“How do I get to play in Japan?”

Exploring Nordic Folk Music Bands’ Brand Identity in Japan

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Master’s Thesis
Sibelius Academy
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Abstract

The starting point of the thesis was the desire to answer musicians' burning question "How do I get to play in Japan?". The thesis aims to give the reader an understanding how bands, agencies and other professionals in the field of music work to build brand identities for Nordic folk music bands in Japan, and give ideas that could be generalized to help answer the question "How do I get to play in Japan?".

The thesis is an exploratory study using qualitative research method. The data was collected through ten interviews with bands that are, or have been, in a roster of an agency, Japanese agencies, and professionals related to the field. Theoretical framework is based on literature on brand identity, Kapferer's theory of prism of brand identity in particular.

The research reveals meanings of brand identity elements on the specific field of Nordic folk music in Japan. Bands' ideas why they were selected to an agency's roster, and the agencies' principles on selecting artists, and reasons why they get interested in Nordic bands, propose answers to the the question "how to get to play in Japan".

Keywords

Branding, Brand Identity, Music, Folk Music, World Music, Music Export, Japan

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The starting point of my research is the desire to answer fellow musicians' burning question "How do I get to play in Japan?". As a folk musician regularly touring in Japan, as well as an arts manager, I've received this question from my peers many times but found myself lacking a proper answer. Looking at the fellow folk musicians touring in Japan, and the rosters of the Japanese agencies specializing in the genre, I've had a feeling that branding probably plays a role in the process but I've had nothing except a gut-feeling to tell what it actually is.

My love for Japanese culture and Japan as a country, and my occupation as folk musician has led me to this subject, on top of the opportunities I have as an "insider" of the Nordic folk music scene in Japan. Relationships play an important role in Japan, and without suitable connections it's not possible to do this kind of research. Therefore, I felt I should do this study and spread my knowledge as I am in a position to do so. Through this thesis, I try to give the reader an understanding how these bands, agencies and other professionals in the field of music work to build brand identities for Nordic folk music bands in Japan, and give ideas that could be generalized to help answer the question "How do I get to play in Japan?".

Nordic area's folk music in Japan seems to have raised its popularity in Japan during the past decades and years. According to Music Finland (2019), Finnish music export's total share to Japan has grown during the last ten years. Many bands see touring in Japan as their dream, and as the market has its limits, there is competition for getting to play in Japan, especially through an agency. I hope I am able to give ideas to enhance the understanding of what the important things are for Japanese agencies and audiences, so that the musicians could get their foot in the door better.

On top of being a Nordic artist who has toured in Japan, I have also the privilege of having an insight into the Japanese Nordic world music field through my Japanese

friends and acquaintances who work as key figures in the field. They have helped me greatly by finding interviewees from the inside of the music field. In Japan in general, it is important to have personal networks and connections. Without these relationships it would be very hard to conduct interviews. I feel very fortunate I had the help of my Japanese friends, without whom making this research would have been impossible.

1.2 Problem formulation

In the field of world music, the market is typically bigger than the musicians' country of origin - it could indeed be the whole world. Some areas, like the English speaking world or a Nordic musician's own home area, could be easy places to promote and sell the concerts of one's own band. Many folk musicians work as entrepreneurs or freelancers doing their own promotion to a lesser or greater extent, might be the reason for the lack of agencies specializing in the genre, or the inner passion to do so. In some other areas, like Japan and possibly many other parts of the world, it would be very rare for a musician to manage the tour and concert arrangements themselves, as communicating with the venues and audience in English is difficult. Thus, the answer to the question "How do I get to play in Japan?" needs to cover more than just the effort of the musicians.

I chose to tackle this question by interviewing bands that are, or have been, in a roster of an agency, Japanese agencies, and professionals related to the field. I think that what the musicians want to know concerning the question "how to get to play in Japan", is how to form a long-term relationship with Japanese audiences, not how to get to play just one concert in Japan. My experience and assumption is that the path to Japanese market goes through the agencies that, based on some principles I hope to reveal, choose which musicians they book. I want to explore the reasons and principles that guide the agencies when selecting artists to their rosters, and what the bands in the rosters think about the processes that made them end up on a tour in Japan. I would like to get an insight of what the selection process and Japanese market for Nordic folk music looks like from the agencies' and the selected musicians' point of view.

Nordic folk music, especially performed in Japan, is a very marginal genre. To this date very few studies have been made but there is a clear interest towards it especially among folk musicians aiming for Japanese market. Since 2011, Music Finland has published an annual report on the marketing figures of music export. In 2017 Finnish music export to Japan was about 3% of all music export which, however, was less than in 2016 (6%). The lessening could be due to error marginal and the real trend can be seen only in the years to come (Music Finland, 2019). As this report focuses on Finnish music export field in general, the numbers of folk music are not reported separately. Since exporting Finnish folk music to Japan is such a small field, I decided to focus on the Nordic area in general to get a bit larger number of musicians involved. I interviewed bands from Finland, Sweden and Estonia. Swedish and Estonian music export agencies do not at the moment produce similar reports as Music Finland does on the export-by-country, so comparable figures are not possible to get at the moment. No previous studies have been made about Nordic folk music on Japanese market.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to show light on the Nordic area's live folk music scene in Japan and explore the reasons why certain bands - or bands in general - from Nordic countries are selected to play in Japan, and why Japanese agencies get interested in Nordic folk music bands. I am also interested in the audience the genre of Nordic world music has in Japan.

The main research question is: What features make a Nordic folk music band suitable for touring in Japan? In the beginning of the research, I had nothing but a gut-feeling that the issue has something to do with the brand. My approach is an inductive approach; after defining the research question, I conducted the interviews, exploring the interviewees' experiences around the subject, and then narrowed down the theories that could be applied on the basis of the data collected. I wanted to explore with an open mind what my informants have to say about the subject, and look for a theory that would rise from the collected data. After having collected and analysed

the interview data by process coding and classification of those codes, I found out that the answer to the research question could be best described through the theories about brand and brand identity in particular. The theories I will focus on are theories about the composition of brand identity, especially Kapferer's prism of brand identity (Figure 1, p. 17).

1.4 World Music or Folk Music?

The terms folk music and world music are quite vague terms used frequently as synonymes for the same genre of music, also in this study. However, I will as follows briefly open up these terms, and why they are both used in this study.

The interviewees, for instance, used both words, unconsciously or consciously. In particular for the Japanese interviewees, "world music" seemed to have the meaning of music influenced by tradition from abroad. "Folk music", again, had the meaning of traditional music for most interviewees, and many times it was used to describe the actual music played by the bands.

Generally the term "folk music" is used when talking about the music played, especially by the musicians, whereas "world music" is used when talking about the same genre from a marketing point of view. Exceptions could be the bands that have members from several countries, and/or represent different musical cultures which can exist inside the same country's borders. On the other hand, a musical culture can spread over the borders of a country. In these kinds of cases, world music could seem a more suitable genre description than folk music. However, the musicians interviewed for this thesis were from bands where all members come from the same country of origin, representing the same musical culture.

World music as a term has been credited to ethnomusicologist Robert E. Brown in the 1960's. To enhance the learning process of ethnomusicology undergraduates, he invited performers from Africa and Asia and began a concert series promoted as world music. In the 1980's it evolved into a term in the media and music industry with the aim to promote certain musical genres, mostly non-Western music described as folk

music or ethnic music. Also non-traditional folk music with elements from pop music, or non-Western pop music with ethnic elements are described as world music. Good descriptions could be “someone else’s local music”. (Nidel, 2004)

1.5 Research Approach

This thesis is a qualitative, inductive study based on interview data of qualitative nature. The theory revealed from the data is best described with the concept brand identity, especially as described by Kapferer’s prism of brand identity (Figure 1, p. 16), which I used to categorize the process codes.

Japanese agents specializing in Nordic folk music and Nordic area’s folk musicians with touring experience in Japan, music journalists, a presenter and an album distributor were interviewed to get multiple points of view on the Nordic folk music scene in Japan.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were transcribed and analysed with content analysis of process coding and classification to general clusters. The primary research data consisted of ten semi-structured, approximately half an hour long interviews. Some of the interviews were with just one person and in some interviews there were two interviewees present. Most of them were made in English and in some, where interviewees answered in Japanese and I asked the questions in English, I had the help of an interpreter. The interviews were mostly conducted in April 2017 and three additional interviews were made in 2019 and early 2020. Also Japanese agencies’ marketing material, mostly flyers and posters, were used to some extent when interviewees brought them up.

Branding literature about brand identity is the cornerstone of the theoretical framework. Also additional literature about branding, arts management and marketing were used to get a wider view on the subject.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. In this first chapter I've represented how I chose the subject, how the problem was formulated, what is the aim of the study and the research approach. Though this is an inductive study, where I first analysed the data until a certain point to gain an understanding of what the theory might be, I have chosen to structure this thesis in a more meaningful way for the reader. In the second chapter I will review the key theoretical approaches and other previous research done around the topic. In the third chapter I will go through the methodological approach, data collection, analysis and critical reflections on the research process. In the fourth chapter, I will introduce the interviewees and the analysis process from transcription to content analysis, and end in what the analysis revealed about the brand identity components of Nordic folk music bands in the Japanese market. Fifth chapter concludes the analysis to answer the research question and aims to give guidelines of "how to get to play in Japan" based on the findings. In the sixth, Discussions chapter, I will discuss some possible adaptations of the theoretical framework and make suggestions for further research on the subject.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Branding literature and especially Kapferer's prism of brand identity are the cornerstones of the theoretical framework of this thesis. Branding is part of marketing, and marketing the arts is somewhat special compared to for instance commercial marketing. I will first briefly introduce some of the specificity of marketing the arts and branding in the field, as the branding literature about the brand identity used is focused on traditional marketing and does not as such take arts and its uniqueness in account. Later, in the analysis, conclusions and discussion chapters, I will reflect on which parts of the theoretical framework seem to work with this specific field of arts and which do not, 2.1 Marketing the Arts.

Marketing is a way to optimize the relationship between companies and customers, and maximize mutual satisfaction. The term marketing includes a consumer need, a link between the company and the consumer and optimization of profits (Colbert, 2001, p. 8). Marketing itself developed already in the nineteenth century when supply of similar products created a demand for differentiation. Marketing cultural enterprises as a unique field was raised by academics for the first time in 1967 when Kotler and Levy (1967) stated that cultural organizations like museums, concert halls and libraries produce cultural goods. Competing for consumers' attention and their own share of national resources, these organizations realized they had faced a marketing problem. Colbert (2001, p. 11) comes to a conclusion that cultural marketing is "the art of reaching those market segments likely to be interested in the product while adjusting to the product the commercial variables - price, place and promotion - to put the product in contact with a sufficient number of consumers and to reach the objectives consistent with the mission of the cultural enterprise."

Marketing theory is originally focused on selling tangible goods which could be defined as either handcrafted or manufactured products. In the 1980's, marketers started to realise that services might differ from tangible products in some aspects. Since then, marketing theory has expanded to address those challenges that are unique to marketing service products (Kolb, 2000, p. 136). Nowadays, also ideas are understood as products that must be marketed and the word product can now

be used to describe any combination from tangible good to service and idea (Kotler, 1997). According to Kolb (2000, p. 136), cultural products can be described as such combinations: presenting a concert is a service, but consumers attending can also purchase tangible merchandise. Moreover, cultural organisations can also sell ideas when selling for example memberships. However, art is typically not a product answering to an immediate, concrete "need" - though it has proven benefits to well-being. Sometimes the greatness of art experiences is taken for granted by the people in the arts world to the extent that they think positioning, where branding is a tool, is not always necessary. For many musicians this seems to be true, as many have maybe themselves experienced the influence of music in their lives to be one of the greatest forces. Kolb describes:

> Perhaps people working in cultural organisations share a similar vision that is not constrained by the everyday reality in which most people live. Because of this insularity, there is a danger that the organisation will become so focused on the importance of their cultural product that they will forget that the product is not a priority for most people. Because the cultural organization believes that everyone should be interested in their product, they can come to believe that everyone is interested in their product. (2000, p. 180)

I do not deny the greatness of art experiences, quite the contrary. Because my aim is to shed light to the constructions that could be beneficial in order to wider spread that greatness, understanding some basics of marketing and branding is in my opinion essential to reach that aim. In this study, branding, in particular, offered the best tools to reach the aim.

