand that might bring some added value to do it just to say ‘Hi, I exist’.” Artist 4

It seems, when the artists have something to say it mostly relates somehow to their music. For example, a gig coming up or a new release coming out. It seems that these artists wanted to avoid ‘posting for the sake of posting’. I got the impression that those artists that were more interested in social media in general, wanted to use it as a way of influencing their audience, to spread a message. Those who weren’t so interested were focused more on the music related content and did not want to create content that was not directly related to their music. Furthermore, some artists mentioned that social media is just a ‘thing they have to do’, and would not necessarily have an artist page on social media if it was not such an integral part of promoting their music.

“(...) when I post, then it has always to do with what I am doing in the near future, for instance releasing a song or having a gig (...).” Artist 1

“Or I communicate something that I want with my text (caption), often it is an announcement I want to write about, such as ‘hey I have a gig next week’ or ‘there is new music coming out’ or something like that.” Artist 5

Promoting their music is probably one of the most important reasons for artist branding on social media. Social media can be an excellent tool for building audiences, but the engagement of the audiences can be difficult to measure on social media. Many of the interviewees mentioned they want to get their followers and therefore audience to buy

tickets to see their concert or go and listen to their music on a streaming service. It seemed to be very difficult for the artists to know how many of their followers on social media actually listen to their music or come see their concert.

"But I don't know how many, if let's say 150 people like your post, if you are having a gig, how many of them are coming to see your show." Artist 1

However, most of the artists mentioned that their music is not necessarily directed to those who use social media the most. Some of the interviewees had also noticed that many of their followers had found them from their concerts, which they figured out from the spikes of new followers after concerts. I think this is an indication that people are still primarily interested in the music, only secondly in the artist's image or social media presence. However, this might have an effect on how the artist chooses to behave on social media, if they are thinking about their followers when creating content or if they value social media in general.

"Then, does it (social media) really matter so much at the end of the day, especially if my music is not directly directed to those who use social media a lot." Artist 1

"I do think that young adults who use social media and then younger teenagers could be interested in my music. But there I also see that there is a difference between a live-thing (and social media). Those who then pay for them, those who come to gigs are usually a bit older (...)." Artist 5

Values are a topic that arose at many points of the interviews and it also arose when thinking about the content on social media. The word itself was not embedded in any of the interview questions, but the interviewees used it frequently in different points of the interviews, also when describing the content they are posting on social media and why. Many of the interviewees said that the content has to be aligned with their values. For instance, Artist 5 said they do not want to post pictures where they would look too sexy: "I also think about it so that anyone can look at the picture. That it is not censored." It could be claimed that values have a big effect on the content on social media and are also a big part of what the artist likes. For an artist's social media feed to 'look like them', it has to reflect on their values.

Another interesting aspect on values appeared when discussing other brands and if the interviewees could consider brand collaborations. Brand collaborations are an integral part for many well-known social media figures and are affecting the content. The interviewees had different thoughts and interests towards this topic, but none of the artists refused on the idea altogether. The interviewees said that doing brand collaboration depended on the brand and that the brand had to have the same values as them. It seemed to be very important to the artists that the brand would be aligned with their own artist brand, even if they did not think of themselves as a brand. The most hesitant interviewees on brand collaborations were the artists who did not find branding that important altogether and who did not necessarily want to think of themselves as brands. I believe this makes sense, as those artists who are more interested in branding themselves can also think to be open to branding in general.

The analysis revealed that there is no clear formula to the branding process of an independent popular music artist. However, according to the interview data it seems that the artists personal values are in the core of the process, as they are affecting the decision-making on social media content as well as the artist's perception of branding. The branding process varies between the interviewees and some of the interviewees did not even think about their social media behaviour as part of the process. This leads to the result of the branding process remaining ambiguous, as most of the artists did not consistently develop their brands. Some of the main factors influencing the branding process were values, perception of the concept of branding and the overall vision they had of themselves as artists. Furthermore, another important influence was resources, such as money, time and knowledge, as independent artists do not often have the support of a label. In addition, knowledge on branding processes and social media varied depending on the artists background and level of interest towards the topics. Social media content on the other hand was mainly influenced by their music, concluding that music is one of the main influences in the branding process as well.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis explores what is the branding process on social media, what factors influence the process and how artists perceive the branding process on social media. In this chapter I will draw together the results of this study and connect them with some of the ideas and concepts presented in the first and second chapters of the thesis.

