SIBELIUS ACADEMY

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SONG

The Praxis of Artist Branding
In the Finnish Recording Industry

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Abstract

In this thesis I will examine how the major record companies create and manage artists' images and artist brands for the purposes of selling popular music in the Finnish market. I will define the components of the artist's image and the artist brand together with the processes of artist image management and artist branding. I will also discuss the role of publicity in the creation and development of artist brands. Because of the lack of tradition and a common language with which the record companies' personnel would deal with artist brands and image related questions, I have also felt the need to present the conceptions of how the recording industry workers perceive the concepts of 'artist's image' and 'artist brand'.

I will discuss the research questions in the contexts of the Digital Experience Economy and celebrity culture. I will reveal how the digital business environment and Experience Economy principles have affected and are expected to affect artist image management and artist brands. The Digital Experience Economy is defined through the theories of Joseph B. Pine and James H. Gilmore together with David Kusek and Gerd Leonhard. The celebrity culture I will examine mainly through the hypotheses of Chris Rojek. The theories of image management and image formation I base for the most parts on the notions of Elisa Ikävalko and Erkki Karvonen. The theories of branding and marketing communications rely mainly on the conceptions of David A. Aaker, Erich Joachimsthaler and Philip Kotler.

The empiric part of the study is conducted as a qualitative research. I have interviewed seven record company employees that have had a key role in the development of current Finnish artist brands. The interview data has been analysed using the methods of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

The study results show that the Finnish recording industry workers conceive an artist's image as a preliminary stage of an artist brand. An image is developed to a brand as a result of the artist's consequent behaviour and the consequent marketing communications from the record company's part. The study results also show that record companies cannot control the publicity or the formation of the artist's image and artist brand. The only person who can have a significant effect on the formation of the image and the brand is the artist himself. However two different lines of branding processes were discovered: branding-from-the-inside and branding-from-the-outside. In the branding-from-the-inside record companies let the artist brand to develop on its own. This method is mostly used with singer-songwriters and artists that aim for long careers. The branding-from-the-outside method is more frequently used with phenomenon artists and artists that suddenly gain publicity. In the branding-from-the-outside method record companies take a more active role in advising the artists. In both the branding methods the role of the musical content was emphasised. All the interviewees underlined the importance of a good song in the success of an artist. Otherwise no single formula of building artist brands was found.

The study results indicate that artists cannot be branded in the same way as traditional products. This fact was also demonstrated in the application of brand theories to the interview data. The brand theories I had selected for this study proved to be difficult to apply to the praxis of artist branding.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will examine how Finnish record companies create and manage artists' images and artist brands for the purposes of selling popular music. It seems to be rather common that when examining popular culture and its products, we easily engage ourselves in a discussion about the relationship between art and commercialism, as if they were contradictory forms of existence. Commercialised art products are often seen as lacking artistic quality. But as *John Fiske* (1989: 23) points out, even though popular culture is industrialised, and its commodities are produced and distributed by a profit-motivated industry, popular culture cannot only be defined in terms of consumption, it can also be perceived as an active process of generating and circulating meaning and pleasure within a social system. All through this thesis my approach in understanding music industry includes both aspirations, i.e. the artistic and commercial objectives that must be taken into consideration when aiming to develop artist brands.

1.1. Why Study Artist Image Management and Artist Brands?

Before going any further in presenting image management and branding theories it is necessary to explain why I have chosen the 'artist' as a branding object instead of music and records. What makes artists so significant for the recording industry?

Already in his 1987 writings *Peter Wicke* (1987: 133) noted that a star cult brings capital to the music industry. He argued that since a record only has a life cycle of around 60 to 120 days and sales over longer periods are an exception, the image conception should primarily be concentrated on the personality of the musician or the collective personality of the band, for their commercial viability is normally higher. According to *Wicke* it is easier in the long run to run a star with assured sales than to have to work on a series of one-offs. If the band has a stable image, this can be carried over onto each of its records, which considerably reduces costs.

Also *Maiju Varilo* (2003: 48) argues that star culture is one of the most important standardisation methods with which the recording industry can affect the usage value of its products. Stardom most likely guarantees the success of a record. Thus it is an

important task of the producers to find star material in new artists so that the artist's potential can be utilised in a profitable way.

The most successful musicians can become icons and stars. They can be celebrated, mystified and worshiped by the fans. Even cults are born to honour musicians. *Chris Rojek,* Professor of Sociology and Culture, argues that celebrities are cultural fabrications (Rojek 2001: 10). Celebrities are a result of social construction – people coding, decoding, and developing messages consciously or unconsciously regarding the public personalities they learn to know through the media. According to *Rojek* (2001: 13) celebrity culture has emerged as a result of three major interrelated historical processes: first, the democratisation of society; second, the decline of organised religion; and third, the commodification of everyday life.

Rojek argues that at the political level one of the most significant developments in the growth of capitalist society was the power shift from the monarch to the society. He further suggests that capitalist democracy perpetually fails to deliver what it promises. He argues that the failure is the result of elected leaders that keep failing the society time and again. (Rojek 2001: 181, 189 - 190). In the absence of exemplary leaders that can be looked up to, the society has turned to other sources, namely public figures created by the entertainment business.

Apart from the lack of credible rulers the decline of organised religion has also left an opening for the rise of celebrity culture. People have replaced the needs they previously fulfilled through religious practice with celebrity worship, through which they gain a sense of belonging and recognition. *Rojek* explains the phenomenon through 'para-social interaction'.

> *"The term 'para-social interaction' is used to refer to relations of intimacy constructed through the mass media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings. This is a form of second-order intimacy, since it derives from representations of the person rather than actual physical contact. In societies in which as many as 50 per cent of the population confess to sub-clinical feelings of isolation and loneliness, para-social interaction is a significant aspect of the search for recognition and belonging. Celebrities offer peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition and meaning."* (Rojek 2001: 52).

Rojek (2001: 187, 189) further suggests that capitalism requires consumers to develop abstract desire for commodities on the basis of media representations. For *Rojek* abstract desire is a form of compulsion of desire that has its starting point in the media representations, not in real people or products displayed by the representations. This desire becomes a compulsion because the logic of economic accumulation requires that desires must be constantly transferred in response to commodity and brand innovation. *Rojek* points out that consumers are required to replace commodity wants with new ones. According to him, *"the compulsion of abstract desire transforms the individual from a desiring object into a calculating object of desire"*. Consumers do not only nourish commodity wants with their purchases but they also construct the facade of embodiment in order to be desired by others.

Mass media representations are the key principle in the formation of celebrity culture (Rojek 2001: 13). Thus it should be crucial for the celebrities to control the representations the media delivers. This leads to a conclusion that celebrities need publicity management. It is in the interest of celebrities to try to deliver a message to the consumers as unchanged as possible, so that the message that reaches the audience is constructed by the celebrity's own team, not by journalists that can distort the presentation intentionally or unintentionally. Media's access to display celebrities should perhaps be limited, and the representations' content should be controlled.

If the publicity is managed well, keeping long-term objectives in mind, an unknown artist can become a legend whose brand value can be utilised in a wider context. A branded celebrity can act as a representative of a value world built around the celebrity's personality or the celebrity can act as a part of an already existing value structure. The entertainment world is full of such personalities. For instance, *Sean "Puffy" Combs* (a.k.a P. Diddy) has exploited the success of his public image in a record label, clothing line and a restaurant chain. In the summer of 2004, just before the Olympics in Athens, *PepsiCo Inc* launched an advertising campaign in which *Britney Spears, Beyonce, Pink, Enrique Iglesias,* and members of *Queen* were joined together in a female gladiator commercial singing "We Will Rock You" which signaled that even though being rivals in the hit charts, Pepsi -people are all one and have no need to compete with each other.

As the *Pepsi*™ commercial shows, in the context of brands also values are sold. If we dig deeper into the ideology of branding we find out that with brands we can feed people's emotional needs to feel belonging and acceptance. A good example of a celebrity utilising her image-based assets for intangible purposes is *Madonna*. Apart from capitalising her public image in her previously owned record label Maverick *Madonna* has also brought huge publicity to Astanga Yoga and the religious ideology Kabbalism. From this we can gather that **a celebrity status can be used to promote products and services,** as well as **non-material values, beliefs and ideologies.**

When current problems of the recording business are discussed, the discussion always turns to the pricing of CDs. Many claim that the reason for the crisis lies in the pricing strategies, which have forced people to turn to the Web where they share files unauthorised. In my opinion the price issue is only of secondary importance because the price is always relative to what you expect to get with your money. Therefore I argue that **the present state of the recording industry relates to the industry's aging products and to the low value consumers connect to its products**.