2.2 Branding the Arts

According to Ghodeswar (2008, p. 4), a brand is a distinguished name and/or symbol - such as a logo, trademark or package design - intended to personalise the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods and services from those of competitors. A brand is not a product but a way to communicate

to customers the source of the product. That way it protects both the consumer and its producer from competitors providing products that appear identical, and answers the same need of the consumer. A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, that consumers view having added values - values that answer more than just their demand of the moment - that suit their needs most closely (de Chernatony, 2003).

In the case of music, Harrison (2014, p. 223) describes what branding at it most straightforward is: “it’s the building up of an artist’s name and reputation in order to help to sell more records and concert tickets”. She also states that at its more sophisticated levels, brands can also sell other things not necessarily involving music: many successful live artists make as much revenue from merchandise as they do from ticket sales. Harrison argues that now, in the time of reality television music competitions and the social media’s possibilities of self-marketing, the need is greater than ever for an angle that will bring one’s personality to the foreground. In that challenge , branding can be of great help (Harrison, 2014, p. 225).

Harrison (2014, p. 225) states that to a greater or lesser extent, a successful artist is always a brand in the sense that their name is being recognized. To tone down the fear of branding, she argues that though many artists are afraid of “selling their soul” in the sake of branding, it’s worth knowing that already establishing a name is a form of branding. Thus branding might not be such an enemy of art as many artists might think it is, and understanding how the brand identity is built might be a good way to enter any market.

2.3 Brand Identity

One way of successful brand building is through understanding how to develop a brand identity: to know what the brand stands for and to effectively express that identity (Aaker, 1997). Companies’ task is to create a differentiated product with unique features, conceptualised as brand identity in marketing literature. More adequate for the case of this study would be to replace the word “company” with “artist” or “agency”.

The conception of brand identity was first brought up in Europe by Kapferer (1986). The literature on brand management does not use the concept of brand identity, but refers instead to the term "brand equity" (Aaker, 1996). The main theory employed in this thesis is the Brand Identity Prism by Kapferer (Figure 1), which is used as the basis of categorising the data in the analysis. Also Kapferer's sources of brand identity and de Chernatony's components of brand identity are used to deepen the understanding of how brand identity is built or formed, alongside with a definition of brand image which is closely related yet separate from brand identity.

According to Kapferer (2004, p. 96), answering the following questions (Table 1) will define the brand identity. From the arts management's point of view, all the questions can be seen as relevant for the field of arts.

Table 1. Questions to define brand identity (J. N. Kapferer 2004, p. 97)

- What is the brand's particular vision and aim?
- What makes it different?
- What need is the brands fulfilling?
- What is its permanent nature?
- What are its values?
- What is the field of competence?
- What are the signs which make the brand recognisable?

Brand identity is a tool to answer the questions about who the brand is, what it stands for, and what makes it unique. Kapferer (2004, p. 95) argues that classic marketing tools do not help answering such questions, but brand identity does, specifying the facets of brand's uniqueness and value. For existing brands, like the ones my interviewees talk about, identity is the source of brand positioning. Brand positioning is the main difference creating preference in a specific market at a specific time. Kapferer (2004, p. 95) describes the need for defining brand identity:

> Defining what a brand is made of helps answer many questions that are asked every day, such as: Can the brand sponsor such and such event or sport? Does the advertising campaign suit the brand? … How can the brand change its communication style, yet remain true to itself? How can decision making in communications be decentralised regionally or internationally, without jeopardising brand congruence?

All these decisions reflect the problem of brand identity and its definition, and are necessary conditions for efficient brand management.

The concept of brand identity includes everything that makes a brand unique and meaningful (Janonis, Dovalienė and Virvilaitė, 2007, p. 70). Park (1986) states that a brand's success in the market depends on the choice of brand identity, the usage of identity developing image, and the guarantee that image transfers that brand identity chosen by a company, differentiating it from competitors and appealing to a desired group of consumers. Kapferer argues that brand identity is more than a graphic charter; although it might be a necessary first step, it's not the same as the whole brand identity:

> Knowing brand identity paradoxically gives extra freedom of expression, since it emphasises the pre-eminence of substance over strictly formal features. Brand identity defines what must stay and what is free to change. Brands are living systems. They must have degrees of freedom to match modern market diversity (2004, p. 97).

According to Ghodeshwar (2003, p. 5), brand identity is a unique set of brand associations implying a promise to customers. It includes a core and extended identity. Core identity is the central essence of the brand that remains constant as the brand moves to new markets and new products. Extended identity focuses on brand personality, relationships and strong symbol associations.

Brand identity is company focused, created by managerial activities. It is how a company seeks to create an identity. Often brand identity can be revealed from the branding strategy, which is a way of communicating the company's values and identity to consumers and other stakeholders. Through brand identity, a company seeks to communicate its individuality and distinctiveness from other similar brands (Nandan,

2004, p. 265). In this thesis, for example, to what extent a band is different from the other Nordic folk music bands, and why it would be appealing to Japanese audiences of world music. An effective brand identity resonates with customers, differentiating the brand from competitors and representing what the organization can and will do over time (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2010, p. 13).

Brand identity includes moral image, aim and values that together reveal the essence of individuality, that differentiates the brand (de Chernatony, 2002). When the identity of the brand includes emotional benefit, it provides strength to the brand (Janonis et la, 2007, p. 70).

2.3.1 Composition of Brand Identity

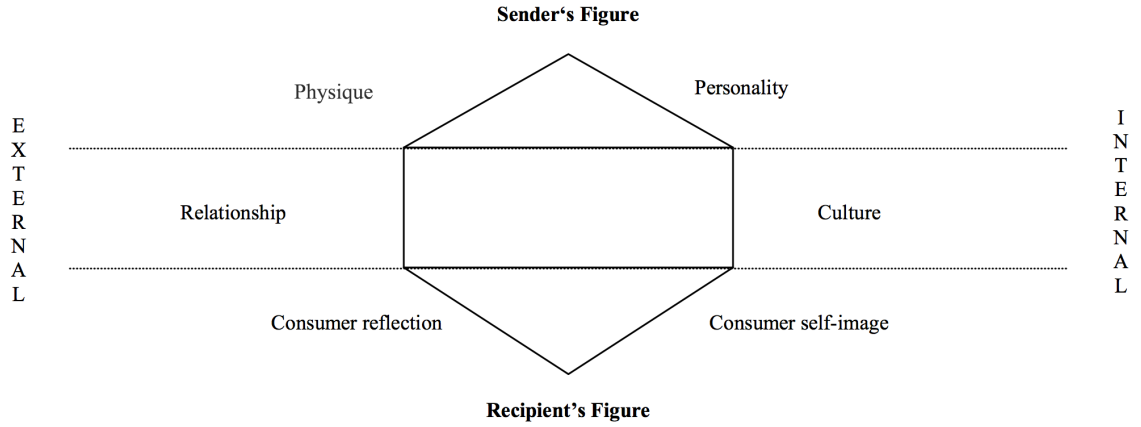

Figure 1. The prism of brand identity (J. N. Kapferer, 2004 p. 107)

To further understand what brand identity is composed of, Kapferer (2004, p. 107) illustrates it by a hexagonal prism of brand identity (Figure 1). The basic conception of the brand identity is that a brand has a "gift of speech", and it only exists through communication (Kapferer, 2004). *Physique* and *personality* elements of the prism determine the sender - the company. *Reflection* and *self-image* define the recipient, the consumer. The *culture* and *relationship* link the sender and the recipient. The prism of brand identity divides the elements also to external and internal: physical appearance, relationship and consumer reflection are social elements and provide brand with external impression; image, personality, culture and consumer self-image

are internal elements and reflect brand's core, its soul. All six elements emphasize brand identity.

The first external quality is *physique*. According to Janonis et la (2007, p. 71), the first step of brand building is defining the physical factors, identifying what it is, what it does and what it looks like. Kapferer (2004, p. 107) describes the importance of physique to the brand: "if the brand is a flower, it's physique is the stem. Without the stem the flower dies: it is the flower's objective and tangible basis". It could be argued that the term "physique" is a poor fit for music business, where the core product is immaterial, audible music. Still in the case of live music, there are actual musicians performing the pieces. It is quite undeniable that the music of a band is very much tied to its performers, the musicians, so physical appearance plays a role - if not the very first one, still an important one.

The second element of the prism is brand *personality*. Brand's character is gradually built up through communication. It is a way a brand talks to and indicates a particular, human personality. Kapferer (2004, p. 108) states that the easiest way to develop a brand personality is to give the brand a spokesperson or a figurehead. The idea of having a famous character, a celebrity for example, to represent the brand has become widespread since the 1970's when brand personality became the main focus of advertising. In the case of folk music bands, the personality and physique elements can get a bit mixed up, since the musicians of the band are such a fundamental part of both of the elements, and in many ways spokespersons of the brand.

Brand with its communications is a representative of a *culture* it originates in. In Kapferer's definition, culture in this context means "the set of values feeding the brand's inspiration" (2004, p. 108). Culture is in the core of the brand, and entails many values that provide brand with inspiration. Brand culture is based on the culture, values and aims of the company. According to Janonis et la (2007, p. 73), the local producers are also sources of brand culture. Kapferer (2004, p. 109) states that countries of origin are great cultural reservoirs for brands. Folk music is very much linked in a culture and region of origin, so this could be thought to be especially true in the field of folk music. Culture links the brand to the firm, and sometimes the

brand image can not be fully dissociated from that of the corporation. The degree of brand freedom is frequently restricted by the culture of a company, as the culture is the most visible and external brand feature. (Kapferer, 2004, p. 109)

Janonis et la (2007, p. 73) claim that brands often take the most important position in the process of human transaction and exchange. Kapferer (2004, p. 110) argues this is particularly true in brands of the service sector and retailers, which are the closest resemblance to the brands in music. This *relationship* is reflected especially in the sphere of services and retail companies. Relationships are emphasized by the way of behaviour which is most identified with the brand. Many actions of communication, for example advertising, and direct consumer communication while purchasing the good, define this feature.

A brand is a *consumer reflection*. With a strong brand, consumers can easily define what goods of the brand are produced for a particular type of consumers. Kapferer (2004, p. 110) gives an example of a customer reflection:

> When asked for their views on certain car brands, people immediately answer in terms of brand's received client type: that's a brand for young people! For fathers! For show-offs! For old folks!

Janonis et la (2007, p. 73) state that communication and goods should aim to reflect an ideal consumer - not what a typical consumer is but what they would like to be - to seem most appealing to the targeted consumers.

Consumer self-image consists of the features which consumers identify themselves with, and the features they would like their chosen good and its brand to reflect about their own identity. Kapferer (2004, p. 111) describes self-image as the target's own internal mirror, "I feel, I am", and differentiates it from customer reflection, which is the target's outwarded mirror, "they are". Self-image is an important feature as consumers tend to purchase goods corresponding to their self-image. It is not always the current self-image consumer wants to reflect with their brand choices, but the image consumers aim to. (Kapferer, 2004, p. 111)

2.3.2 Sources of Brand Identity

As a background source of information, the sources of brand identity are essential for this thesis, though they are not explicitly used in the actual analysis of the data. Kapferer (2004) identifies elements that determine brand identity: *good, name, personage, symbols and logotype,* and *communication*.

¨ is the primary source of identity. According to Janonis et la (2007, p. 71), "Brand transfers its equities into the process of production and distribution, which constitutes the essence of service sales as well." Every brand makes a consumer think spontaneously about particular goods, as well as particular actions as a way of communication. These goods are able to contribute to the building of brand identity (Janonis et la, 2007, p. 71).

Name is the second source of brand identity, and it is one of the most powerful sources. According to Janonis et la (2007, p.71), a strong brand has the ability to give a new meaning to words, like for example German Mercedes Bentz has done to Mercedes, an originally Spanish name.