The music industry has gone through major changes in the past two decades, as digital distribution services and different online platforms have emerged (Christian, 2011, p. 6). Social media is a key element in the new music industry structure, especially what comes to branding. The whole industry is shifting towards a DIY culture (Tschmuk, 2016, p. 14-15) and independent artists are in the core of that development. However, independence also brings responsibility, as social media has become one of the aspects in an artist's career that they are responsible of and need to manage. The interviewees considered social media distant from the artistic work and the advantages of social media were valued differently by each interviewee. Furthermore, social media was also easily neglected when other commitments required more time. It seemed that the more interested the interviewee was in social media, the more value they saw in it and the more effort they were willing to invest in it. Social media can be considered an inexpensive and easy way to promote an artist and their music, but on the other hand it requires a lot of time, effort and interest to build an online presence.

It could be argued that popular artists are primarily on social media to promote their music and artist brands. However, deciding what kind of content to post on social media depends on the artist. Social media makes the self-branding process complex, as there are no rules on how to express oneself (Labrecque et al., 2011). Nonetheless, certain social media platforms, such as Instagram influence the content as it forces the artist to present themselves in a certain form, for instance produce pictures and videos, which might not necessarily come naturally to all artists. The interviewees all seemed to have different attitudes towards social media, but it was mainly perceived as a mandatory, yet useful tool to promote their music.

The research data shows, that the branding process of an independent popular artist varies depending on the artist as they have full control over the process. Social media allows independent artists to grow their brand without the help of record labels or other gate-keepers. The whole industry has shifted towards a more artist-centric industry structure, where the role of record labels and other gate-keepers has diminished (Tschmuk, 2016, p.16, 28). However, this also means that artists are deprived of the resources that a label or management company could provide. Many of the interviewees mentioned the lack of resources, such as money, time and knowledge, as one key limitation to the overall process. The artists main focus is to create music, but independent artists have to devote their resources also to the managerial side, including the branding process. It seems that each interviewee had a different level of resources, which was affecting the process since independent artists have to acquire resources themselves. However, independence gives the artists the freedom to steer the process in the direction they desire.

Personal contacts were also an important resource affecting the branding process. All of the interviewees were building teams, as they had gathered people around them and trusted them with various tasks, such as photography and music production. Building a team is one important aspect of an artist's career, especially when their career is growing (Passman, 2015, p.16). This argument can be confirmed by the interviewees mentioning having their friends supporting them with for example content creation or giving advice on social media strategies. However, this also confirms that independent artists do not necessarily have the resources to get professionals to work for them in the beginning of their career (Karhumaa, 2018, p. 18-19), as the team initially consists of friends and acquaintances. This can create an unequal situation, as it is evident that some artists have better personal contacts and more knowledge than others to begin with, while others have to do more work networking and acquiring suitable resources.

The lack of resources is forcing artists to think about branding and social media, although most of the interviewees would rather use that time to create music. This is also what Harrison (2003, p.151) noted by saying that some artists do not want to think about branding, but would rather focus on their music. Many of the interviewees mentioned they rather entirely focus on their music if it was possible. However, Harrison (2003, p.151) also remarks that artists realize they need to do branding related work in order to

get their music heard and monetize it. Branding was perceived in very different ways by the artists, depending on their level of knowledge and interest towards the topic, as well as their personal values. Overall, branding was connected to commercialism and something mandatory one has to conform to if they want to promote their music and themselves on social media.

The interest level towards branding depended on how much a particular artist wanted to be perceived as a brand. It seemed that some of the artists were clearly choosing not to be brands and not wanting to be a part of a branding process. However, according to personal branding literature everyone has a brand (Peters, 1997; Rampersad, 2009, p.9), indicating that even an ordinary person can be considered to have a brand, even if they did not actively develop and control that brand. Thus, it could be argued that all artists already have at least a personal brand, which they could use as a base when building their artist brand. Creating an artist brand is something the artist can control, whereas the artist brand image is the perception the audience has of the brand. Therefore, it could be claimed that all artists are brands and subject to the branding process. The difference being, if they choose to control the process or not.