David Kusek and *Gerd Leonhard* (2005: 29 – 30, 85) are in line with my hypothesis. According to them the CD does not have the same relative value in today's highly complex and competitive market as it used to. If you compare the values of what you receive on a CD to what you can purchase on a DVD that costs as much as the CD, the DVD is without a doubt a better bargain. They argue that customers' attention can only be returned to the CD if the record industry manages to invent additional value to records. To *Kusek* and *Leonhard* the copy protection that the recording industry has already started to use does not signify additional value to the customers. Thus they predict that copy protection will derail the record industry into a deeper crisis.

I believe that one way to create additional value to the CD and its content is to utilise artists' or record labels' public images more efficiently. According to *Kusek* and *Leonhard* (2005: 21 - 22) a record label is not usually a brand in its own right. They claim that most often it is the artist's work the fans are interested in. Despite the productisation of music most people still place the greatest value on their connection with artists. *"We cherish artists because they are purveyors of feelings, special moments, and experiences that we value."*

From this point of view, the recording industry should invest more in the development of artist brands. But what kind of tools should the industry use in the development? On the basis of the literature used in this study it seems that at least in other industries marketing professionals preach in the name of public relations instead of traditional advertising. The reality TV-formats such as *Idols™* and *Popstars™* have proved to be a profitable enterprise for both the record and media companies involved. While record companies gain huge publicity for their future artists and save money in marketing costs, they simultaneously educate their future stars and audiences to interact with each other. TV-appearances and public discussion in the press also provide a platform for record companies' marketing departments to conduct unofficial research on potential audiences and their consumer behaviour. However, in the context of *Idols* and *Popstars* many among the audience have had doubts in relation to the artistic integrity and the quality of the content. Many feel that the way in which the talents that provide "only their voices, looks and dancing talents" are filtered through hundreds of applicants provides no room for artistic freedom. On the other hand, from the artists' point of view TV-competitions might offer the one and only option to gain access to a career as a performer and musician.

Turner, Bonner and *Marshal* (2000: 13) recognise the phenomenon. They argue that contradiction is always created when commercial and cultural functions are combined. Thus the celebrity culture is contradictory in its nature. Celebrities are brand names as well as cultural icons. Celebrities operate as marketing tools as well as sites where the agency of the audience is clearly evident. The celebrity industry is structured around two conflicting objectives: the commercial objective of maximising the income generated by the celebrity as a commodity, and the celebrity's personal objective of constructing a viable career.

For this thesis I have consciously selected record companies as a study subject. I feel that the record industry offers an interesting and a productive position to examine the current state of celebrity utilisation in the music industry. At the same time I have the possibility to explore what an aging industry could gain from artist brands.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1. Theoretical Orientation

The empiric part of the thesis is conducted as a qualitative research based on seven semi-structured theme interviews. The results of the empiric part are analysed in the context of selected commercial and communications theories that will be presented in section three. In the analysis, and in the construction of the theoretical framework, it has been kept in mind that music sector phenomena, no matter how commercial the business objectives are, cannot solely be explained through commercial and communicative approaches. Thus art and culture studies conducted in the fields of social sciences and humanities are used as background information to explain phenomena that affect the recording industry and the audience behaviour. The idea of using theories, traditionally belonging to three or four different faculties in the Finnish universities, i.e. commercial, social or political sciences and humanities, is based on the fact that the record industry itself operates in the crossfire of commercial and artistic aspirations. As I will later demonstrate in this study, both aspirations, commercial and artistic, have a role in the artist brand development.

Based on the previous thought I have drafted a model to clarify the starting point of the research to both the readers and myself. Commercial theories on branding and marketing are in the core of this study. Thus branding and marketing communications theories can be found in the centre of the illustration (figure 1, page 7). In the second layer you will find theories of image management and mass communications. On the basis of the research literature used in this study 'image' seems to have been a popular study subject during the 1990's in the faculties of social and political sciences at the Finnish universities. The third layer stands for 'Popular Culture'. The circle of 'Popular Culture' points to the fact that in the field of popular music artist brands and artists' images must be transmitted to the percipients using a code they are familiar with in the context of the popular culture. Apart from that messages must be coded and transmitted in an understandable way, the surrounding culture also affects how the decoding, perception and interpretation of the messages occur. Changes in the culture change both the coding and the decoding practices.

EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

POPULAR CULTURE

IMAGE

BRANDING
Marketing Communications

Mass Media
Presentation

Cultural Code & Tribal Rites

Personified Experiences
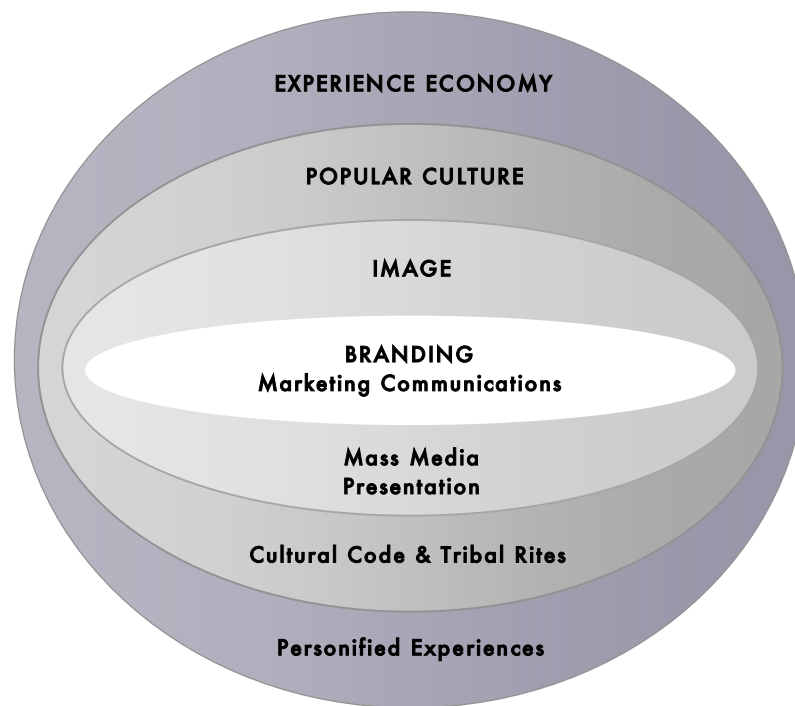
Figure 1: The four layers of the theoretical orientation

In the outer circle I have 'Experience Economy'. The prevailing socio-economic environment affects all the lines of business and research. In this case the socio-economic environment is defined as a free capitalist digital economy that emphasises the meaning of personified experiences. The concept of 'Experience Economy' is taken from *B. Joseph Pine II* and *James H. Gilmore*. *Pine* and *Gilmore* (1999: 3 – 6) argue that in the current economy companies should market experiences, i.e. moments of time spent enjoying, instead of services (= Service Economy product), goods (= Industrial Economy product) or commodities (= Agrarian Economy product) because the increasing competitive intensity and new technologies drive companies into an ongoing search for differentiation. Also the rising affluence has made it possible for consumers to require more than functional user value from their purchases. *Pine's* and *Gilmore's* viewpoints on the changing economic environment are accompanied by *David Kusek's* and *Gerd Leonhard's* (2005) writings on the 'Digital Economy' and its effects on the music business.

This research is limited to cover artists within the popular music sector. Classical, jazz, gospel, folk and world music artists are not included even though they would have provided an interesting study subject in relation to branding. The need to limit the subject is based on my desire to conduct research on a field that from the outside looks commercial and profit oriented, but on the inside aims to value artistic objectives.