Personage is another source of brand identity. Janonis et la (2007, p. 71) describe the meaning of emblem this way: "If the brand is the capital of enterprises, so the emblem is the righteousness of brand capital." The emblem symbolizes brand identity through visual image. According to Kapferer (2004), the functions of an emblem are: to help identify and recognize a brand; to provide guarantee by indicating a long-term commitment of a producer to retain quality; to provide brand with durability when the emblem is a long-term sign; to help identify and adjust goods to transfer personality to the brand.

Visual ***symbols and logotypes*** help to conceive the culture and personality of a brand. They are often chosen to apply a graphic identity with the elements and values of the brand. Janonis at la (2007, p. 71) emphasizes that "it is extremely important to note that such symbols and logotypes help not only to identify brands but brands are identified together with them." Some brands are closely related with the country of origin, and folk music bands are definitely in this category. Janonis et la (2007, p. 72) describe:

> Some of brands structure their identity and uniqueness based on their geographic roots, embodying advantages presented. While mentioning Finland it can be noted that this is a country where the earth ends as it is a cold, ascetic, remote, with little sun land. These features are pretty well embodied in Finlandia vodka. The vision of pure and clean water as well as of the vodka is spontaneously revealed.

Communications reveal identity through its content and form. Any way of communication contains the information about a sender, source, the recipient and relationships that are attempted to be created in between. All brands have their history, culture, personality and reflection and reveal these through communication. (Janonis et la, 2007, p. 71).

2.3.3 Components of Brand Identity

To further analyze what a brand identity is, it could be divided into components. This component model does not serve my interview data very well but could work with another situation in the arts world well. It clarifies why the brand identity is needed. According to Harris and de Chernatony (2001), brand identity is based on the following components: brand vision, brand culture, positioning, personality, relationships and presentations.

In the center of brand identity are *brand vision and culture*. Vision communicates the brand's core purpose and values, which serve as guiding principles. Harris and de Chernatony (2001, p. 443) argue that "it is the consistency of the perception of those values, that is an important characteristic of successful brands." Though the culture needs to be appropriate, adaptive and attentive to the needs of all stakeholders, Harris and de Chernatony (2001, p. 444) suggest that managers need to agree on the few core values that will remain unchanged, and less central values that can be adapted to changing situations.

According to Rositer and Percy (1996), *brand's positioning* sets out what the brand is, who it is for and what it offers. Positioning emphasizes the characteristics and attributes that make the brand unique. Following Gutman's (1982) means-end theory,

a set of functionally distinct capabilities that differentiate a brand should be derived from the brand's core values. The brand's positioning will be affected by artefacts which provide cues about brand's performance characteristics. (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001 p. 444)

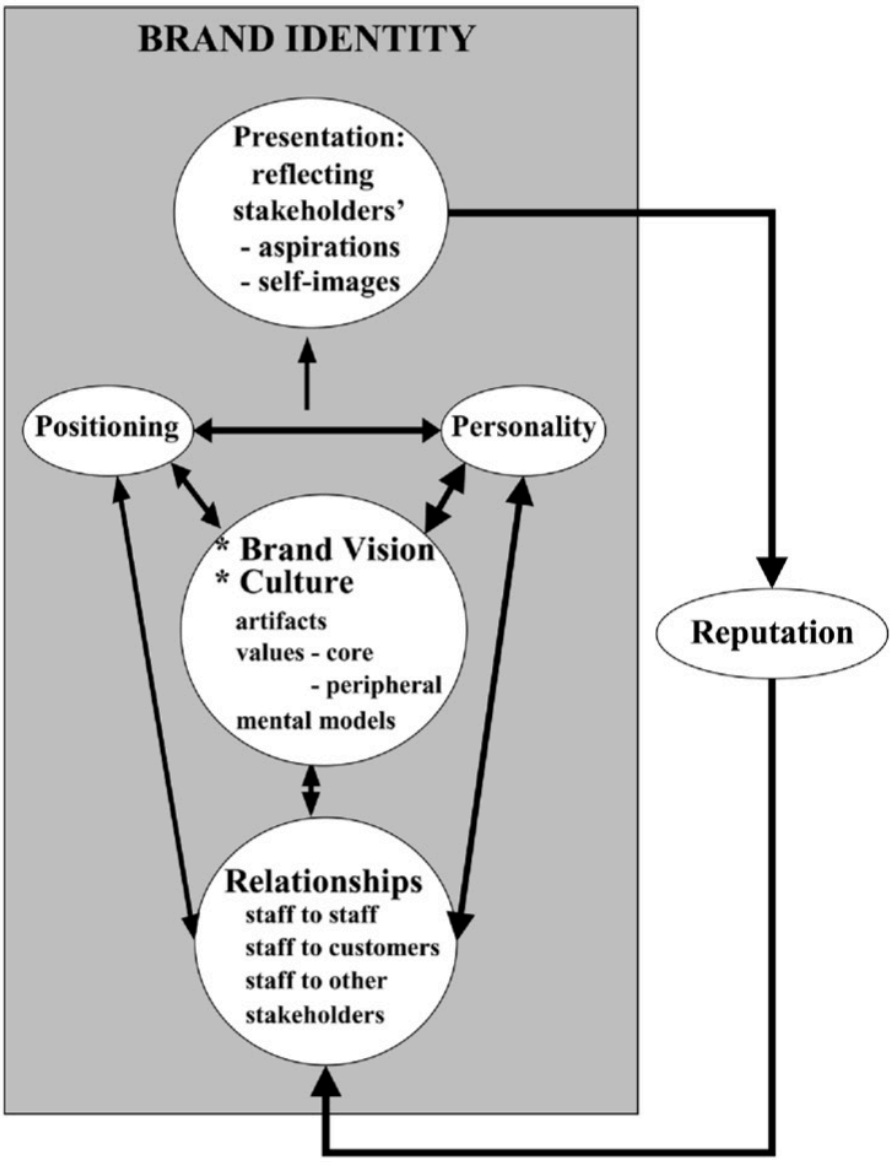

Figure 2. Components of Brand Identity (de Chernatony, 1999)

Brand's personality is its emotional characteristics. Personality rises from the brand's core values. The traits of personality are further developed through associations with the image of a typical user, endorsers and consumer's contacts with the company's employees (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001 p. 444). Aaker (1997, p. 347) defines brand

personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand." Rook (1985, p. 262) concludes that consumers can think about brands as if they were celebrities or famous historical figures. Keller argues that brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function (Keller, 1993, p. 3). *Relationship* between brand and its consumers evolves through nurturing the brand's personality. Also employees significantly affect a brand's relationship with its customers through interaction. A consistency in customer interactions is very important, since relationships constantly evolve and react to changes from either partner, the brand and the consumer. (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001 p. 444)

Presentation styles refer to brand's symbolic meanings to consumers. To reflect consumers' aspirations and self-images, identification of presentation styles should be made, as people respond more favourably to brands they see as being consistent with their self-concepts. Brand's symbolic meaning helps consumers understand and express aspects of themselves to others. (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001 p. 445)

According to Harris and de Chernatony (2001, p. 446), when the components of internal brand resources are successfully managed, the result is a positive brand image. It should lead to a favourable *brand reputation*. As a contrast to brand image which reflects current perceptions, a brand's reputation is more stable and represents the constituent parts of multiple images created over time.

2.3.4 Differences Between Brand Identity and Brand Image

Brand image is closely related but different from brand identity. For the aim of this thesis, it is important to differentiate the two. From a consumer's point of view, different levels of knowledge, such as awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences get linked to a brand and its understanding by the consumer (Keller, 2003). Nandan describes the difference between brand identity and image: "Brand message is packaged or wrapped in terms of brand identity, and it is unpackaged or unwrapped by the consumer in the form of brand image" (2004, p. 268). Keller defines brand image as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the

brand associations held in customer memory" (1993, p. 3). According to Zhang (2014, p. 58), brand image is "the key driver of brand equity, which refers to consumers' general perception and feeling about a brand and has an influence on consumer behaviour."

Brand image relates to the consumer's perception of the brand. Kotler (2003, p. 197) defines brand image as "the set of beliefs held about a particular brand". Gardner and Levy (1955) in their classic article proposed that brands can have characteristics or overall personality that may be more important to the consumer than the technical properties of the product. Brand image could be described as the sum total of impressions that the consumer receives from different sources, and form a brand personality (Herzog, 1963). Ditcher describes brand image as the total impression of the product in the minds of the consumers. (Ditcher, 1985) According to Nandan (2004, p. 267), it is clear that consumers form an image of the brand based on the associations they have formed about the product. Brand image's favorability, strength and uniqueness are the factors distinguishing brand knowledge that play an important role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity, especially in high involvement decision settings. Aaker states that "a brand image is a set of associations, usually organized in a meaningful way" (1991, p. 109). According to Park brand image is "the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged by the firm" (186, p. 135).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Because of the subjective nature of my research question, choosing a qualitative research method seemed natural. This is an exploratory study with a bit of an autoethnographic twist. In this chapter, I will describe the chosen qualitative research method, the data collection and analysis methods used. I will end the chapter with critical reflections on the research process.

3.1 Qualitative research

Leavy (2014, p. 2) describes qualitative research as "a way of learning about social reality". According to Saldaña (2011, p. 4), qualitative research is "an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to, and methods for the study of natural social life". Qualitative approaches to research can be used to study a wide variety of topics, and are often used to explore, describe or explain a social phenomenon (Leavy, 2014, p. 2).

The main dimensions of research could be categorized under three general categories (Leavy 2004, p. 2): philosophical, praxis and ethics. The beliefs - how research should proceed, what can be known, who can be a knower and how we come to know - form the philosophical substructure of research. Praxis is the practise of research: approaches, methods and theories that come to being while researchers build projects and execute on them, making adjustments on the way. Ethics bridges the philosophical and praxis aspects of research; how to prevent harm to the people or settings involved in the study, avoiding exploitation of participants, disclosure of the nature of the study and how the findings will be used, the voluntary participation and confidentiality involved. (Leavy, 2004 p. 3- 5)

In qualitative research, the data is mainly collected and analyzed with non-quantitative methods and is primarily non-quantitative in character. It consists of, for example, interview transcripts, field notes, documents and visual materials like photographs and video recordings. Mostly, the research data in qualitative studies documents human experiences on social action. There is no one single goal for qualitative studies, the aim depends on the purpose of the project in hand. Outcomes of qualitative

research are mostly essential representations or presentations of significant findings based on the analysis of data. They can, for example, include documentation of cultural findings, new insights and understanding about social actions, evaluation of the effectiveness of programs or policies, or critique of existing social orders and social justice. (Saldaña, 2011, p.4)

3.1.2 Inductive Approach

Qualitative research is generally characterized by inductive approaches to building knowledge (Leavy, 2015, p. 9). Inductive approach is also known as inductive reasoning. It is an approach that starts with observations; theories are proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of the observations. Inductive research method searches for patterns from observation, and the development of explanations for those patterns through hypothesis. In inductive studies, theories or hypotheses are not applied at the beginning of the research. Inductive approach aims to generate meaning from the data collected to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory; it is based on learning from experience. Inductive reasoning begins with more detailed observations of the world and moves towards more abstract generalisations and ideas. At the initial stages of research, no hypotheses can be found, and the researcher is not sure about the type and nature of the research findings until the study is complete. However, inductive approach does not prevent the researcher from using existing theories to formulate the research question to be explored. (Ruane, 2016, p. 35)

3.2 Data collection via semi-structured interviews

Many - if not most - qualitative research studies rely on interviews with participants. This data collection method is according to Saldaña “an effective way of soliciting and documenting, in their own words, an individual’s or group’s perspectives, feelings, opinions, values, attitudes and beliefs about their personal experiences and social worlds, in addition to factual information about their lives” (2011, p. 32).

There are several interview formats from the highly structured to unstructured: highly structured interviews consist of a set of prepared and specific questions to be asked in a particular order from each participant; unstructured is more like a free exploration over a general list of topics. Research interviews could be prearranged or happen spontaneously as the opportunity arises. There could be one or several interviewees present in a single interview situation. The total number of interviewees can vary from just one person to a large number of people. Participants could be interviewed once or several times during the study.