Every person is unique; therefore, every personal brand has its own particular traits that helps to distinguish them from their competitors (Chen, 2013). According to Peters (1997) personal brands are somehow connected to our personalities, beliefs, values and other personal traits. Thus, it could be claimed that the artists brand identity stems from their personal brand and the particular traits associated with it. Every interviewee mentioned values multiple times during the interviews, which supports the fact that their artist brand is connected to their personal brand. In addition, one of the most important notions from the interviewees was, that regardless how and what an artist does on social media it has to be authentic and reflect on the artist's personal values and beliefs. This is affirmed in literature, as according to Ramperstad (2009, p.9.) a functional personal brand is authentic, which can be accomplished by knowing oneself. It could be argued that values are in the core of influencing the brand creation process on social media.

When comparing the interview data to existing literature, the process of creating an artist brand on social media remains ambiguous and depends on the artist. This answers the

first research question of this thesis, as the process of branding an independent popular artist cannot be explicitly detected from the interview data of this research. Furthermore, the literature on personal branding is still underdeveloped, thus there is no clear theoretical formula on how to create a personal brand. In addition, artist branding is its own niche within personal branding and has been written about even less. The interviewees mentioned that their artist brand on social media needs to ‘look like them’, but were unable to verbalize what that means. This seems to be one of the core issues in clarifying the branding process. The emergence of social media has enabled independent artists to start building their brands on their own, thus allowing them to approach the branding process in their own way, which is not always explicit.

The branding process is influenced by a number of factors, including the level of knowledge an artist has on branding, but also the amount of resources they are able and willing to put into the process. It seems that knowing oneself and their values are in the core of the branding process, as these factors influence the content choices on social media as well as affect the overall perception of the concept of branding. These findings indicate that values and resources are the main factors that influence the branding process and the perception of it. How each artist perceives the branding process varies, as each artist has individual values. In addition, music was affecting the content choices on social media, thus also affecting the branding process. Furthermore, one of the main issues concerning the branding process seems to be having a vision and being able to verbalize it. Most of the artists did not seem to have the knowledge or interest to strategically think about their artist brand, their vision of it and how they could execute that on social media.

6 DISCUSSION

The branding process on social media is not straightforward, but it seems that knowing oneself and one's values, as well as having a clear vision play a big part in the process. Some of the interviewees stated having a vision, but some of the artists did not seem to have a clear vision of their social media or themselves as an artist brand. Describing their vision on a concrete level was difficult, although I cannot be certain if they were just holding back because of the interview, not wanting to reveal their plans and ideas. Karhumaa says that behind every brand there is a story (2018, p. 111) and it could be argued that the vision for an artist brand is connected to that story. From a managerial stand point it could be claimed that getting the artist to explain their vision is probably one key challenge, as the artist themselves might not have a very clear idea of what they would like to accomplish and who they are as artists. It could be argued that one key element affecting the process of branding on social media is the lack of an overall vision and the ability to verbalize it.

Social media seem to have become a necessity for artists these days and it was perceived as a mandatory tool to promote music. The interviewed artists were not interested in spending time on social media any more than they had to and they were mainly creating content that was directly related to their music and artist career. Dutta (2010) notes that branding oneself on social media requires one to think if their goals are professional or personal. In the case of an artist, the goals seem to be mostly professional, as many of the interviewees mentioned making a conscious decision in keeping certain personal aspects separate from their artist image. Social media grants the opportunity for each person to create their brand image how they desire, as there are no explicit rules on how to express oneself on social media (Labrecque et al., 2011).

An important notion arose from the interviews, which is the relation between who listen to their music and who are on social media. It is easy, yet presumptuous to assume everyone is on social media, as social media are discussed a lot these days. However, not everyone finds music and artists from social media, but from concerts and other channels. This poses the question of why people are following a certain artist on social media? Do

they listen to the music or does the artist have a distinguished way of presenting themselves on social media, which makes them interesting to follow even if they do not listen to their music? Can an artist brand be so strong that it overrules the music altogether? It could be claimed that creating oneself a brand on social media could open many opportunities, beyond music. Having a large fanbase can attract different kinds of collaborations, which can also lead to new income possibilities.