2.2. Research Objectives and Limitations

In this study 'artist' refers to a musician that performs as a solo artist or as a member of a band or a vocal group. 'Artist' can also refer to a whole band or a vocal group. Analogously 'artist's image' and 'artist brand' can refer to an image and a brand of a solo artist or a band. I would also like to clarify that this study concentrates on the formation of artists' image and artist brands from the record companies point of view. It is not the purpose of this study to examine how successful record companies' artist image management or branding strategies have been, nor how the public has received and perceived companies' marketing messages and artist brands.

When planning how to approach the subject I decided to take the Marketing Mix[1] as a starting point in the exploration of the artist brand. This fact is also demonstrated in the skeletal structure of the interviews. The skeletal structure can be found as an attachment at the end of this study. In this thesis 'Marketing Mix' is defined through *Neil Borden's* (see footnote) four P -variables, i.e. 'product', 'price', 'placement' (same as 'distribution') and 'promotion'. Due to the nature of the research I will concentrate on 'product' and 'promotion'. 'Price' and 'distribution' will be introduced briefly as their relation to artist brands is discussed in the context of the future recording industry business model. The existence of the Extended Marketing Mix model created by *Bernard H. Booms* and *Mary J. Bitner* and its usefulness in service and knowledge-intensive environments is acknowledged in this study but the three extra variables, namely, 'people', 'process' and 'physical evidence' are left outside the research because it would have widened the study far beyond what is expedient for a master's thesis. 'People' as well as the 8th possible variable 'partnerships' that some theorists connect to the Marketing Mix were originally included to the skeletal structure of the interviews but as the research progressed the concepts were dropped out partly because the interviewees did not provide enough substantial data on the subjects and partly in order to limit the length of this thesis.

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[1] The Marketing Mix approach to marketing is one model of crafting and implementing marketing strategies. It stresses the "mixing" of various decision factors in such a way that both organisational and consumer objectives are attained. When constructing the mix, marketers must always think of who their target market is. They must understand the wants and needs of the customer then construct marketing strategies and plans that will satisfy these wants. The mix must also meet or exceed the objectives of the organisation. The model was developed by *Neil Borden* who first started using the phrase in 1949. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marketing_mix).

I have also limited this study to include record companies' marketing communications efforts from the viewpoint of publicity management. Thus in the Marketing Communications Mix[2] (also known as the Promotion Mix) I will concentrate on public relations with the emphasis of media relations. I will define **what kind of role publicity plays in the creation and development of artist brands.** Advertising will be introduced briefly as an alternative method of marketing the brands. With this limitation marketing communications in the context of business-to-business relationships is left outside the research. Therefore there is no need to discuss the aspects of personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing.

The subject brings along an intrinsic problem. There is no common lingo, no common terminology, which all the interviewees would accept without misgivings in relation to the artist image management and the artist brands. Therefore my first task during the interviews was, and in the study is, to **define how** the seven **interviewees conceive** the **concepts of 'image', 'artist image management', 'brand' and 'branding artists'.** Additionally, the study gives me a possibility to examine the ways the record company personnel communicate about the brands. Simultaneously the interviewees' attitudes towards image management and branding will be revealed.

Secondly, I aim to **define what is an artist brand and** how it differs from **artist's image**. I will also demonstrate from which components and qualities an image and a brand are formed in relation to artists. In this context I will also study the role of the content production. I will demonstrate how the musical content affects artist brands.

I will also **outline the processes of artist image management and artist branding**. The interviewees will also reveal whether artist brands and music are created to fulfill an existing demand on the market, or whether the record companies are in the business of creating customer needs, i.e. modifying the markets, in order to create demand?

Finally, I will ask my interviewees to reflect **what kind of influence the digital business environment and the Experience Economy have had in the record companies' marketing communications techniques?** What kind of changes and

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[2] The Marketing Communications Mix is a specific mix of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing that a company uses to pursue its advertising and marketing objectives. (www.davedolak.com/promix.htm).

challenges the record company professionals expect as the digital revolution proceeds? How do the changes in the economy and technology affect the products record companies are producing? How will possible changes in the core product, together with the development of marketing communications and sales channels affect the record companies' artist branding strategies?

While we find answers to the five main research questions presented above I will gradually reveal how the Finnish recording industry brands its artists through content production and marketing communications.

2.3. Research Material and Research Methodology

The research material of the thesis consists of semi-structured face-to-face theme interviews conducted with seven record industry professionals that represent six record companies. The interviewees are experienced music sector workers who have had a key role in the development of current brands in the Finnish recording industry. Four of the interviewees, Brand Manager *Marko Alanko* from Sony BMG Music Entertainment Oy, Marketing Director *Kimmo Kivisilta* from Universal Music Oy, A&R Director *Pekka Ruuska* from Warner Music Finland and Marketing Manager *Mia Salo* from Oy EMI Finland Ab represent the 'majors', i.e. multinational record companies operating in Finland. *Kari Hynninen* from Suomen Musiikki Oy is a former A&R-manager of BMG and the owner of the former Zen Garden record label. *Pekka Nieminen* and *Asko Kallonen* are also former BMG employees. Currently *Nieminen* works as a marketing manager in Helsinki Music Company Ltd. A&R-specialist[3] *Asko Kallonen* is the co-owner of Helsinki Music Company Ltd. More information about the interviewees is found in the appendix.

The interviews were conducted between 8.6. – 7.7.2005. The 73 – 113–minute–long interviews were recorded in a portable hard drive and transcribed later to a written format. Only those parts of the interviews were transcribed in which the interviewees provided new or relevant information in relation to the research objectives. This

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[3] A&R stands for 'Artist and Repertoire'. A&R personnel is responsible for finding talents and signing them to labels. They also look for songs for artists. If needed A&R finds the musicians to play on records and in the background of artists' gigs. In record projects A&R is responsible of organising the music production and recording. As a discoverer of the artists they also take part in the planning of marketing strategies.

approach is motivated by the fact that in non-rehearsed and spontaneous speech people tend to repeat the same information. I saw no use in transcribing information that had already become clear in the previous parts of the interviews. In the semi-structured interview framework the interviewees also tend to turn the conversation to subjects close to their background even though these subjects may not have a direct connection to the research area in question. After the transcriptions the interview data was categorised under the pre-determined topics that correspond to the main research questions presented in the previous chapter. At this point the interview data was still in Finnish. I chose Finnish as an interview language because all my interviewees speak Finnish as their mother tongue. The interviewees could express themselves more accurately in Finnish than they would have in English. I have not aimed to keep the translated interview material in the form of spoken language even though the spoken and written languages in Finnish are fairly different from one another. It would have been an impossible task for me to find a way of expression or a dialect in English that would have related appropriately to the spoken Finnish. Therefore the interview material will be presented in a more formal manner than it was presented to me during the interviews.

The translations from Finnish to English were done after the categorisation of the data. As I started to edit the material the overlaps in the interviewees' answers were eliminated. The finished material presents only the most apposite comments; apposite comment meaning an expression that represents the average notions of the interviewees most accurately. If there was no general practice to be found on the basis of the answers, all the practices were presented if they had the potential to increase readers' understanding on the subject.

The edited data presented in section four was processed to conclusions that will be presented in section five. In section six I will examine how the theories and the approach selected for this study served the analysis of the data and the production of new research information on artist brands. As an analysis method of the interview data I have used *Norman Fairclough's* outlook on the practice of discourse analysis. *Fairclough's* discourse method will be introduced in chapter 2.3.1.

Each of the interviewees were given a chance to get acquainted in advance with the main points of the theoretical orientation. One of the interviewees did not want to receive the information package and two had not had time to read the information before the interview. The interviewees also received a description of the research area in form of nine questions (see attachment 1). At the interview stage the research area was wider than what ended up to be presented in this study. The research area was narrowed down in several phases of the data analysis. The narrowing down was done because without the limitations the thesis would have grown too extensive. I also found the results of some questions to be inadequate to be processed to a generalisation. I felt that I did not receive enough substantial data dealing with the new marketing techniques and brand collaboration. Also the interviewees' thoughts on the future business model remained rather vague. This data is however presented because it sheds light on the current and future practices of the artist branding.