To collect the data, the interviews need to be documented. A voice recorder or a video camera are usually used to document the interview situation most accurately. I chose to use a digital voice recorded and at the same time my mobile phone's microphone as a backup, as I felt a video camera could make the situations stiff and would be hard to carry along on the field.

I conducted ten interviews for this thesis. I chose an approach of conducting semi-structured, pre-arranged interviews with a list of questions in a free order, and allowed myself to ask more about the topics if the urge arised. Two of the interview situations had two interviewees present, in the other nine situations there was one interviewee present. Still, in most situations there were more people present than me and the interviewees; an interpreter or a person that introduced me to the interviewee, or both.

3.2.1 Interviewees

I conducted three of the interviews with members of bands who have toured in Japan, and other seven with Japanese world music professionals. Three of them are promoters or managers of agencies that specialise in world music and have Nordic musicians in their rosters, and four are other professionals in the field of world music in Japan. The duration of the interviews was planned to be around half an hour, but in some cases it grew longer because of the enthusiasm of the interviewees; or shorter because of the time constraints of the interviewee. Most of the interview recordings are thirty to forty minutes in duration, the shortest is fifteen minutes.

I chose the interviewed musicians among my colleagues, friends and acquaintances who have been touring in Japan. All bands represent different nationalities; they are from Estonia, Finland and Sweden. Also, as they all have a wide experience of touring in other parts of the world, mostly Western market areas, they have insight to compare the Japanese market with the Western live music markets. I have included short introductions of each band in this chapter.

The representatives of the world music agencies promoting Nordic folk music in Japan are also people I more or less knew before the interviews. The three agencies included are the three main - if not only - agencies on the world music market in Japan that represent Nordic world music. All represent world music from other parts of the world as well, and work closely together to arrange wider tours or special projects for their artists. I was happy to get a chance to interview a manager from each of the three. I have included introductions of these agencies' representatives in this chapter.

At times, both artists and agencies call the managers as promoters, which has a slightly different nuance. The manager is in general a definition for someone who has the role of bringing together and coordinating the people and projects necessary to meet the goals of an artist or band; and a promoter is someone who publicizes and promotes performances. Promoters organize gigs, book bands or artists and advertise the shows to bring in audience. In a marginal field of music like Nordic world music scene in Japan, it is common that the managers also work as promoters. For all the interviewed managers, this is the case.

In March 2017 in Japan, I interviewed four Japanese professionals involved in the world music scene. They were previously unknown to me, and introduced by managers A and C. They are the owner of a cd distribution company, H. A.; editor in chief of a world music magazine originally focused on the Latin music scene, H. B.; a presenter from a large, publicly funded theater in Tokyo, H. C. and a journalist writing to a world music magazine, H. D. These interviews provided me with a greater view on the world music scene in Japan in general.

3.2.1.1 Band D

Band D is a Swedish a cappella quartet consisting of four musicians. They have been a band for more than seventeen years and toured in Japan already four times since 2012. Their agency in Japan is Agency A, and they have also cooperated with Agency B for a shorter project. I interviewed two of the band members, Musician A and Musician B in February 2017 in Sweden.

3.2.1.2 Band E

Band E is a harmonica quartet from Finland consisting of four musicians. The band also has a mascot teddy bear, referred to as Bear E, that tours the world with them. Band E's first album came out in 2005 and they have toured in Japan five times since 2007. Their agency in Japan is Agency C. I interviewed two members of the band, musician C and musician D in Helsinki, September 2019.

3.2.1.3 Band F

Band F is an Estonian trio that has toured the world very widely since their first appearance in 2013. They have toured in Japan once in 2018, organized by Agency A, but have since been released to look for a new partner to better meet their target audience in Japan. I interviewed one member of the band, musician E via Skype in November 2019. Musician E has also toured in Japan previously with another band.

3.2.1.5 Manager A, Agency A

Manager A is the founder of Agency A based in Osaka. He started the company in 2000 from the love of Nordic folk music and spelmanstämma culture he had experienced in Sweden. He doesn't have a background with music but in other types of import businesses, and has learned the music business while working in it. Nowadays, Agency A brings annually many world music bands to Japan, mostly from Northern Europe but also from other countries with a wide range from choirs to instrumental duos. I conducted the interview with manager A in March 2017 in Osaka.

3.2.1.6 Manager B, Agency B

Manager B started his career about 15 years ago in the music business by working with

Japanese rock bands. After returning to Japan from Ireland, where he spent a year in 2008 and 2009, where he got excited about the local folk music, he started working in Agency B that has many Irish musicians in their roster. They have artists from Nordic countries in their roster too, organizing a total of three to four tours a year for these artists. Agency B also works with some corporate partners, arranging special tours and events. At the time of the interview in October 2019, conducted in World Music Expo in Tampere, Agency B had just had a Danich band on a tour in Japan.

3.2.1.7 Manager C, Agency C

Manager C has been working with world music since the early 1990's. She first worked in a bigger record company's PR section. After quitting that job, she started to promote Irish musicians she knew from her record company times. She founded her own Agency C in the early 1990's, and took first Nordic musicians to her roster in the late 1990's. As well as organizing tours for her own artists, she works for corporate partners to provide them artists from the world music scene. I conducted the interview with her via Skype in January 2020.

3.3 Data analysis

Saldaña describes the nature of data analysis in qualitative research this way: "Analysis can range from the factual to the conceptual to the interpretive. Analysis can also range from a straightforward descriptive account to an emergently constructed grounded theory to an evocatively composed short story" (2011, p. 90). The purpose of data analysis is to reveal to the readers fresh insights on what the researcher has observed and discovered about the human condition. Analytic choices are often based on what methods will harmonize with the research method and theoretical framework, and therefore will generate the most sufficient answers to the research questions - and best represent and present the project's findings. In qualitative research, the research outcomes are not always hard data. They could be, in fact, more questions instead of answers, or an objective reportage, or even an artistic work. (Saldaña, 2011, p. 91)

Leavy describes different data analysis methods as strategies, "a carefully considered

plan or method to achieve a particular goal" (2004, p. 581). Leavy (2004, p.582) notes that the data analysis in many ways begins even before any data is collected: when the researcher designs a study in their mind, and considers the kind of data they may need to help inform and answer the research questions.

3.3.1 Transcription Process

It could be argued that the transcription process is both part of data collection and data analysis (Saldaña, 2011, p. 44). "Through field note writing, interview transcribing, analytic memo writing and other documentation processes, you gain cognitive ownership of your data, and the intuitive, tacit, synthesizing capabilities of your brain begin sensing patterns, making connections, and seeing the bigger picture" (Saldaña, 2011, p.90). As I had a feeling that transcribing the interviews made the first analysis, I have included a brief description of the transcription process in this data analysis chapter.

For most of the interviews, I made the transcription from the recordings within a month from the interview. I found the quality of the recordings satisfying, though in all of the interviews, there were some inaudible words and some background noise interference. Despite those small quality issues, I felt I could accurately transcribe the course of the interviews into written text. I chose to transcribe the entire interviews but leave out informal and broken speech such as "uhs" and "ums" and influent strings of speech, like repetitions when interviewee was looking for the right word or the next sentence. I translated the one interview conducted in Finnish into English directly after transcribing the interview. I also see the translation process as a process of analysis. I will further analyse these processes of the possibly broken translations in the critical reflections later in this chapter.

3.3.2 Process Coding and Classifying

To analyze my interview transcriptions, I coded the data to summarize the topics covered by the interviewees. Coding is a heuristic to the meanings of individual

sections of data. A code in qualitative data analysis is most often a word or a short phrase that summarises attribute for a portion of language-based data. These codes work as a way of patterning and classifying each datum into emergent categories for further analysis (Saldana, 2011, p. 95).

First, I used process coding on the interviews to reveal the main topics. Process coding is a method to capture action in the data by using gerunds - "-ing" words. A code is applied each time the subtopic changes in interviewee's speak (Charmaz, 2001) and suggests a new action. Process coding is a subjective method of analysis: a different researcher could use different gerunds for the same portion of data. Process coding is used to form memos which are easier to analyze than the original transcriptions.

After process coding, I classified the codes into clusters of similar gerunds; gerunds that suggest similar kinds of actions. Most of these categories matched one or several of the six brand identity elements according to Kapferer's prism of brand identity (Figure 1, p. 16). The codes that were not suitable for any of the elements, I put under the classification of "Non-classifiable under brand identity elements". This included roughly ten percent of the process codes. The fourth, analysis chapter is based on the analytic memos generated from my narrative interpretation of the data, based on these classifications under the elements of brand identity.

3.4 Critical reflections on the research process

Most of the critical reflections that I had on the research process are related to cultural differences. Many of my interviewees are Japanese, and cultural differences certainly had some role in the research process. Same could be partly true for Estonian and Swedish interviewees, but since Finland, Sweden and Estonia share many parts of the general culture, I didn't feel it played a major role.

The fact that Japanese relationship building and trust are so close to each other, I think I got most out of the Japanese interviewees that I had the most personal relationship with. From all the Japanese interviewees, they were the most eager to share what felt like their true opinions.

Hierarchy is more important in Japanese than Finnish culture, so the hierarchy of the people present could have had an impact on the opinions carried out, as it's important to remain in harmony in Japanese culture. This could mean people try to bring out opinions they think will have most resonance from the people present, rather than speaking out their own opinions.

Many times Finnish and Japanese cultures are described as relatively similar, both peoples being modest and viewing remaining silent in some social situations as polite and respectful. Still there are many differences, and Japanese politeness seems to me way more subtle than Finnish politeness. Finnish culture of spoken language is very straight-forward. You ask what you want to know, and when you answer, you do it to your best knowledge and do not think too much of how it may sound- truth is polite in Finnish culture, and people from other cultures could indeed think it's rude.

Japanese conversational culture carries many subtle features that might be hard to translate or understand by a foreigner. Between friends, a more straightforward communication can be used, but between strangers, a more polite way is adopted. For example, saying "I disagree" or "I don't know" can be impolite in Japanese communication, so sometimes word-to-word translation of a sentence containing either of those meanings can be very confusing and hard to interpret for an outsider of the culture, if the interpreter doesn't also translate the meaning. Also my questions and way of speaking could have sounded too harsh and straight if the interpreter didn't adapt them to Japanese culture at all, or the interview was made in English. Usually Japanese people do understand that foreigners do not know all the correct ways to behave in Japan, and thus forgive us the mistakes.

I speak Japanese on a very amateur level. However, as well as Japanese language, I have studied the culture for years and have many Japanese friends who are always willing to explain the details to me. My general feeling during this research was that we had a good understanding and trust between me and the interviewees. Therefore, I believe that my conclusions on the answers are close enough to the original meanings and ideas the interviewees wanted to express.

The interview language chosen was English, as I do not speak Japanese nearly well

enough to be able to conduct an interview in Japanese. I was lucky to have a professional interpreter in about a half of the interviews conducted in Japan. Some interviews were interpreted by a person who is not a professional interpreter and as such, I can not exactly know how close the interpretations were to the original statement. Also some of the interviewees that I spoke with directly without an interpreter did not master the English language to full extent and could maybe not explain all the things they could have expressed in their mother's tongue. On some rare occasions, I understood where the interpretation was aiming at but the English translation word-to-word didn't have the same meaning, as some ill-suited words were used in the translation. On these occasions, I decided to use my own understanding, rather than the word-to-word translation, and replaced the few ill-suited words with a more accurate translation in the transcription phase. I interviewed in the Finnish band E in Finnish, and it was the only interview where everyone used their native tongue. The translation I have made could carry out slightly different nuances than the original answers in Finnish would. Being a Finn speaking fluent English, I think I did a good enough job to bring the intended meanings to the English translation.

My interviews were meant to be one-on-one interviews but in some cases they turned into more of a conversation than I had in mind, maybe more like a group interview. In these cases, there were more people present than just me and the interviewee, usually the music professional who had introduced me to the interviewee, and possibly an interpreter who had an isight on the subject. The interviewees asked for opinions from both me and the other people present, either to back up their opinion, or to ask for their experience on the same subject. I wouldn't say this had a negative impact at all, quite the contrary. I think it made the situation more natural and probably also made expressing true opinions easier. It did make the interview structures maybe more complicated than they would have been in more purely one-on-one interviews. I transcribed in these cases also what the non-interviewee had to say, though I did not end up using those quotes in the analysis chapter.