Some of the interviewees thought of branding in a more negative way as it was connected to commercialism. Two of the artists did not want to think of themselves as brands or think of what they were doing on social media as branding. This seems controversial, since deciding not to be a brand and not to do branding also sends a certain message. Strauss (2005, p.99) says that “without a brand, you may find that instead of being all things to all people, you are nothing to no one”. I find this quote very accurate and with an artist trying to distinguish themselves in the music market without actively branding themselves, the message of that sentence may become a reality. Furthermore, I believe that an artist is creating a brand image as they post on social media, even if they do not perceive it as branding. However, I claim that in those cases the brand image often remains vague and unclear as it is not thought through. On the other hand, being ‘anti-branding’ can also be considered a brand.

The interviewees are all popular music artists, albeit each artist may define their genre more specifically themselves. Gaining popularity however, did not seem to be in the main interests of the interviewees. It could be argued that creating an artist brand can be linked to the goal of gaining popularity, which in these cases did not apply. According to Wall (2013, p.144), popularity in popular music can be defined in three ways, being “widely liked”, having poor cultural value as a cultural product or the third where popularity is connected to the production and consumption of music belonging to the masses. In the case of the interviewed artists, the definition of popularity would be the third one, as it is the perspective of independent and DIY artists. In this sense, the definition of an independent popular music artist could be reconsidered, as it does not automatically stand for an artist who is popular as in “widely liked”, but who is a part of the masses and has the power to create music with their own terms.

6.1 Further Research

This thesis opened interesting aspects to the branding process of an independent artist on social media. However, the limited number of interviewees restricts from drawing any definitive conclusions. It could be useful to conduct the research with more interviewees to gain a wider perspective on how independent artists approach the branding process. However, I claim that there is not one clear formula to be found to the process, as each artist is an individual and the process has to do with personal values and interests. Thus, I would find it more relevant to investigate independent artists that have gained recognition and are further in their career, to see how they have developed the process throughout their career. It could be interesting to see if the pivotal moments of the process could be pinpointed.

Another interesting aspect would be to research if previous experience as an artist influences the branding process. In this thesis I studied new artists, which were defined as new artist brands. I did not inquire the interviewees, whether they had previous experience as artists. It would be interesting to investigate if previous experience as an artist helps in the process of building a new artist brand. Does creating an artist brand multiple times develop the process and make it clearer and more coherent? If the branding process has to do with getting to know oneself and their values, does creating a new artist brand for the same person mean they have to change their values? Or is the person creating a new artist brand because their values and perception of themselves has changed? On the other hand, creating a new artist brand could also have to do with changing musical style or becoming a solo artist or forming a band. It would be interesting to find out how do the different aspects of the branding process fit those realms.

7 REFERENCES

Adorno, Theodor W. (1964). *L'industrie culturelle*. In: Communications, 3, 1964. pp. 12-18. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1964.993>

Baskerville, David (1995). *Music Business Handbook & Career Guide, 6th Edition*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

Bhasin, Hitesh (2019). *Difference between Brand image and brand identity*. 27.5.2019. Marketing91. Retrieved from <https://www.marketing91.com/difference-between-brand-image-and-brand-identity/>

Birmingham, Peter & Wilkinson, David (2003). *Using Research Instruments. A Guide for Researchers*. Routledge. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/181843?accountid=14749.com>

Blaxter, Lorraine, Hughes, Christina, & Tight, Malcolm (2010). *How to research, 4th Edition*. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/650302?accountid=14749.com>

Chen, Chih-Ping (2013). Exploring Personal Branding on YouTube. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 12:4, 332–347. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332861.2013.859041>

Chong, Derrick (2002). *Arts Management*. London: Routledge.

Colbert, Francois, Nantel, Jacques, Bilodeau, Suzanne and Poole, William D. (1994). *Marketing Culture and the Arts*. Montreal: Gaëtan Morin Éditeur Itée.