In the interview situations I let the interviewees talk rather freely. Most of the interviewees produced speech naturally without my cutting in between. My task was to direct the discussion to the research topics. Occasionally, if I felt that the discussion was taking a wrong direction I presented a comment or an argument that would turn the discussion back to the research subject. The questions were not presented to the interviewees in a consequent order in relation to the skeleton structure of the interviews. The only standardised part of the interviews was the beginning of each interview when I mapped the interviewees' work history in order to figure out which areas of the research I would concentrate my questions on, and in which order I would present the topics. In each interview I modified the questions separately to match the interviewees' background. With A&R-specialists I concentrated more on content production. With the promotion and marketing specialists I discussed more thoroughly marketing communications issues.

All the interviewees were also given a chance to give comments and correction suggestions on the finished material before the thesis was left for grading. I wanted to give this chance to the interviewees because of two reasons. First, in the communication process there is always a chance that the transmitting and receiving parties do not understand each other in the way the transmitting party wants to be understood. Secondly, in the translation process from Finnish to English it is possible

to lose the original "tinge" of the message just because the languages work differently. As the result of the offered correction possibility two interviewees wanted to clarify their comments. In all four small alterations were made. The clarifications did not affect the content of the comments, merely the way, how the ideas were presented.

One of the main barriers between the interviewees and myself as an interviewer was that there is no established lingo in relation to branding and image management. In fact, the two terms aroused controversy in all the interviewees. I tried to resolve this problem by finding out in each individual case what kind of vocabulary the interviewees preferred to use. After finding out the preference I tried to stay consistent with the interviewee's usage of the terminology.

Another problem in the research was that it is not self-evident what is the main product record companies deal with. In reality record companies are in the business of producing music and publishing records. Artists are merely vehicles with which the music is carried to the records. This controversy remained all through the interviews and the results can be explored from sections four and five in this study.

2.3.1. Discourse analysis of the interview data

As the basis of the analysis of the interview data I have used *Norman Fairclough's* (1995: 53 – 74) conceptions on the methods of critical discourse analysis. Although *Fairclough's* analysis of communicative events was originally developed to function as a tool in the analysis of written, oral, and visual media (= print media, radio, television) texts, I find the method useful also in the analysis of the data collected for this study. In my study I consider the interviewees to possess a role of a medium that filters, modifies, manipulates, and transmits information for the recipients, in order to transmit a planned and regulated set of viewpoints that are to some extent self-serving and present only a narrow sector of reality.

I have tried to build the theme interview framework in such a way that it allows heterogeneity in the interviewees' answers. This has been realised through taking into consideration the different backgrounds the interviewees have, and by not presenting in advance questions that include a value position originating from the theories used in

the thesis. However, the research topics and the theoretical orientation were given to the interviewees in order to secure that the interviewees would provide data that was based on processed thoughts rather than presumptions. I also wanted to provide the interviewees my orientation as a researcher so that they would know what affects my thinking. There are good and bad sides to the selected method. The good side is that no interview time was needed to explain what the thesis was about and with what kind of hypothesis the interview material was to be connected with. This way it was possible to avoid any later disappointments as the interviewees already knew how the interview data was going to be used. The bad sides include that there is always a danger that if the interviewee disagrees a great deal with the selected theoretical framework the interview situation could be spend in discussing the background theories instead of creating new information for the research. There is also a danger that the interviewees could become affected by the background information, and that they would only provide information that would fit the given framework. In this study, the latter did not seem to happen. None of my interviewees had any problems in contradicting questions or comments they disagreed with.

Also the selection of the interviewees that represent six different corporate cultures ensure that the results of the study will not be as homogenous as they would be had the interviewees represented only one or two corporations. All the previous procedures have been chosen on the basis of *Fairclough's* (1995: 60) perception that media texts are sensitive barometers of cultural practices which manifest change through heterogeneity and contradictoriness, and that the textual heterogeneity can be seen as a materialisation of social and cultural contradictions.

For *Fairclough* (1995: 57, 62) 'discourse practice' means the *"processes of text production and text consumption"*. The 'socio-cultural practice' includes *"goings-on which the communicative event is a part of"*. *Fairclough's* analysis of texts is concerned both with meanings of the texts and the forms through which or by which the texts are delivered. In addition, in the analysis of production and consumption of texts *Fairclough* recognises the need to understand three different layers in the socio-cultural practice that are relevant and in effect within every communicative event. These layers are: 1) economical, 2) political (power and ideology), and 3) cultural (value and identity).

"The nature of a discourse practice is mediating between the textual and socio-cultural practice. Thus the socio-cultural practice shapes texts by transforming the nature of the discourse practice, i.e. the ways in which the texts are produced and consumed." (Fairclough 1995: 59 – 60).

In the analysis of media texts Fairclough encourages us to find answers at least to the four following questions:

1) *How is the text designed, why is it designed in this way, and how else could it have been designed?*

2) *How are texts of this sort produced, and in what ways are they likely to be interpreted and used?*

3) *What does the text indicate about the media order of discourse?*

4) *What wider socio-cultural processes is this text a part of, what are its social conditions, and what are its likely effects?*

(Fairclough 1995: 202 - 205).

As suggested by *Norman Fairclough* I have developed his fairly general questions further in order to serve the purposes of this study. The framework in which the interviewees' answers are interpreted consists of the following considerations:

1) *How do the interviewees structure their thoughts and speech in the issues of image management and branding? What might be the underlying factors that affect their thinking and public speech? How is the speech meant to influence the percipients?*

2) *What kind of possibilities does the speech offer for the interpretation of the speech content?*

3) *What does the speech tell about the interviewees' values, attitudes and the lines of action in the context of their professions? What affects them and how do the research situation and the researcher influence their speech?*

4) *What is the wider socio-cultural context the speech belongs to and what are the possible social conditions, limitations, and influences the speech content offers as such, and would offer if the speech content was to be implemented?*

In this thesis '*discourse*' is defined as an interaction between the practices of how and in what kind of environment the marketing professionals form, develop, communicate, transmit, receive, and perceive marketing messages, and the theory of how the selected

researchers perceive the practices of image marketing and mass communication and the media environment in a wider context of business activities. The interaction between different music professionals is also included in the discourse. The consumers' reception and interpretation of the record companies' marketing messages would also be a natural part of the discourse, but as mentioned earlier, consumer reception is not a study subject in this thesis.

2.4. Previous Research

At the first stage of the examination I mapped the previous commercially oriented studies made on the image management of public figures in the fields of music, film and sports. The results were scarce. Public images of musicians, actors, and athletes have mainly been studied in the area of culture studies and sociology. In the search for literature on musicians' public images I encountered *Taina Viitamäki's* and *Lasse Kiistala's* theses. *Viitamäki* (2000) has finished her thesis work for the Tampere University on Pop-artist *Morrissey's* public image in the press. *Lasse Kiistala's* (2002) thesis for the Helsinki University is a study on *HIM* vocalist *Ville Valo's* rock star image from the fans' point of view. Both the theses are good examples of a humanistic orientation. Most often cultural studies focus on defining and analysing stardom or star and fan cultures as cultural phenomena, together with defining the meaning and significance of stars and celebrities in the society.

From the research conducted in the spirit of culture studies in the field of sociology I have among others studied writings of *Chris Rojek,* Professor of Sociology and Culture from Nottingham Trent University, and *Joshua Gamson,* Associate Professor of Sociology from Yale University. Both professors concentrate on finding explanations to how celebrities are constructed in the contemporary entertainment industry and why celebrities have gained such an important role in people's lives.

The previous commercial studies are mainly focused on the product and company image development. Branding is a trendy subject in commercial studies but once again branding theories have not been applied to people very eagerly. *David Aaker* and *Philip Kotler* are among the leading authors that have made a huge impact in the fields

of branding and marketing communications. From the Finnish branding expertise I have chosen to include *Jari Mether's* and *Timo Rope's* thoughts of branding.

The thesis "Merkkituotteen johtaminen ja viestintä ääniteteollisuudessa" (Brand Leadership and Communications in the Recording Industry) of *Kimmo Valtanen,* the present managing director of Sony BMG Music Entertainment Oy, acts as a reference point to my thesis. In his thesis, finished for the Helsinki School of Economics in 2003, *Valtanen* concentrates on applying brand leadership and marketing communications theories to the practices of the Finnish recording industry. According to his own words *Valtanen* (2003: 3) wanted to find out which parts of the brand leadership theories could be applied to the record business in order to help the record industry to develop such marketing strategies and content that would make the consumers want to buy record companies' products also in the future. *Valtanen's* approach is very similar to mine. I also want to develop means of utilising brands in a more lucrative manner in the Finnish recording industry. The difference between *Valtanen*'s and my theses is that *Valtanen* bases his theoretical framework solely on branding and marketing communications theories, while I also seek answers from social and political sciences and cultural studies. *Valtanen's* objective in his thesis is to find out how record companies could utilise brands and branding techniques in their business strategies. My objective is narrower and I will solely concentrate on artist brands and the current artist branding praxis.