Sometimes the fact that I am Finnish seemed to make interviewees think more about Finland than Nordic countries in general as I originally intended. Also the fact that

I am a musician touring in Japan, which most of the interviewees knew, might have guided them using my band as an example, or made them think of some questions through that fact.

The individuals I interviewed are quite a small group that works closely together or co-operate; there are few agencies representing Nordic area's folk music. This could make the opinions brought forward quite homogenous. Then again, as mentioned, this is a very marginal genre, so getting a wider range of interviewees might be very hard or not even possible at all. On the other hand, interviewing most of the key figures in the field of Nordic folk music in Japan is possible. The selected genre is undeniably very marginal, and for this research, it's in my opinion maybe more a positive than a negative feature. Narrowing the study down to cover a reasonable number of interviewees for s use of a thesis wasn't very limiting.

I chose the bands for this research on the basis of with whom I had worked together before or knew quite well, and thus felt I could have a trusting relationship already. Of course this could be seen as a negative thing too, as a researcher should not be too involved in the research.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the analysis of data, I have used process coding to identify the subtopics interviewees talked about. Through those codes, I was able to detect topics that repeatedly came up in most or all of the interviews, which I further categorized under the elements of brand identity: physique, personality, culture, relationship, customer reflection, and self-image. On top of the six elements, I will introduce some wider thoughts about external brand identity, as many of the interviewees had subtopics covering that side of the brand identity as well.

4.1 Elements of Brand Identity Composition

In this section, I will introduce each element of brand identity through quotes from the interviews. I will focus on the meaning of each element as expressed by my interviewees, and highlight the important aspects of each element for this specific field of world music. Findings will be introduced in the same order as Kapferer introduces the elements of his prism model, not in the order of significance. The conclusions will be further discussed in the fifth chapter.

It is notable that there are overlappings in the elements, as some of the quotes could represent several of them. In these cases, I've chosen the most correspondent element though the actual analysis could contain features from another element, too.

4.1.1 Physique

Physique, or in the previous editions of Kapferer's book (2004, p. 107), physical appearance, can be an ill-fitting term for music. At least it has a different emphasis in the music business, as the emphasis in Kapferer's theory seems to be that the visual side is most important for the product's physique. I argue that "what it sounds like", which is not very essential for many other types of brands, is in the core of the product in the music brand, and thus generally in the core of the brand physique in the field of music.

Still, on the basis of the interviews, "what it looks like '' has an important role too. It is especially important in live music where the musicians are on the stage with people sitting in the audience, watching as well as listening to them. For all the interviewed bands, the word "brand" seemed to bring to mind mainly the visual side of their product. None of the musicians mentioned their music as the first thing when asked about their brand, though they otherwise emphasized music as the priority - or as the most important value all their other doings are based on. It is my general feeling that the musicians take their music for granted as a self-evident essence of their career, or even of their life, and they don't really think it as a part of their brand or product - though looking from the outside of the scene, it might look like an obvious essence of a musician's brand.

All my interviewees said that visual appearance is, or seems to be, an important thing on the Japanese market for world music, and in Japan in general. For the brands of bands D and E, the visual appearance seems to be less in the core of their brand vision, though they have some kind of a passion or interest towards the way the band looks. Band F, in turn, takes the visual side seriously and has started to develop their brand identity already from the beginning with visuality in mind. Based on the interview, the visual side is more in the core of the brand culture of band F than it is for the bands D and E. Also, the band F was less willing to make any concessions of their visual physiques.

Band E's musicians reflect on the visuality that has been a part of their brand identity building from the beginning. They say the band has had a clear visual appearance from the start, such as specific performing outfits and manners on stage, but they state they didn't develop the band's physical appearance on purpose. They had thought about what would feel true to their identity:

> Musician D.: We have a brand but we haven't planned it.
>
> Musician C: Yes, we have it, but we have never planned how we are going to develop it, only what feels like our thing.

Band F has had a similar, yet different approach. They have deliberately focused on

their brand identity development and physical appearance before releasing any music. Musician E reflects on the decision of releasing an EP (a recording containing more tracks than a single, but which doesn't qualify as an album) with a logo made for the band already at that stage, as a result from working with a graphic designer. The Band wanted to reveal to the audience the first taste of their music and their visual identity at the same time. In his opinion, clear positioning with visual identity from the early days is a wise choice:

> Our designer made the logo that relates [with the music], and we started to use it from the beginning, that's probably the key of our marketing. If you have already been on the music field, and advertised yourself with different fonts and different logos and stuff, or no logos, we had this logo out since the first day, with the first album. It made that road a little bit easier, I think so - if I look back into the history.

All the interviewed bands talked about the effect their agencies had on their brand physique, to a lesser or greater extent. The agencies had requested particularly styled promotional photos, encouraged participation in Japanese documentaries, radio shows or television advertisements, and asked for certain types of outfits to be worn in the concerts and for promotional photo material. The bands were also requested to perform special songs or speak about certain things in the announcements between the songs. Many of the musicians said they wanted to fulfill the requests, even if that would not be what they might do in another setting, or it felt a little off from their usual concert behaviour or visual image. They said they trusted in the vision of their agency as the specialist of Japanese audience, and that they think those adaptations could help them be successful on the Japanese market. Musician A tells about the requests from their agencies:

> Yeah, they asked to take winter pictures, so on, they also had many opinions about the clothes all the time in the pictures. They wanted us to be dressed matchingly, quite the alike. We always used to have different clothes, each style different, but they really insisted "could you please have this kind of skirts and this kind of shirts" and… very specific ideas about the clothes. Also the concerts. .. Yes, [they requested for] some special songs, and what we should say about the songs, also. .. We also

> sang in Japanese, I think that was also something. And also an ABBA song. That was another suggestion.

Band E has also fulfilled many special requests for their tours in Japan. They have for example taken promotional photos in Japan, arranged and played Japanese songs with and without Japanese musicians, and played improvised music for a radio play. They say they did this all willingly, as they think concessions are a part of the job of a musician. It's nothing that "sacrifices the music of band E", as musician C puts it, so they have nothing against concessions for Japanese or any other market, as long as it's reasonable and compensated for. For band E, the music seems to be at the core of their brand. They still had played special songs when their agency requested it, and said they feel that through arranging they can also make other's music their own.

Musicians of band E say that Japanese have a very special taste on the tour flyers and posters. They have never tried to make promotional photos or any other material themselves for Japan in mind, because they think they wouldn't know what exactly it is that the audience in Japan likes. They let their agency decide what kind of visuality works in their promotion in Japan.

> Musician D: About this visual material, they have a completely own idea about what's a cool poster, don't they? They make unbelievable combinations. Nobody in here would invent what to put there.

> Musician C: They always mess with our photos and make them their own, we've never tried to make anything especially for Japan.

Band F has taken a different path when it comes to requests on modifying their physiques. They have toured widely and gotten requests from many countries, and decided that their principle is to stay loyal to their chosen path: they independently decide what the product is like and what features to add. Musician E says it's a matter of not having to please everybody, that the same band just might not be suitable for all markets:

> There have been different requests also from other countries, "can you do like this or can you do like that". And then we made a decision that we design our image

> for the band, and it's nothing you need to rebrand or adapt to some other market. I think it's just a question of whether you are suitable for the market or not. If you take it seriously, it's ok, I don't have to play in every country, and I don't have to be the right band for that country, it's ok.

4.1.2 Brand Personality

Brand's character is gradually built up through communication. It is a way a brand talks and indicates a particular, human personality. (Kapferer, 2004, p. 108). Especially bands D and F talk about their brand personality and adjectives attached to them, by themselves or by the Japanese agency, through examples from their career. Band F has the principle of an untouched brand and has developed their brand personality consciously themselves, band D is ready to be flexible also in the terms of their brand personality.

Band F's brand personality has been built hand in hand with their music - but also through deliberate contradiction with the clichés attached to the genre of traditional music. They want to expand their audience by a rebellious personality and appeal to listeners who haven't previously taken the folk music scene as their own. Musician E describes the ideas that they had about using disco balls in promotion and in the gigs:

> We don't need to please anybody actually, just some people need to have another connection to notice our kind of music, that's why we had the disco balls. To mess up the picture, in a way, so people can start to think: "is it a folk band or is it funky, or disco band? Let's see and have a listen".

In some cases, interviewed musicians have felt that their Japanese agency aims to modify or establish their brand personality. In Japan, band D have let the agency have a say on their brand identity. They think their Japanese agency has an idea about their brand personality and they would like to develop it further to a certain direction, which is not necessarily the same idea the band has about their personality. Band D has gotten an impression that their agency aims for a "mysterious" personality for their band. Their agency has requested special things from them to achieve that, such

as a special opening for a concert, certain outfits, and to not to speak too much in between the songs. Musician A tells about the brand personality their agency would like to achieve for their band in Japan:

> I think they wanted us to be a bit mysterious, like from a fairytale. And also they asked you [to musician B] to do the kulning [Swedish erie style of traditional cattle calling], many tours it has been kulning in the beginning of the concert.

Band D's musicians have seen touring in Japan as a long-term dream, and now that it's possible through an agency, they are ready to make concessions in their brand personality for the Japanese market. They generally think it's something that would not work on their home market, but trust their Japanese agency's vision of what works for the audience in Japan. Musician B reflects:

> Like manager A, he would like us to have a stronger image, maybe that's what he is trying to do, this mysterious thing. Maybe he'd like us to develop it more I think, maybe it would work, sell in Japan. Maybe in Japan, but not in Sweden.

The Japanese agencies interviewed seemed to think that brand personality is especially important. Managers A and C emphasized that they want to have many different personalities in their rosters in order to appeal to different audiences. Manager C tells that she has very different types of brand personalities in her roster of bands, and what she looks for from new additions, is that they fill in a place that is not yet occupied by one of her established bands. She describes her views, giving an example from the process of getting Band E on a tour in Japan:

> I think it's a good idea as a promoter or a presenter to have many different things, you know. If you have a Väsen, you don't need two väsens in your line-ups. If you have an Irish singer Mary Black, she's the best, you don't really need another one. At that point, I really wanted to have something different, I think. Anyway band E's album was really smashing good! Especially the first album was really good, and the great photograph of course.

4.1.3 Brand Culture

Kapferer (2004, p. 108) argues that products originate from the brands' own culture. In Kapferer's definition, culture in this context means "the set of values feeding the brand's inspiration" (2004, p. 108). He states that "the product of not only a concrete representation of this culture, but also a means of communication". Harris and de Chernatony (2001, p. 444) suggest that managers need to agree on the few core values that will remain unchanged, and less central values that can be adapted to changing situations, to build a clear brand identity. All the bands interviewed said that they have values they want to communicate to the audience, such as: which companies it is ethical to cooperate with; what concessions can be made without sacrificing the core value, the quality of music; or that they want to renew the clichés attached to their beloved genre of music.

Band F has built their brand culture through several visual cues that have an essential role for their products; visual products such as music videos and merchandise, and the core product of concert experience. Musician E sees that the visuality is in the core of their brand culture, and the consistent visual image helps the consumers to connect with the music. With their brand they wish to communicate that their music is not anything people usually associate traditional music with; pretty-pretty, for seniors, and uninteresting. One of the first things they wanted to be associated with the band was disco balls, which carried out the statement of being something else than the cliché of traditional music. Musician E reflects on the effect:

> That's what happened and after that, disco balls were pretty popular, and we brought them to make a pretty strong statement. And whenever people came to our concerts, there were disco balls.

Musician C from Band E, who sees branding the arts as a current trend, shares his opinion about brand culture in the field of folk music. In his opinion, brand identity should be built on with the music as the center or brand culture, not as the visuals as the most important thing. For the band E, music is in the core of their brand, and they think it is the thing they won't sacrifice though they can make concessions. His ideas find resonance from Kapferer (2003, p. 97), who argues that the graphic identity

should not be the base of the brand identity, as it "puts the cart before the horse":

> In this branding thing, we've [in the field of folk music] climbed the tree with our ass first [a Finnish idiom]. People think that branding makes us happy, we've completely forgotten about the contents. People are just thinking about how to dress and how to make nice posters, without thinking about the contents. In my opinion we should begin the branding from the inside so that it has a connection with the music.