Christian, Elizabeth (2011). In E. Christian (Ed.) *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture*. (p.6-8), Lexington Books. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/reader.action?docID=662181&ppg=6>

Davis, Daniel Cochrane, Delaney, Bryan P., and Kettler, Heidi M. 2011. *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture*. Edited by Elizabeth Christian, Lexington Books, 2011. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/reader.action?docID=662181&ppg=6>

Demers, Joanna (2006). *Steal This Music: How Intellectual Property Law Affects Musical Creativity*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press Athens. Retrieved from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=3038824>

Dutta, Soumitra (2010). *What's Your Personal Social Media Strategy?* Harvard Business Review, Vol.88 (11), 127-130. Retrieved from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy2.usc.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=6c993cd8-2684-4301-bb10-2026ac536341%40sdc-v-sessmgr02>

Gehl, Robert W. (2011). *Ladders, samurai, and blue collars: Personal branding in Web 2.0*. First Monday, Peer-reviewed Journal on the Internet, 16(9). Retrieved from <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3579/3041>

Gronlund, Jay (2013). *Basics of Branding: A Practical Guide for Managers*. N. Malhotra (Ed.). Business Expert Press. Retrieved 20.12.2019 from <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=1097920>.

Groys, Boris (2016). *The Truth of Art*. Journal 71, e-flux. Retrieved from <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/71/60513/the-truth-of-art/>

Harrison, Ann (2003). *Music the Business – The Essential Guide to the Law And the Deals – Fully Revised and Updated 2nd Edition*. London: Virgin Books Ltd.

Hoffman, Jan (2009). *Justin Bieber Is Living the Dream*. 31.1.2009. New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/fashion/03bieber.html>

Instagram, Inc. (2020). Verified Badges. Retrieved from <https://help.instagram.com/854227311295302>

Kaplan, Andreas M. and Haenlein, Michael (2010). *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*. Business Horizons, 53(1), 59.68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>

Karhumaa, Mika (2018). *The Essence of the Music Business – Philosophy*. Publisher: Mika Karhumaa (August 3, 2018).

Keller, K. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (2006). Brands and branding: Research findings and future priorities. *Marketing Science*, 25(6), 740-759. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uniarts.fi/stable/40057218>

Khedher, Manel (2015). *A brand for everyone: Guidelines for personal brand managing*. Journal of Global Business Issues, 9(1), 19-27. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy2.usc.edu/docview/1711197915?accountid=14749>

Klamer, Arjo (2017). *Doing the right thing: a value based economy*. Second edition. London: Ubiquity Press Ltd.

Labrecque, Lauren I., Markos, Ereni & Milne, George R. (2011). *Online Personal Branding: Processes, Challenges, and Implications*. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25(1), 37–50. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2010.09.002>

Negus, Keith (1996). *Popular Music in Theory – An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Obar, J. A., & Wildman, S. (2015). *Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the issue*. Telecommunications Policy, Volume 39, Issue 9, 745-750. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2015.07.014>

Passman, Donald S. (2015). *All you need to know about the music business*. Ninth Edition. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Peterson, Richard A. (1977). *Where the Two Cultures Meet: Popular Culture*. Journal of Popular Culture, 11(2), 385. Retrieved from <http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/docview/1297348089?accountid=14749>

Peters, Tom (1997). *The brand called you*. (1997, August 31). Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90437001/what-if-we-gave-half-the-planet-entirely-back-to-nature>

Power, Dominic & Scott, Allen J. (2004). *Cultural industries and the production of culture*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

Rampersad, Hubert K. (2009). *Authentic Personal Branding - A New Blueprint for Powerful and Authentic*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing Inc. Retrieved from <https://books.google.fi/books?id=ePcnDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=fi#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Silverman, Donald (2008). *Doing qualitative research: a comprehensive guide*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Strauss, Steven (2005). *The Small Business Bible: Everything You Need to Know to Succeed In Your Small Business*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/818078/bookReader?accountid=14749&ppg=16>

Tessler, Holly (2016). Back in black: rethinking core competencies of the recorded music industry. In P. Wikström & R. DeFillippi (Ed.), *Business innovation and disruption in the music industry* (p. 33-52). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/4410402?accountid=14749.com>

Tschmuk, Peter (2016). From record selling to cultural entrepreneurship: the music economy in the digital paradigm shift. In P. Wikström & R. DeFillippi (Ed.), *Business innovation and disruption in the music industry* (p. 13-32). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/4410402?accountid=14749.com>

Twitter, Inc. (2020). About verified accounts. Retrieved from <https://support.twitter.com/groups/31-twitter-basics/topics/111-features/articles/119135-about-verified-accounts>