Another commercial study, conducted a couple of years ago, examines the branding practices within the music industry in the UK. The author *Richard Cree* (2004) encountered unexpected problems in the data collection as the marketing personnel he had planned to interview refused to take part in the dissertation. Therefore *Cree* had to reinvent his study by basing it more on quantitative research methods. One of the main findings of *Richard Cree's* dissertation "Papa's Got A Brand New Brand – An Investigation of Brand Strategy in the UK Music Industry" is that even though most of the music industry professionals recognise the commercial potential of branding, very few of them, however, consider branding a key part of the current practices within the recording industry.

As mentioned earlier, none of the previous branding specialists concentrate on artist brands. *Aaker, Kotler, Rope* and *Mether* are theorists that refer to the practice through traditional product based industries. *Valtanen* and *Cree* recognise the existence of strong artist brands, but their research focuses on the wider context of record companies' branding praxis.

As the examination progressed, and I moved on to review image development literature in the framework of social and political sciences, I came to realise that many of the academic studies in the field of communications were made on the reputation management of politicians and corporate leaders. Here again, no public images of artists, actors or athletes were examined. A popular study subject was also corporate reputation. Additionally, many social scientific studies concentrated on defining *'image'* as a concept and determining connotations connected to the concept. Quite often these studies were leaning on humanistic approaches and theories of semiotics, structuralism, phenomenology and cognitive science. From this tradition I have used ideas from e.g. *Elisa Ikävalko, Risto Uimonen, Erkki Karvonen*, and *Joe Marconi.*

From very early on it became clear that literature about artist image development and persons as brands was difficult to find. Thus at an early stage I knew that my study was going to be an applied study leaning mostly on the theories of marketing and communications but also taking influences from cultural research.

3. IMAGE MANAGEMENT AND BRANDING IN THEORY

3.1. Central Concepts Around Image

According to *Erkki Karvonen* (1999: 17, 46)*,* in the context of journalistic language, the concept of 'image' (imago, mielikuva) tends to attract connotations that insinuate some sort of concealment and smothering of reality. Generally **image** is also **perceived as** a **visual metaphor** emphasising certain object qualities and depressing simultaneously other non-visual aspects. The concept of 'reputation' (maine, kuuluisuus) is perceived more positively because the conception of the term is based on communication and interaction between people. **Reputation is linked with what people say and hear about objects.**

While 'image' is a visual term describing mainly external qualities, 'reputation' is considered to cover also values and qualities that lie beneath the appearance. But there can be two kinds of reputation. Reputation can bear both negative and positive connotations. When an artist's name is connected with the term 'famous' (kuuluisa, maineikas), artist's reputation is usually perceived as good. 'Notorious' (pahamai-neinen, tunnettu rikostensa seurauksena) is linked with a public personality with a bad reputation. Analogously, 'reputation management' can be conceived as damage control if an artist has broken society's rules and cultural codes. However, most often 'reputation management' is used in the context of pro-active implementations of the creation and maintaining favourable appearance in the public eye.

The ambiguity of the different terms is even more apparent when the terms are discussed in Finnish. In this study the terms 'image' (equivalent to imago) and 'public image' (equivalent to julkisuuskuva) are used as synonyms. *Philip Kotler's* (2003: 566) conception of image being *"a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions a person holds regarding to an object"* is in this study perceived as 'mental picture' (mielikuva). 'Mental picture' is used in the context of how record companies' marketing messages are conceived by the people who create and transmit the messages, and the ones that receive and consume them. 'Reputation' is used when the discussion turns to the description and definition of what kind of mental pictures the record company personnel and the customers have formed, or are expected to form on the basis of artists' public images.

3.2. How Are Images Born?

Image formation is a complex process for people's perceptions are based on what they know or what they think they know (Marconi 1996: 21). Thus image formation can be a conscious or an unconscious process (Uimonen 1996: 75). Images are created and developed in every situation in which we transmit and receive information about others and ourselves (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 190).

The impression of an image is born in a recipient as a result of the recipient's aspirations. Thus **image creators have no full power over image formation**. Even at its best image can be only partially perceived in the way the creators meant the image to be perceived. This is because recipients gather messages, signals and impulses also from other sources. The other signals can strengthen or weaken our message. Also the recipient's values, knowledge base, prejudices and opinions influence the ways the images are conceived. (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 189 - 190). Therefore the transmitter can only give 'building material' to recipients who then form their own conceptions (Karvonen 1999: 51).

3.3. How Can Images Be Constructed?

When an image is constructed for an artist it should always have a starting point in the artist's personality. According to *Ikävalko* (in Uimonen 1996: 181) an organisation's or **a person's identity functions as a basis in the image formation process**. *Ikävalko* argues that all identities have evolved in the course of time and through experiences experienced. The identity is always truthful and real; it is constructed by values, qualities, and ways of conduct. The identity cannot be changed violently or along the passing trends. However, the identity changes along with people's conduct. Also time and evolving values change the identity.

"The identity can be communicated in a form of a story that is fun to tell and easy to remember." In the story formulation the formulators must establish 1) why the organisation exists, 2) what the organisation offers to its environment and people, and

3) what are the values, special qualities, strengths and properties that make the organisation distinct and memorable. (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 183).

Although *Ikävalko* has developed her theory around organisational reputation, the questions above can also be applied to artist image management. The first step in the creation of an image management strategy should be based on finding the answers for 1) why does the artist exist, 2) what the artist has to offer to the markets, and 3) what kind of values and qualities make the artist distinct and memorable?

The next step in *Ikävalko's* (in Uimonen 1996: 184) image formulation process is to define a profile for the object. Profiling is a strategy or a series of methods and actions with which the target image (tavoitekuva) is attained.

> *"The purpose of defining target image is to differentiate the object from other organisations, products, services, conceptions and individuals. Target image should be created from the properties of the basic essence - the identity."*
> (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 184).

The target image should present organisational qualities that are not tightly bound to time and everyday life. The target image should be formulated on the basis of qualities in which the organisation excels in comparison to its competitors and their competitive messages. Furthermore, target image should support the organisation's future vision. It should also be consistent with its content. Together with the message communication, visual appearance is a central area of profiling. However, manipulating appearances is not the only means of profiling. Visual line is important but its turn comes after the identification and definitions of the artist's basic identity and the verbal messages that are to express the identity. The central issue is to define what kind of impression an organisation, a product or an individual reflects on the outside? (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 184 – 187).

Ikävalko (in Uimonen 1996: 186 – 187) notes that in the organisational context the target image is developed for a 10 - 20 years time span. In this context it must be noted that different interest groups can be interested in different aspects and viewpoints, and their tastes can change in the course of time. Thus organisations can have several

slightly different profiles for different interest groups. All the profiles must however be based on the organisation's basic identity.

In *Ikävalko's* (Uimonen 1996: 189) model image formation is the last step in the chain that started with identifying the product identity, which along the process was processed to a profile. **Image is an end result born as the result of the transmitter's aspirations and the recipient's perceptions**, recipient's perceptions being independent from the transmitter's intentions. *Ikävalko* argues that an organisation or a product can have several images depending on what kind of target image the organisation strives for, and how the environment influences the image. However, the images should always be as consistent as possible with the target image and the self-image (i.e. identity). If an organisation manages to create an image that does not relate with reality the crash can be merciless when the truth is revealed.