Band D's musicians A and B say they haven't intentionally talked about their brand identity. In their opinion, it has developed on its own during the years of cooperation. When they talk about the brand culture they have, they think about the values they share. Kapferer argues (2004, p. 96) that the brand identity is clearly defined once certain questions (Table 1) have been answered, and it helps to define for example which companies a brand can cooperate with and still remain true to itself. This is a common scenario in the music scene; bands are requested to perform at an event organized by a company. Musicians of band D think especially about the values they want to bring out as a brand when they get a request, and will refuse if the company's image is in conflict with their core values:

> Musician A: We haven't talked about it so much, "we should do this because it's strategy". But, of course, sometimes when we are asked to do something that we don't feel is good for us, maybe it's a way of protecting the brand when you say no to different kinds of companies that want you to perform, and we don't agree.

Musician B: Generally I think we don't talk so explicitly about the music. Many things are unspoken but we know what we want.

Based on the interview, one can conclude that honesty, being true to oneself, seems like a core value for band D's brand culture. Musicians of band D revealed that their agencies have had a lot of requests, and they have agreed to make concessions and add things to their brand culture to meet the needs to connect with the audience. For them, these requests were not in conflict with their values. They have a strong will to play in Japan and they agreed they could fulfill these requests from the agencies. Musician A concludes: "So they had a lot of opinions all the time. But we always felt

maybe we could do a little more than what we usually do in Sweden because we also really want to go to Japan."

Band D has done some special projects as part of their promotion in Japan, for example participated in a documentary film made by a Japanese tv channel. During the filming, they noticed that they and the film group had diverging ideas about a documentary. They had thought they would tell in their own words about their life in Sweden but found out that the film crew had already made a script for what they would like the band members to do and say. The band followed the script on some things which didn't conflict with their values too much but refused a part that was fictional and didn't match their reality:

> We didn't know that they had a fixed story in the beginning that they wanted us to perform, we thought it was about our lives, and like, "we are doing this and this", but they had something they wanted us to tell. And maybe, we did some things that we wouldn't have done in Sweden but also we said no to some things. They wanted [one of the band's musicians, not present] to talk about her grandmother and tell that she wanted to go look for secrets at her grandmother's place. Her grandmother is not alive, so she didn't want to lie about it.

Kapferer (2004, p. 109) states that countries of origin are great cultural reservoirs for brands. This is supported by all my interviewees, and all the agencies use country of origin when marketing their bands. All agencies seemed to view that being from a Nordic country is a good mediator for their bands' brand cultures.

Manager B shares the Japanese interviewees' general view about a small segment for international folk music on Japanese music market. He thinks Nordic music has special potential because of the good country image in the minds of the Japanese audience. He tells about many bands that have been in contact with Agency B and how they can't take all the very interesting ones in their roster because of the limited demand. He states that the demand towards Nordic bands is still greater than one could think from the size of the countries themselves because of the good country image. In his opinion, Japanese audience connects the good country image of Nordic countries to the brands of Nordic musicians:

> But if the venues are not interested in them, it can't happen. So, every year I have many bands I'm interested in working with, but maybe only 10 to 20% we can make a tour happen. I know a thousand good bands but, in a year, we can only make five to six tours. … Japanese people admire Nordic culture, and Nordic music represents Nordic culture. So that is why some venues are more interested in Nordic music. Not only music, but ordinary people are interested in Nordic culture so they might come to the Nordic music concert. So it looks like the market is a bit bigger for Nordic music.

4.1.4 Relationship

Relationships are emphasized by the way of behaviour which is most identified with the brand. Many types of communication, for example advertising, and direct consumer communication while purchasing the good, define this send-receiver relationship. (Kapferer, 2004, p. 110)

There are two types of relationships that could be thought of as sender-receiver relationships based on the interviews. There is the obvious relationship between the bands and the audience, the consumers, where the agency has a very important role linking the two, which sometimes might be more invisible for the consumers. There is also the relationship between the bands and the agencies, which many of my interviewees saw as an essential first step towards the Japanese market. Personal relationships in Japan are generally considered very important and it takes time to build those.

4.1.4.1 Relationship between band and agency

Two of the three interviewed bands, bands D and F, had been working for years to get to play in Japan. They had a certain agency in mind they thought would be a good match for their music, and spent a long time building the relationship through emails, social media and/or meeting face to face. For both bands, the emphasis was in developing a personal relationship with the agency over time. Musician A describes their process of getting the first tour in Japan:

> It was [one of the band members, not present], who knew some bands who had Agency A as a booking agency. So I think some people from that band told him about us, and she emailed him I think, she emailed a lot, many years I think. And then finally, he said, “ok”.

The importance of social media, which is also a way to establish a direct relationship with audiences, and presence on networking events where relationships with agencies are initiated and fostered, was emphasized by the interviewees in both band F’s and band E’s journey to Japanese market. Musician E had been working to get a tour for his band F since his other band had their first tour in Japan. He reflects on the first contact he had with Agency A, which was through social media, and how the relationship with Agency A developed since then:

> Musician E: We had a Facebook chat [about another musician F’s band’s Japan tour] with manager A. And first I didn’t take seriously, because it was Facebook and all, but then I chose to take a look [of the agency’s online presence] and I found many familiar names, you [band G] included and Swedish bands, who were already related to agency A. … And then we had a short meeting in South Korea showcase about [the other band’s] upcoming tour, and then, the tour was already booked and we exchanged some emails, maybe timeline was, a year in advance. … Basically, that’s how it went. I’d say it’s very unusual that somebody is writing on Facebook [chats] about tours, one awaits for emails and that the artist is discovered, but not that it comes through Facebook somehow!

Band E was in the beginning of their career when they got a chance to tour in Japan, and they state they didn’t yet even had time to dream about it. They say they got booked because Agency C got interested in their music first on the basis of their album cover, which she had received on the networking event for promoting Finnish musicians in Japan. Their Finnish agent was representing band E there, and as mentioned, networking events are tools to establish international relationships. Manager C explains her ideas about how she selects new bands to her roster, but thinks it is hard to describe. She says she has to have a gut-feeling about the band, and a feeling of getting along with the people. She reflects on the coincidence in a networking event

that lead her to invite band E for their first tour in Japan:

> That's difficult [to describe what things affect the choosing process], it's like falling in love, you know. So you never know, like for band E. That was in a music expo thing, you know the one Music Finland did, has been doing for years. Then their manager, I met her there, on her table, and she actually recommended some other band, I can't remember which. She recommended this one, but on the table there was a very funny cover, band E's first album. I said, "that is a really good cover", and she gave me the cd, of course. And then I listened to it and I thought it was great!

Unlike the other interviewed bands, band E didn't have a clear ambition to play in Japan from the beginning of their career, but after the first tour, they wanted to work towards a continued relationship with their Japanese agency, to be able to play in Japan again. Along the way, they have noticed the great importance of personal relationships in Japan. They have had a request from an organization wanting to bring to Japan a special program they had played in Europe, consisting of music of a romantic era's classical composer they had arranged for the band. Their Japanese manager turned the idea down, so they ended up not doing it to please their agency. Musician D explains his thoughts about their professional relationship in Japan:

> That loyalty works, on both ends. If you have a thing going on with someone, you can't go shopping for a possibly better promotor. Then you'll burn the bridges. You have to be sensitive in that way, whether it works or not.

Musician E from band F has noticed a loyalty between the agencies and artists. He also sees that these relationships are based on trust, not written agreements. He says there seems to be an agreement between the agencies. Once an artist is working with an agency, they will not try to get that artist to their roster:

> I don't know how it goes usually, you make an agreement through your agency or something, but this was a little bit different. I mean they have a strict system, if you bring some artists to Japan, the others can't ask the same artists.

Musician E ponders how a band that does not have an agency in Japan could get in contact with one. He thinks consulting your fellow musicians either indirectly, by

researching their relationships to Japan online, or directly by asking the musicians for tips. He acknowledges that as Japan is such an agency-driven market for world music, the musicians themselves could be unaware of the structures behind it and therefore talking to the agency might be the best solution. He thinks that as politeness is in the core of the Japanese culture, the agencies could take their time, really listen to the music and tell if it could suit the Japanese market or not.

4.1.4.2 Relationship between the bands and the audience

The Japanese interviewees mostly focused on the relationship between the Japanese audience and the Nordic folk music bands; what the general relationship between the genre and its audience is like. They seemed to be focused on building an audience for all their bands simultaneously, not so much for each band separately. Each informant said that audience development, achieving a bigger market segment, is crucial and an important part of their job as the Nordic world music scene is still young in Japan. They viewed it both as a challenge and as an advantage that Nordic music has a vague image in the minds of the audience.

Manager A thinks it's good for his musicians that he can build audiences' relationship to Nordic music through their art. He thinks his bands also enhance the audiences' relationship to the band's country of origin. That makes him quite "choosy" when adding new artists to his roster, because he is very conscious about the image he wants to create of each country with his bands' music:

> I choose the musicians for Nordic world music carefully. We are not familiar with that area so the audience's image of Nordic music forms from the musicians I choose. For example when they hear a Band G's song they think that is what Finnish music is like, it's the first impression. That's why I'm quite choosy.

Japanese interviewees agreed that in Japan, where the working hours are long and there are many things to do in the big cities during the limited leisure time, spending time in a concert competes with all the other forms of entertainment. To get people to spend their time going to concerts, the product and the communication about it has to be very inviting in order to strengthen the relationship with the audience, manager

A thinks. He tells about the impression he wants his artists to make in the concerts:

> So for our lifestyles, going to a live concert, it's not daily life. We'd like to see [in a concert] a different world, a fantasy world, a dream!

Especially managers B and C talked about a change in the audience relationship in recent years. From their point of view, it looks like the audience is not as interested in experiencing something completely new but more interested in experiencing something they know already. Manager C reflects on the change: "But these days people like to meet somebody they know already, people don't like to be challenged, they like to be safe, because, probably the world is not very safe these days." Manager B has similar thoughts about the issue, he thinks the audience is more than before looking for familiar things in their relationship with live music:

> Japanese used to be interested in bands they didn't know, but recently the audience is looking for things they already know. … It is because the media has changed, it's not only in one place, it's everywhere. And then they can connect to many places, they can go and find many things. … Audience just wants to see what they already know, they are tired of looking for something because there is so much, that's just my feeling. They are losing interest in new things. Especially the music media has changed during these ten years.

Also the musicians saw the role of their audience as influential to their brand identity in Japan. Musician D tells about coincidences that have influenced their brand identity in Japan. A famous Japanese manga (Japanese cartoon) artist got excited about their band, and made an illustration that ended up on a t-shirt sold as merchandise during their Japan tour. Another fan sculpted a miniature statue of the band, and that got a lot of attention in social media:

> But there's no denying that when it comes to Japan, Bear E has had a big importance at some point. And of course these completely random meetings, a cartoon artist [in Japan] and someone made miniature statues of us. Many things happened but all by chance.

Though musicians C and D see that their Japanese brand identity through the relationship with the audience is built on coincidences, they think their manager C has had a big role in making that possible. She took special interest in their mascot teddy bear that really wasn't a deliberate mascot from the beginning. The teddy bear belongs to one of the band members and he takes it with him to all the gigs. Musicians C and D say that on their other markets, the mascot bear has not had a big role. Manager C started to post on social media about the band using photos of the bear E, and it became so popular among the Japanese fans that at some point, it even had its own website. Musician D says that the bear helped to draw crowd to their concerts:

> Well, manager C started to take photos of her, post them on Twitter, everywhere photos of bear E, that "she's here now". Manager C was very active from the beginning, posted from the subway that here we are, on the way to the venue, and that made me think "wait a moment, does this have an effect if the gig is in two hours".