Vance, Deborah C. (2011). "Moving Her Hips, Like, Yeah": Can Miley Survive the Hannah Brand? In E. Christian (Ed.) *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture* (p.52-68). Lexington Books. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aalto-ebooks/reader.action?docID=662181&ppg=6>

Wall, Tim (2013). *Studying Popular Music Culture*. Second Edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Walle, Alf H. (2014). *Qualitative Research in Business: A practical overview*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/2076546?accountid=14749.com>

Wikström, P., & DeFillippi, R. (2016). *Business innovation and disruption in the music industry*. In P. Wikström & R. DeFillippi (Ed.) (p.1-9). Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/legacydocview/EBC/4410402?accountid=14749.com>

Wilson, Jerry S., & Blumenthal, Ira (2008). *Managing Brand You: 7 Steps to Creating Your Most Successful Self*. AMACOM. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/docview/2131323789/bookReader?accountid=14749>

Witkin, Robert W. (2002). *Adorno on popular culture*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

8 APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1. Interview questions

Finnish

1. Mitä sinulla tulee mieleen brändäyksestä?
2. Onko sinulla kokemusta brändäyksestä tai markkinoinnista? Mikäli kyllä, kerro lisää.
3. Ajatteletko olevasi brändi? Ajatteletko olevasi artistibrändi?
4. Haluaisitko olla artistibrändi?
5. Missä sosiaalisen median kanavissa sinulla on artistiprofiili? Miksi valitsit juuri nämä kanavat? Mikä kanavista on kaikkein tärkein?
6. Onko jokin brändäysprosessi sinulle tuttu teoriassa? Mikäli on, oletko seurannut jotain näistä prosesseista omaan käyttöösi sosiaalisessa mediassa?
7. Oletko tehnyt benchmarkingia luodessasi itsellesi artistibrändiä sosiaalisessa mediassa? Katsonut mallia muista artistiprofiileista referensseinä?
8. Kuinka usein julkaiset somessa?
9. Kuinka päätät mitä ja millon julkaiset somessa? Mitkä tekijät mielestäsi vaikuttavat näihin päätöksiin?
10. Onko sinulla selkeä visio siitä, millaista haluat sisältösi olevan sosiaalisessa mediassa? Onko sinulla pitkän tähtäimen suunnitelmaa/strategiaa sosiaalisen median kanavillesi?
11. Oletko saanut ulkopuolista apua sisällöntuottamiseen? Missä vaiheessa ja keneltä olet saanut apua? Tarvitsetko apua brändäysprosessiin?
12. Ajatteletko yleisöä/kuulijoita kun luot julkaisuja? Mistä he voisivat kiinnostua?
13. Onko sinulla tietynlainen kohderyhmä mielessä jonka haluaisit tavoittaa? Miten aiot tavoittaa heidät?
14. Mietitkö musiikkisi ja julkaisujesi suhdetta kun teet julkaisuja someen? Ovatko ne mielestäsi linjassa keskenään?
15. Oletko ajatellut millaiset brändit sopisivat yhteen oman brändisi kanssa? Miten brändi-imagosi sopii toiseen brändi-imagoon?

English

1. What comes to your mind when you think about branding?
2. Do you have any experience in marketing and branding? If so, please do explain a bit more.
3. Do you think you are a brand? Do you think you, as an artist are a brand?
4. Would you like to be a brand as an artist?
5. In which social media channels do you have an artist profile? Why did you choose those particular channels? Which channel is the most important one and why?
6. Are you familiar with any particular theoretical model of branding? If so, do you use any of those for your own needs on social media?

7. Have you done any benchmarking when creating yourself a brand on social media? Looked at other artists profiles for reference?
8. How often do you post on social media?
9. How do you decide what kind of content you post and when? What factors do you think influence these decisions?
10. Do you have a clear vision of what you want your social media content to be like? Do you have a long-term plan/strategy for your social media channels?
11. Have you had help from other people when designing your content? At which point and from who did you get help in the process? Do you need help in the branding process?
12. Do you think about the audience as you create posts? Do you have an idea what they might be interested in?
13. Is there a specific target audience group you are interested in reaching? How do you plan on reaching them?
14. Do you think of the relation between your music and the posts you make? Do you think they are aligned with one another?
15. Have you thought of which other brands would fit your brand? How your brand image fits with other brand images?