I would like to add a fourth dimension to *Ikävalko's* three-step image formation process. After the formation of an image I suggest a subsequent step that can be developed from an artist's public image. The next phase is called *'formation of reputation'*. While *'image'* can be seen as an impression formed instantly on the basis of the object's visual and verbal expressions, **formation of reputation occurs over time on the basis of the artist's consequent conduct** in the public eye. With consequential behaviour the artist can create trustworthiness through familiarity, generating a relationship between him, the fans and the media. With a consequent line of action and objectives met the artist can build a life lasting career and become a living legend like the *Rolling Stones* or the Finnish band *Eppu Normaali*. The first step in the reputation formation process should be the definition of the *'target reputation'*. The definition of target reputation aims to differentiate the artist's career from other long-lived artists or artists that aim for long-lasting careers. Changes to the target reputation must be made slowly over time. Just as the reputation is formed in the long run on the basis of an artist's consequent behaviour, the changes of the target reputation must be made in the same manner.

Inspired by *Elisa Ikävalko* it can be concluded from the previous passages that the process of artists' image creation includes the following steps:

1) IDENTITY RECOGNITION AND DEFINITION

    Q1:   Why does the artist exist? What are we trying to gain with the artist's existence?

    Q2:   What are the basic qualities of the artist's "true self" and how these qualities relate to the needs of the market?

    Q3:   What are the qualities of the artist's identity that could make him distinct and memorable?

2) TARGET IMAGE/PROFILE CREATION

    Q4:   What is needed to differentiate the artist from his competitors?

    Q5:   In which areas the artist excels in comparison to his competitors?

    Q6:   How can the artist's basic and special qualities be enhanced to be even more distinctive?

    Q7:   What kind of impression we want the artist to reflect outside?

    Q8:   Is there a need to create slightly different impressions/profiles for different interest and target groups?

3) PUBLIC IMAGE FORMATION

    Q9:   How do the recipients perceive the artist's public image?

    Q10:   How does the environment influence and modify our message of the artist's intended image target?

    Q11:   Do the different interest groups perceive the artist's public image truthfully regarding the basic essence of the artist's identity? If not, what should we change in the process of image formulation in order to make the artist's career a long-lasting one (if the artist strives for a long-lasting career)?

4) REPUTATION FORMATION

    Q12:   How is the public image to be developed and maintained in order to build a reputation?

    Q13:   How do the market development, fashion trends and demographic changes influence or how should they influence our message of the artist's intended target reputation?

    Q14:   Is the artist's target reputation perceived as truthful in relation to the basic essence of the artist's evolving identity? If not, what should we change in our reputation management process to match the artist's reputation with his basic identity?

3.3.1. Celetoids and fraudulent artist images

The list in the previous chapter is compiled with the aim of building long-lasting careers for popular music artists. If the purpose of marketers and artists is to make fast profit with short-term projects the artist's basic identity, target image and perceived image do not necessarily need to be identical and unified, for the public personality is meant to be alive only for a short period. The one important thing in short-term money making projects is to create a target image that will draw attention and create drama, perhaps even scandals, in the media.

Chris Rojek calls celebrities that receive their moment of fame through drastically manipulated appearances *'celetoids'*. For him celetoids are accessories of cultures organised around mass communications and staged authenticity. Celetoids are often constructed around sexual scandal, symbolising the hypocrisy or corruption of public figures. (Rojek 2001: 20 - 22). A good example of a celetoid in the popular music charts of 2004 could be for instance *Günther*, a Swedish singer performing with scantily dressed women. *Günther's* music is mainly targeted for young audiences. "Pleasureman" *Günther* performs naughty lyrics (e.g. "Ooh, you touch my ta-la-laa, my ding-ding-dong" and "I want you to be my love toy") along with children's song-like melodies and riffs. When looking at *Günther's* and his women's dresses and physical appearance the visual similarities with glamour seeking rap and hip-hop artists become apparent. Also the music of a perversely performing adult male that attracts primary school aged audience catches attention. To smoothen the ambiguous image of *Günther* his Web site informs us that: *"Günther's four main things in his life are Champagne, Glamour, Love and Respect"* (www.gunthernet.com).

A celetoid presentation of an artist does not necessarily signify a false presentation. A celetoid can be an exaggerated and stereotypical presentation of certain features of the artist. But a celetoid can also be built on a fully staged authenticity. *Erkki Karvonen* calls staged presentations fraudulent or illusionary presentations. According to *Karvonen* (1999: 99) a fraudulent presentation is possible only in two occations. Firstly, it can be a result of the restrictions in the recipient's perception. Often in this case the recipient relates to the object through heavy prejudice. Fraudulent

presentations are also possible if the chances to encounter all the aspects of the object are restricted or inhibited. This is the case, for example with war propaganda and in situations where the access to "truthful" information is made difficult.

In the music industry the most effective way of restricting audiences' knowledge of an artist is to restrict the artist's public performances and media visibility. Within the past fifteen years there have been a couple of attempts also in the Finnish recording industry to produce an artist that merely provides the physical appearance and dancing skills to the project while a session musician has sung the vocal parts in the studio. However, as the artists' public performances could never be carried out live the media and the audience lost interest. Due to the lack of live concerts people started to doubt the authenticity of the artists. If an artist's image is not based in his "true identity" the perceived image seems usually unauthentic and false. Most often these false appearances do not last long because it becomes impossible for the performer to maintain the consensus between his private and public identities.

On the other hand, *Gamson* (1994: 77) argues that depending on the truth alone may mean losing the campaign's livelihood. He claims that fictionalising frees up the celebrity producers to be competitive against one another. The good sides in telling the truth, however, include making the selling job easier, especially if the product is genuinely outstanding or in demand. Having a basis in truth also provides the protection of "facts" if the project encounters doubts.

3.4. Artists As Brands

In this thesis a brand is conceived as a trademark and a distinctive name identifying a product, service, organisation or an artist that offers the consumers a special value through quality associations. (compare to www.thefreedictionary.com/brand).

Later in this thesis I will introduce the interviewees' conceptions regarding the concepts of 'image' and 'brand'. To me, however, 'image' and 'brand' present merely different lines of business and academic research, at least in the case of "human brands" such as artists. The core of the theories of image management and branding are the same. What makes the difference is the scope of application. In the commercial

line of business the offerings have traditionally been inanimate commodities or products that have fulfilled functional needs. In this context brand management theories have been able to show how to refine the essence of the offerings to a format that brings additional value to customers. As the product has evolved – today we talk about marketing services and experiences – it has become more complicated to apply the branding theories to practice. In the case of this study we talk about artists as the originators of experiences. Of course the branding theories have also evolved. For instance *David Aaker's* Brand Identity Planning Model, presented partly in the next chapter, has been created for today's complex markets. However, what has always bothered me in the branding theories is that the way the hypotheses are presented seem often to scratch only the surface of things. Catchphrases and drawings are an excellent way of minimising the message to a memorable format, but do they have the power to reveal the essence of human brands? I personally doubt it to some extent. Communications theories on the other hand have always involved the aspect of two or more people communicating with one another. Image management theories belonging to the tradition of communications research have helped us to realise how the appearance, verbal expressions and conduct of the transmitting individual affect the recipient's will to receive and conceive messages. Therefore I am willing to mix the two traditions of commercial and communications research when discussing the artist brands. To me the last stage of image formation process (presented on page 23 under the topic "reputation formation") is the same as reaching the stages of brand preference and brand loyalty.

Philip Kotler (2003: 422) argues that if organisations want to refine an ordinary product into a brand, they need to be aware of the five stages of the process of constructing brand value for a product. At one extreme we have brands that are 1) not known by most buyers. In the next stage we have brands for which buyers have a fairly high degree of 2) brand awareness. The third stage includes the 3) brand acceptability. Brands that enjoy a high degree of 4) brand preference and 5) brand loyalty, are the brands that attract the most committed customers.

Brands that are unknown have the lowest brand value and capability of producing lesser profits. In an artist's life this would correlate to the stage where the artist is still

looking for a record deal and performing mainly to his friends and early adaptors[4]. The brand awareness for an artist would correlate to the launching phase of the artist's career and his first record release backed up by a record company's marketing efforts.

According to *Blackwell* and *Stephan* (2004: 36 – 37, 219) brand acceptability is a sign of an artist becoming culturally relevant which makes it possible to build a long-lasting and successful career for an artist. Artists that become rock'n'roll legends are relevant to the values of the fans. **Cultural relevancy is created by matching the product with consumers' lifestyles, values, belief systems, and basic needs.** If bands continue to stay in tune with their fans' lifestyles, they will build long-term loyalty.