4.1.5 Consumer Reflection

According to Kapfrer (2004, p. 110), brand communication should aim to reflect an ideal consumer, which is called consumer reflection. On the basis of the interview data, Japanese interviewees had more influence on the consumer reflection than the bands, which seems natural. The agencies have similar ideas about the ideal crowd that comes to their artists' concerts, and describe them as "music lovers"; a specialized group of people who have knowledge about the genre they listen to. All see their typical consumer as a specialized Nordic music lover, and that the image is maybe more exclusive than inclusive. All agencies have ambitions to appeal to more wider types of audiences as well, and different agencies have a bit different ideas of who that ideally would be and how to reach them.

Manager C has started her career with Irish musicians, and still has many Irish bands in her roster. She tells that the audiences for Irish and Nordic music are still quite divided, but she'd like to combine the audiences, build customer reflection towards both ways:

> So my target is to try and mix it. My audience has a lot of players I think but Irish music is always Irish music - and Nordic music… It's quite divided. Sometimes I'd like to do a big concert with a Nordic band and a Celtic band because it's quite divided, it's not the same people.

The aim for Agency B is to target an audience that consists of a general public, rather than people especially interested in world music, by making their communication appealing to ordinary people. In their Nordic bands' advertisement, they've for example used imagery of iconic Nordic attractions most Japanese people recognize. Manager B thinks that a good country image draws bigger audiences especially to Nordic artists' concerts, and builds a Nordic world music consumer reflection in Japan:

> Japanese people admire Nordic culture, so Nordic music represents Nordic culture. So that is why some venues are more interested in Nordic music. Not only music, but ordinary people are interested in Nordic culture so they might come to the Nordic music concert. So it looks like the market is a bit bigger for Nordic music. So we always think about what ordinary people are interested in.

Manager A's strategy when selecting artists to his roster is to pick musicians who would be especially appealing to a certain pool of Japanese music lovers, who are not necessary yet familiar with the genre of world music. He sees relationships with different audiences as important, and thinks about these different possible audiences when communicating about his bands through advertising. The core of his strategy is to reach out to audiences that already listen to some other marginal genre of music, and could become consumers of world music. For example, he has an a capella quartet that he thinks appeals to choir music lovers. This way manager A aims to cover a bigger segment and get new audiences interested in world music, positioning his bands in a wider perspective: "It is a way of my marketing, so that is why I don't concentrate on one genre, I try to cover the whole market."

Japanese music professionals agreed with Kapferer's (2004, p. 109) idea about the countries of origin being a great cultural reservoir for the brands. Manager A thinks that it is a positive thing that the audiences don't have a clear image of Nordic folk music, whereas Irish folk music's image could be constraining: "Compared to Irish

music, we don't have any images of Nordic world music so that's why it's easier for marketing."

4.1.6 Consumer self-image

Consumer self-image consists of the features that consumers identify themselves with and the features they would like their chosen good and its brand to reflect (Kapferer, 2004, p. 110). Harris and de Chernatony express the same element as brand's symbolic meaning, which helps consumers understand and express aspects of themselves to others (2001, p. 445).

Though manager C uses the country of origin while positioning her bands, she hesitates to think that positive country image, or other brands associated in Nordic countries, would bring more audience to her musician's concerts. She thinks listening to her bands reflects in the audience members' self-images, and the band's country of origin is a feature that they want to be reflected in their self-image:

> I'm still struggling with that point. I noticed that, especially women, in Nordic music bands concerts, they carry Marimekko, so I recognize that. But I think quite the opposite. I don't know to be honest. They just want to have something kawaii [Japanese for "cute"], they don't really go to Nordic music from there. I can tell that the opposite is possible. My Swedish band's fans, they like Swedish design and food.

When talking about world music, many of my interviewees mentioned Irish music, which has internationally a vast audience, also in Japan. One of the informants, album distributor H. A, thinks that Irish music is popular because of the consumer's reflection and especially self-image. In his opinion, many of the people interested in Irish music somehow participate in the scene and have an active role, they see themselves as more than just a listener. He also gives a tip what Nordic music could do to be more popular in Japan:

> I think it's the participation. People can dance Irish dances and play Irish music as their hobby. They have a more active role than just a listener has. Maybe also Nordic

> music should spread out, have workshops, not only playing workshops but also for example cooking. Japanese people love food!

Band E has noticed that the audience is in a way participating in their concerts, and the audience identifies themselves with their band particularly in two things; harmonicas and more surprisingly, teddy bears. There seems to be some amount of harmonica players and orchestras in the audience in all the countries they play in, and it's not uncommon for an audience member to come to chat after the concert and draw a harmonica from their pocket. Unique to their Japanese audience is identifying with the teddy bear mascot. It seemingly also has an impact on their consumer reflection - which is not generally a young woman in for example Europe. Musician D tells how the self-image is visible in the concerts: "On manager C's latest tour there were pretty young women on the first row with their own teddy bears with them, wanting to take selfies with bear E."

Band D has experienced that their audience is very invested in their music and the genre. In their example, it is not a visual self-image like in band E's example, but a musical identity. Musician B tells about fans of Swedish folk music in Japan that know generally more than the Swedish people about the traditional musical culture, and about fans that have formed an acapella quartet and learned to sing their songs:

> Once we saw a band with the nyckelharpa [Swedish traditional instrument]. They had learned something Västerbotten, this area, it's weird to see a band in Japan, they played Swedish folk music. I mean, songs from this area, people don't know them in Sweden. So yes, people have special interests. It's such a big country. … There are four girls in Japan that have learned to sing our songs, Japanese band D. We had a workshop with them last time. I think they are teenagers. Now they also sing the Japanese songs we sang in our arrangements!

The media has changed during the past decades, and all of my Japanese interviewees who mentioned media, state that it has affected the world music genre in Japan. It's not only a negative impact, they say, because social media has advantages as a direct communication channel from agencies or artists to the audiences - and vice versa. The audience participates in promotion by sharing articles, news and videos

about their favourite bands on social media. Manager C tells about the loss of power of traditional media, and how its impact has changed from drawing the audience to concerts, to being meaningful to existing audiences, because of how it helps to build their self-image:

> They are not powerful like they used be. Still if I take a photograph of the article [in traditional print media] and I put in my web diary [blog] "my band is in this magazine, my band is in this newspaper", then people reading my web diary appreciate that. They get something that they really like, they get kind of a social status. That is how the media works. It doesn't really draw new people but I can use it to stimulate my people, my list of audiences. I think that's how it works these days.

4.1.7 External Brand Identity

Many of my interviewees had a vision of a wider totality , a building process of a whole external brand identity - or more passively, of a forming process, as some of the interviewees considered that they had not consciously worked on the building of their brand. Band F shares an example of conscious external brand identity building: after associating their brand with disco balls, band F started to feel they wanted to add something new to their physical appearance. They thought about what would represent their music well, and came to the conclusion it would be nature. They got an idea from their audience members to wear animal masks a good example of a contemporary brand-consumer relationship working both ways. Wearing an animal mask became a reflection of being a member of band F's audience. Musician E reflects:

> So that was one thing we had at first, and when we started to think what's there in our music, that's when we reached this nature-side of our music. Which were animals, and then we started to create this, I guess we discovered this graphic style how to make animals. Two of our big fans, they had discovered these masks, and they came in to our concert with masks of wolves. And we were like oh my god, what are these. And then we asked them where did they get them, it ended up we were trying to buy those masks for ourselves and the snowball started to roll, we used them on

> the stage, and in our visual things, and it became our thing. And there's also one of the biggest film festival in Estonia, which is very big here. They also have a logo of wolves, and they asked us to take these masks to their shows. And people started to see Band F everywhere because of this, to see connections.

Manager A has an emphasis to build strong external brand identities for his artists through promotional material he creates especially for the Japanese market and with the Japanese audience in mind. He explains his views on the cultural difference which leads into - for Western viewers, peculiar looking - Japanese advertisement flyers of bands, with many pictures, colors and texts. In his opinion, for Japanese audience, visuals have a very important meaning, which builds a relationship with consumers and helps to build a customer reflection:

> In Japanese restaurants there are usually photos in the menu. I think Japanese people like to see a photo of what they get, it's the same technique. That's why it's very important in Japanese culture to make a certain image.
>
> ...
>
> I think it has a very historical meaning in Japan, because, you know, kabuki? It has many special make ups [the same iconic characters in all the plays that you recognize from their make-up]. Japanese have a lot of respect for the stage players. They are a dream, it's the whole other people, not ordinary, it's very important to make a public image.

All of the interviewed managers of agencies mentioned the importance of visuality for Japanese audience, and the meaning of photos in communication towards audiences. Manager B tells about the meaning of promotional material in Japan:

> Japanese people are interested in the complete image. So sometimes the band sends the photo, without instruments, in a concrete building. Not like that! So sometimes we arrange a photo. ... Western style posters with only name and a photo do not work. Japanese people want more information, there's also a Danish flag in this poster [Danish band's tour poster].

For Agency B, connecting the recognized brands from Nordic countries to their artists is a deliberate way of marketing their Nordic bands. They want to attract a more general audience, on top of the small crowd of Nordic music lovers, and have been thinking how to build that kind of an external brand identity for their artists. Manager B gives an example of the recent tour flyer of a Danish band. He thinks that the promotional photos used in the Western marketing for many folk music bands do not work in Japan. In this case, the band had been posing in an empty concrete building. Because in their opinion, Japanese people need something more visual connecting the band to the country image, they substituted the background with a photo of a Danish castle. They also added illustrations from H. C. Andersen's fairy tales on the flyer, aiming at building a relationship based on visual cues with an audience that doesn't yet know Danish music but knows something else about Danish culture - the Andersen fairy tales. They hoped that it would make the general audience interested in hearing what the Danish band's music is like:

> Actually, their photo was not like this, they were just three people standing in a boring place. But we put a Danish castle in the background, and these are Andersin pictures. Nobody [in Japan] is interested in Danish music at all, nobody knows, but everybody knows Andersin, so we have to connect something everyone knows.

It would have been nice to also include here a paragraph of internal brand identity, but there is a lack of suitable interview quotes that would reflect that side of brand identity. It could be due to my interview questions, but in my opinion, this reflects maybe a more generalized idea on the music scene that the brand is something external. Also my literature somewhat confirmed this, as Harrison (2014, p. 225) only talks about the merchandise and by-products as a way to brand a musician, though in my opinion, there could be so many more ways. Of course external brand identity is an important part of a brand, but maybe the meaning of internal brand identity in arts should be more studied and taught to help the musicians see its value in branding, and how to include the internal values in their brand identity more consciously.

4.2 Country image and brand identity

To my surprise, it seemed like the term “Nordic” had a very vague brand image for most of the interviewees. My initial unconscious assumption had been that it is quite obvious what Nordic means. Several informants stated that when they think of it, they do think it means Finland, Sweden and Norway, some also mentioned Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. For them, and Japanese people in general, they stated, the name of each country separately has more meaning than the term Nordic countries. Consequently, the term “Nordic” was not in active use in marketing since it doesn’t mean much for the Japanese people. For example Finland had much more meaning than the generalization of Nordic countries. When thinking about Finland and its brands, many of my Japanese interviewees mentioned Marimekko, Aki Kaurismäki, Arabia and Alvar Aalto.

Many of the interviewees also said that Japanese people have a particular, different image of each country so they find using the word Nordic confusing. They didn’t really think of the Nordic countries as a homogenous cultural area, though many still stated that they, and Japanese in general, think of social well-being and and good education when they think about the Nordics. Many said that the area has a good image in their minds, though the individual countries had more associations.

Based on the interviews, the country of origin seemed very important for the Japanese market of live folk music, and it is widely used in the marketing of the bands. In all of the interviewed bands’ Japanese tour flyers the country was mentioned and usually also illustrated with the countries’ flag or some other imagery related to the country and its culture - like castles and Andersin illustrations to link the band with Denmark.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on my results and analysis, I've come to some conclusions that I'd like to propose as answers to the research question "What features make a Nordic folk music band suitable for touring in Japan?" and the question on the background of this study, "How to get to play in Japan". In the beginning of the research, I wanted to explore why certain bands - or bands in general - from Nordic countries are selected to play in Japan, and why do Japanese agencies get interested in Nordic folk music bands. I also wanted to explore the audience the genre has in Japan.