The good success rates of an artist's first release and his first tour can be seen as signs of cultural acceptance by the market. If a record does not sell and the gig venues remain empty that is the result of either cultural rejection or the record label's poor implementation of marketing strategies. The cultural rejection is a result of a non-effective or non-efficient marketing communications or a choice of launching a product that does not simply have demand on the market.

Brand preference and brand loyalty are built over time. Brand preference and brand loyalty are the results of fans being emotionally and intellectually bonded with the artist. Emotional and intellectual bonding needs time to develop. *Blackwell* and *Stephan* (2004: 57 - 58) point out that in the building of long-term loyalty it is not enough for the bands to create new music. Artists and bands that want to become legends must regularly reinvent themselves also in other terms in order to avoid becoming outdated and irrelevant.

3.4.1 The Brand Identity System

Aaker's and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Identity Planning Model will not be presented here fully because the full description would lead us to discuss matters that are not in the core of this research. Instead only the Brand Identity System that is part of the Brand Identity Planning model will be under examination.

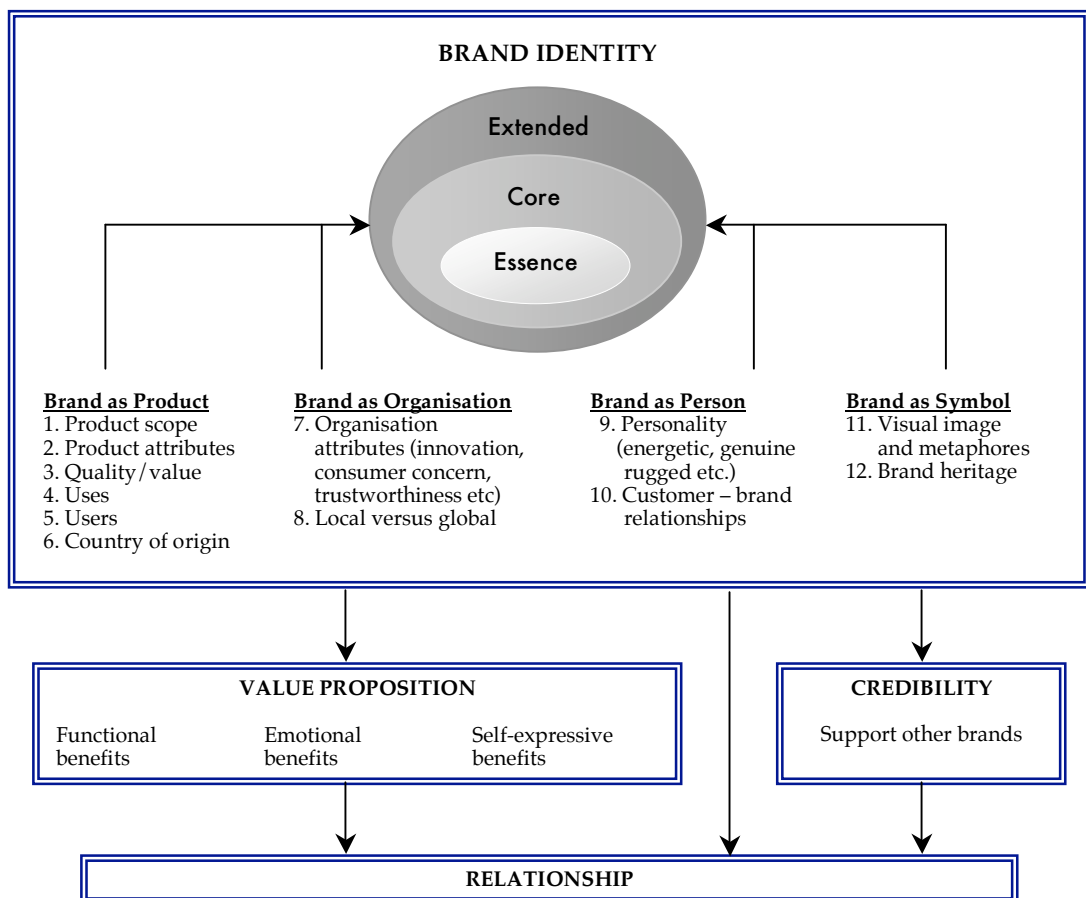[4] During a product launch the early adaptors and innovators are the main target groups. They are a group of people that adapt new ideas and trends the first. Early adaptors can be characterised as being venturous, cosmopolitan, and priviledged (attitude and possession of money). They are socially active and on the way up on the ladder of social scale. (www.homebusiness-knowhow.com/customer-targeting-marketing.htm).

Aaker and *Joahimsthaler* (2002: 43) argue that brand identity is a set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain for a product. Brand identity consists of a core identity, an extended identity and a brand essence.

According to *Aaker* (1996: 85 – 88) the core identity represents the timeless essence of the brand. The core identity contains associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets. The extended identity includes elements that provide texture and completeness to the brand. It fills in the picture, adding details that help portray what the brand stands for. According to *Aaker* and *Joahimsthaler* (2002: 43, 45) the extended identity includes all the brand elements that are not in the core. The extended identity elements can be organised into meaningful groupings under four perspectives that include twelve categories. The perspectives are: 1) brand as product, 2) brand as organisation, 3) brand as person, and 4) brand as symbol. Virtually no brand has associations in all twelve categories.

BRAND IDENTITY

Extended

Core

Essence

Brand as Product
1. Product scope
2. Product attributes
3. Quality/value
4. Uses
5. Users
6. Country of origin

Brand as Organisation
7. Organisation
   attributes (innovation,
   consumer concern,
   trustworthiness etc)
8. Local versus global

Brand as Person
9. Personality
   (energetic, genuine
   rugged etc.)
10. Customer – brand
    relationships

Brand as Symbol
11. Visual image
    and metaphores
12. Brand heritage

VALUE PROPOSITION

Functional
benefits

Emotional
benefits

Self-expressive
benefits

CREDIBILITY

Support other brands

RELATIONSHIP

Figure 2: Brand Identity System according to Aaker and Joahimsthaler (2002: 44).

For example the core identity of *Antti Tuisku*, the singer who finished third place in the Finnish Idols in January 2004, could be crystallised to *Antti's* talent being in the public eye. From the very first beginning *Antti* has showed exceptional skills in confronting his audience and the media. *Antti's* social skills, his cute looks and the pop tunes he sings are the basic building materials of *Antti's* core identity. These are the qualities that also an international audience would recognise in him immediately. An essential part of *Antti's* extended identity is that he comes from Rovaniemi, the biggest town in Lapland. To an international audience this aspect bears no meaning at all, but the Finnish popular music fans connect specific values and conceptions to artists that come from Rovaniemi, Tampere or Turku. All these towns are automatically connected with certain types of music genres and artist personalities.

The Brand Essence is often dressed in a form of a statement that crystallises the dimensions and the essence of the brand's core and the extended identities to the customers (Aaker & Joahimsthaler 2002: 45). In the image formulation model the Brand Essence would correspond to the story that is created in the promotion process to summarise the artist's identity and quality. *Antti Tuisku's* Brand Essence could be for example: "A true pop star who does everything with a big heart".

In the case of artist brands 'brand as product' points out to the qualities and attributes of the artist himself. But it can also point out to the scope of different products, i.e. the merchandise that is created around the artist. 'Brand as organisation' is demonstrated in the artist's backers: the record label and its personnel, the booking agent, the manager, and the touring organisation. 'Brand as person' is demonstrated on the artist's music and in his personality traits, i.e. his way of interacting with the audience. In a case of a band one or two members usually give a face and a personality to the band. If an artist wants to become successful, he must be able to crystallise his musical and personal styles in a logo presenting the artist's name. This demonstrates the 'brand as symbol' –perspective. Besides the logo and possible other symbols, all artists reflect the symbolic perspective also in their clothes, hairstyles, and conduct. Showing satanic or peace signs in gigs are also symbols that the artist wants to connect his brand with.