5.2 Why are certain bands selected to play in Japan?

The three bands interviewed all have a general idea of the reasons why they think they were selected to play in Japan. Bands D and F told it was persistent communication and forming a relationship with the agency years in advance, and band E claimed the fundamental reason was their fascinating album cover that caught an agency's attention - and the good contents of that album. On top of these reasons all bands had additional reasons they thought could have been important, mostly reflecting the audience the agencies could have in mind, such as: Japanese audience feels connection to the culture and country of origin the band comes from; audience longs for something authentic and traditional that is not present in their everyday lives, which the Nordic culture represents; and the audience is highly interested in the very specific field of music that the band's music represents.

5.3 Why do agencies get interested in Nordic folk music bands?

Japanese agencies got interested in the Nordic folk music bands through showcases, concerts, their own explorations and direct contacts from the bands. All managers of the agencies said that they are interested in more bands than they can bring to Japan. Thus being suitable for the Japanese market, or being a great band in the agencies' opinion, are not the only things that guided the selecting process, though

of course these two conditions had to be fulfilled first. Meeting the rest of the conditions could be a coincidence, and depend on the current situation. The additional reasons explained by the agencies were such as: the band answered to the demand of the venue or recipient; the band had potential to engage specific new or existing audiences; the band had the power to combine the existing audiences, such as Irish and Nordic folk music listeners; the band was different enough compared to the agency's existing artist roster; and the visual image of the band was a good match for the Japanese audience.

5.4 Exploring the Japanese audience

The Japanese audience was a mystery to me when I began this research, and it seemed to be that to the interviewed bands, too. The band members could describe the general age and gender typical of their audience in Japan, but none knew specifics about the audience they have. The agencies could describe their audiences with more detail and insight. They talked about the "music lovers" which is a Japanese phrase meaning people who are very dedicated to a particular genre of music, or enthusiast for music in general. The agencies thought that their core audiences, the audience that comes to all of their Nordic artists' concerts, is the music lovers of Nordic folk music. They said that the genre is new in Japan, so they have had the privilege and responsibility to educate this group of music lovers, define what the genre means in Japan. All have also ambitions to grow their audiences and engage new listeners. To some, it means to make their artists appealing to other genres' music lovers, or to appeal to the people who are not "music lovers" but general audience, less dedicated to any genre.

5.5 How to get to play in Japan

What could be the answer to the question "how to get to play in Japan"? There was no one single recipe that could be found in all the interviews but several suggestions, which rose up from several if not all the interviews. Getting a tour in Japan is not just a lucky incident, though fortunate coincidences could have favourable consequences

in any musician's career. Musicians and arts managers alike could benefit from the following propositions I have gathered on the base of my analysis and conclusions.

Have a strong vision and work towards it. Two out of three of the bands interviewed seemed to have had a strong will to tour in Japan. The third was in the beginning of its career and hadn't yet thought much about touring in Japan, but after the first tour, they felt they wanted to play there again. The will was more than just a wish. All the bands, or certain members of the band, had worked for the dream to come to reality. All had consistently worked on the relationship with their agency, made concessions and used time to maintain and deepen the relationship.

Know your brand identity. Interviewed bands seemed to have a strong brand identity - with or without conscious brand building. Maybe agencies see that marketing a band with a strong brand identity is easier than a band still about to find its identity, since many saw that they needed to fill in a certain spot in their roster - or at least saw that they did not need a similar band they already had. Being able to clearly position a brand is always helpful, and the Japanese market doesn't seem like an exception.

Know your values. All the interviewed bands had important values; for example the quality of music, honesty, being true to their chosen identity. The bands had made an evaluation of what values they would not "sacrifice" for any means, and what were the values they could be flexible with. This helps to answer any of the many requests a musician gets during their career.

Make a visual statement. Since visuality is very important to Japanese people, making an effort with the promotional photos and other visual material could be a wise move if a band wants to enter the Japanese market. All the agencies mentioned that good photos are a great tool for them, and could even be the reason why they get interested in a band.

Build connections and networks, make your band possible to "find". Of course a key factor of getting "inside" any scene is networking and building relationships. Because Japanese culture is quite different from Western cultures, it's important to recognize that, and develop some intercultural communication skills if you are not

familiar with the Japanese culture to begin with. There seems to be no fast way to do this relationship building, and many musicians interviewed did mention the years of preparation it took.

Use your country image in your brand. This is maybe an easy one to achieve in folk music, where most musicians get inspiration from their culture's traditions, and are many times viewed as their country image's ambassadors by audiences abroad. Although it may appear obvious, it might be wise to emphasize it even more for the Japanese market. The agencies interviewed use the country of origin in their promotion a lot, and it matters to the Japanese audience.

6. DISCUSSION

In this thesis I have explored the features that make Nordic folk music bands suitable for the Japanese market. I have applied theories of brand identity to detect those features from the interview data, and highlighted the elements of brand identity especially applicable in this very specific segment of arts management. In the results and conclusions I have summarised features revealed from the data which can be applied with little adaptations to the field of music in general, or maybe to the field of arts with some more adaptation. In this chapter, I will reflect on the theories of branding and how they worked with my research material and the field of arts, and suggest what would be interesting for future studies.

During the study process, I noticed how branding the arts works differently compared to branding in the business world. This makes applying some of the existing theories hard, and many times the terms used have to be adapted to make sense on the scene of arts. For example in this study, the "company" could be thought to be the band, but also the Japanese agencies have a role of a company. If the agency is the company, is the artist an employee, a customer servant, a person who makes the product - the music - or can there be two companies as a sender in Kapferer's prism of brand identity at the same time? In my opinion, both the agency and the band are in the role of the company, and both are also in certain situations customer servants that communicate the brand identity directly to the consumers. In the case of some of my bands, the agency's role as a sender was more active, and they produced new material to help communicate the brand identity - for example elements of brand personality or brand culture. In general, most bands had noticed that their customer reflection is different in Japan than in their country of origin and other markets, which could be due to this. It can be concluded that the roles are quite mixed in the field of arts. Only that of the consumer is quite clear, which in this thesis is the Japanese audience - though the sub-receiver from the band's point of view could be the agency, their gateway to the Japanese market.

For my interviewees, their "good" was the music they play, as for the Japanese agencies, the whole band and their concerts, or even Nordic world music on a larger

scale represented the product they market. So at times, though my interviewees were talking about the same general subject, they had a different viewpoint on it. Based on my interview data, there seems to be several, intersecting prisms where the sender and the receiver can be in part same and different.

De Chernatony's Composition of brand identity is a theory that could be well suited for the world of arts, because its emphasis is on the vision and values, which seem especially important to the artist and arts organizations. Further studies on how to adapt the theory for the needs of the arts and music would be needed. For my research, the emphasis on stakeholders - staff - customers -relationships was irrelevant or hard to define; who would be the staff communicating the brand message, the band or the agency? In my opinion, at different situations both can take the role of staff and be the ones in direct communication with the customers, the audience.

Some more theories of brands and brand identity could have been relevant for the study subject. I chose to use only brand identity, which applied to a larger portion of the data, though theories of brand localization and brand umbrella/family would have been very interesting to use in the analysis of part of the collected data.

In brand localization, the brand message is adapted to the special local market, and it is much used in adapting brands especially to Asian market. The culture, value system or competitive landscape can mean that the benefits brand wants to stand for might not be relevant, or they might have different meanings in the other culture. For example, it is not always self-evident that the translation of the adjective used in the advertisement comes with the same set of meanings and underlying values in another culture. The need for brand localization rises from the realisation that some parts of the brand message could be understood differently in another culture, even harmful for the brand, and adaptation makes the brand communication more successful. On the basis of my data, it is visible that the agencies used this kind of an approach to the brands of their artist roster to better meet their audiences, but further data collection and studies would better reveal this side of the subject.

Another interesting and well-suited theory of branding would be the brand family or umbrella thinking, where products or brands are placed under an established brand.

This benefits the product of the existing trust and knowledge of consumers: brand building efforts and marketing costs are lower than with a single brand strategy. Based on my data, the brands of the Nordic bands were associated with the brands of their country of origin - they seemed to be thought of as ambassadors or sub-brands of their country brand - and this was utilized by their agencies. For a study focusing on this phenomenon, more data collection and an approach of for example content analysis would be necessary.

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APPENDIXES

Tips from the interviewees

Some of my interviewees wanted to give direct tips to help bands wanting to get a tour in Japan. The previously mentioned change in media and the change in the relationship with audiences was not only a negative feature for my interviewees. Manager C reflects on the growing impact of social media and online time, and the opportunities it brings to build direct relationships with Japanese audience even without being in a roster of any agency, and encourages musicians to make use of them:

> And especially when 5G is coming to Japan very soon, this year, it's coming, after that it's going to be the big break for YouTube on their phones. It could be a good time to have a Japanese cover song, you know, because people Google it, the song title. So I hope all the Finnish bands will do a Japanese song, that would be very fun! And also it's fun to do a collaboration with Japanese artists, it has to be art meet art. It's actually an interesting situation at the moment.

Manager C thinks that personality building is a very important thing. In her opinion, if a musician has many different projects, it can be confusing for the audience. She wants to encourage musicians to be consistent in their career:

> The one thing I really don't like about Nordic musicians, you have so many bands. One person has maybe five bands. Don't do many bands, focus on it, do it for ten years, fifteen years! Maybe many bands work in Finland, but in Japan it's better to focus on one band, one profile. Try to build the profile, that's very important.

Also musician E wants to encourage musicians to work more consistently on building relationships with the audience, and evaluate how the band is doing online. He argues that many musicians do not understand the value of extra-musical work, or how to do it, and thinks the band F's success is due to this non-artistic work. He describes the way he works to maintain, build and evaluate relationships:

> I go every day to my office in a cafe or at home and I monitor my band. How my single is doing, how my cd is doing, how my ticket sales are doing, how my followers are

> doing, how are my numbers in general. Even though I could also just come out of bed and start doing music or look at the clouds! But that's not how the music business works nowadays. Especially if you don't have a full time manager, who pushes that stuff forward for you. What we are, is that we are the managers who work for our band every day, that's the key to our success. The consistency, that's how it goes.

Many of the interviewed musicians encouraged other musicians interested in touring in Japan to learn about Japanese culture and people. Musician D from band E suggests:

> If I now try to step into the boots of a musician who would like to go to Japan. You have to go there, at least as a tourist. Looking from here it's a very mysterious place. When you go there it is still a mysterious place but in a whole other way I imagined. It's such a different country that you won't know anything about it unless you study and visit and get acquaintanced with Japanese people.

Musician D playfully offered me a conclusion in the beginning of the interview, an a tip to all musicians:

> Musician C: Based on the cover photo, manager C said she wants this one. We only had our first album out by then.
>
> Musician D: Here's an easy conclusion: You should make an effort with the album cover photos, considering the market of course.

Questions for the interviews with band:

Please tell me a little about your band's background?

How did you first end up on a tour in Japan?

What is your band's brand like?

How has your brand developed?

How is your brand used in Japanese marketing?

What do you know about marketing the Nordic folk music in Japan?

How has your band been promoted in Japan?

What kind of special requests the agency/promoter in Japan has made for you?

Have you made concessions for Japanese market?

How does your country of origin show in your Japanese promotion?

What kind of an audience do you have in Japan?

How did you contact the agency/how did the agency come in contact with you?

What tips would you give another band wanting to enter the Japanese world music market?

Would you like to add something, answer to a question I haven't yet asked?

Questions for the interviews with Japanese music professionals:

Please tell me about your background with world music, how did you end up in this field?

How is the Japanese audience for live music in general like?

What kind of special features does Japanese audience have?

How has the field of live world music changed during your career?

How popular is Nordic world music in Japan?

What is the audience for Nordic world music like?

Nordic design seems to be popular in Japan. How do you think this affects the popularity of Nordic folk music (or does it)?

How does bands' country of origin's attract listeners to the concerts (or does it)?

What could make Nordic world music more popular in Japan?

(Questions especially for agencies' managers)

How do you choose bands to your artist roster?

What things are important to you when choosing new bands?

What is your artist roster for Nordic world music like?

How do you market your bands in Japan?

What kind of promotional material do you ask from the artists?