To clarify *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* four brand perspectives I will use the rock band *HIM* as an example. *HIM's* 'brand as person' –aspect is reflected mainly through the vocalist *Ville Valo*. The band's public image and reputation, i.e. the *HIM* brand, is demonstrated to the public mainly in *Ville Valo's* thoughts, conduct and visual traits. *Ville* has been profiled as an intellectual artist that has original ideas even though the content of the music is fairly mainstream and ordinary. *Ville's* physical appearance is androgyne, almost feminine, even though he has a deep masculine voice and the band acts in the hard rock genre. The applicability of the band in different audience segments has been made possible through the ambiguity of the band. In *HIM* there is something for everybody. Audiences with hard rock preference build the bonding with the band through *HIM's* music. With some the bonding is built through *Ville Valo's* appeal. The ambiguity has also made it possible that *Ville Valo* can be displayed both in rock and women's magazines without it affecting the band's credibility.

HIM's brand as symbol –perspective is demonstrated in the "Heartagram" symbol that resonates the band's musical concept of "Love Metal", i.e. hard rock music that actually is not heavy metal music, but as it has been named distinctively, it is associated as a special kind of heavy metal music played only by *HIM*. The Heartagram symbol is built from a heart that has merged with a pentagram turned upside down. As the symbol is connected with the vocalist *Ville Valo's* deep and lazy voice singing: "when love and death embrace", there is no doubt what the band and the brand is about. The symbolic level of the brand is demonstrated all through the scope of different products connected to *HIM's* brand.

The brand as organisation shows in *HIM's* choice of people and organisations that work to promote the band's career. *HIM's* manager *Seppo Vesterinen* has gained reputation as a manager who takes Finnish bands abroad. A&R–manager *Asko Kallonen* who has worked with the band since the mid 1990's is also one of Finland's most respected professionals in his field. *HIM's* booking agency Welldone Agency and Promotion Oy is an affiliated company of Clear Channel Entertainment and also the leading entertainment organisor in Finland. *HIM's* connection to the brands of *Vesterinen, Kallonen* and *Welldone* has also had a positive effect on the band's brand credibility.

With the value propostition *Aaker* points out that a brand needs to demonstrate its usage value to the customer in three different levels. At its best a brand offers functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits to its users. *Aaker* argues that functional benefits are benefits based on a product attribute that provides functional utility to the customer. (Aaker 1996: 95 - 96). In the context of music the functional utility can be demonstrated for instance in a situation in which music on the radio keeps a driver awake on the dark highway or that music provides a rhythmic background for an aerobic exercise.

According to *Aaker* emotional benefit is provided when the purchase or the usage of the brand gives the customer a positive feeling. He claims that emotional benefits add richness and depth to the experience of owning and using the brand. (Aaker 1996: 97). Music most often evokes people's feelings. The feelings are not necessarily solely positive for music has also the power of attracting disapproval. It is typical of fan culture that the fans differentiate themselves from the other "tribes" by taking strong emotional positions. By choosing a side the fans distinguish their place within the consumption and fan cultures. By doing so they evoke the self-expressive benefits the brand witholds. Particularly for the Generation X[5] and Generation Y[6] shoppers music is a device used for constructing an identity (Gobe 2001: 73).

Concerning the credibility aspect *Aaker* and *Joachimsthaler* (2002: 131) point out to the fact that any value proposition must be made credible for the consumers. This task is seen to be most difficult with value propositions that break new ground and involve consumer risks. By attaching a brand with strong organisational associations, however, the credibility challenge can be reduced or even eliminated.

In the music business all artists that aim to gain public recognition come to face the credibility factor. If an artist becomes successful his fans have found him credible. For an artist with a new music style winning the acceptance of an audience might prove to

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[5] It is widely disputed which are the years in which Generation X was born. The most frequent argument I have encountered includes years 1965 – 1976 which is also *Gobé*'s argument (2001: 27). Wikipedia uses a wider scale of 1961 – 1981 but acknowledges also the year range from 1964 - 1976 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_X).

[6] This area is also widely disputed. Wikipedia intoduces three sets of birth years for the Generation Y: 1983-2002 to 1981-1997 and 1976-1994. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y). I personally tend to bend towards *Gobé's* opinion on 1977 – 1994 (2001: 27).

be a demanding task. In such cases *Aaker* and *Joachimsthaler* suggest that the artist brand should be connected to an older, well-known brand that the audiences have already found credible. In the music business this would mean that an artist could break through on a record label that already has the acceptance of the selected target group. It could also mean that a journalist would choose to write about an artist on the basis of a suggestion made by a record company worker that has proved to be credible in his earlier encounters with the journalist. But the easiest way to gain credibility is to produce a product that evokes such strong emotions that the public cannot resist.

The last aspect in the Brand Identity System is relationship. The relationship construct points out to the quality of the relationship between the brand and the customer. It is desirable that the relationship would resemble a personal one. For example Microsoft aims to be a mentor to its customers. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler 2002: 50).

In the context of artist brands it is obvious that the artist-fan relationships resemble personal relationships even though they have been formed at least to some extent through para-social interaction (= *Rojek's* term), i.e. through media representations of the artists. If the artists wish they can deepen the bonding with fans for example in chat rooms in the Internet. Also the artist's conduct in relation to any public performances, whether being a shopping trip to the nearby grossery store or a concert in a club, can strengthen or weaken the relationship between the artist and the fans.

3.5. Marketing Artist Brands

Brands have a life cycle in the same way as ordinary products. According to *Gobé* (2001: 273) the brand cycle starts with brand creation that correlates to the product launch or the introduction of a product to the market. The growth phase of the market correlates in the brand environment to brand evolution. The maturity phase requires repositioning of the brand. In the decline phase the brand must be re-launched.

The marketing communication tools the record companies have at their disposal are traditionally conceived as: advertising, public relations, sales promotion and personal sales. Direct marketing, word of mouth, sponsorship and brand collaborations are also gaining a foothold on the side.

According to *Kotler* (2003: 582) different promotional tools should be used at different stages of the product's life cycle. If a company strives for cost-effective marketing communications it should carefully consider which of the Promotion Mix tools bring the biggest benefit. In the introduction stage, *Kotler* recommends advertising and publicity creation, which should be complemented by personal selling to gain distribution coverage and sales promotion to induce trial of the product. In the growth stage, word of mouth is an effective way of generating demand. In the maturity stage, the mixture of sales promotion, advertising, and personal selling can prolong the product's life cycle. As the product slides to the decline stage, sales promotion should continue strongly, while other promotional activities should be reduced in order to free the organisation's resources to new projects.

Rope and *Mether* (2001: 26, 87 - 88) note that marketers that aim to use marketing communications tools efficiently must understand what kind of psychological impact their marketing messages have on individuals. In addition to understanding people, marketers need to understand the needs of the people, as well as the factors that are in effect in the purchasing process. *Rope* and *Mether* argue that people's feelings are usually manipulated through paid advertising. The aim is to appeal to the emotional factors that guide individual behaviour. In order to use the advertising tool efficiently marketers need to understand the need hierarchy. People's attitudes are manipulated through marketing communications. The aim is to appeal to the rational factors that affect consumers' buying decisions. With marketing communications *Rope* and *Mether* refer to the whole range of marketing communication tools. People's experiences are manipulated through conditioning the people as product users by letting them try out the product before purchasing it. The aim is to influence the image formation process, and to generate buying through positive user experiences.

According to *Kotler* (2003: 565) three different phenomena affect the processes of how marketing messages are received and perceived by the recepients. The phenomena are selective attention, selective distortion and selective retention. In the case of selective attention *Kotler* notes that people are bombarded by about 1 600 messages a day, out of which only five percent is consciously noticed and under one percent provoke some reaction. *Selective distortion* points out to the fact the receivers will hear

what fits their belief systems. As a result percipients often add things to the message that are not there and do not notice other things that are there. Therefore the **communicator's task is to strive for simplicity, clarity, interest, and repetition to get the main points across.** *Kotler's selective retention* process refers to people only retaining a small fraction of the reached messages in their long-term memory. *Kotler* points out that if the percipient's initial attitude toward the object is positive and he or she rehearses support arguments, the message is likely to be accepted and have a high recall.

3.5.1. Advertising and music video

Kotler (2003: 420, 430) argues that a common misconception is that brands are built by advertising. An ad campaign does not create brand bonding, no matter how much the company spends on advertising. Brand bonding occurs when customers experience the company as delivering on its benefit promise. *Kotler* emphasises that **brands are built by brand experience not by advertising.**

In the music business companies can induce trial of product in order to build brand experience in various ways. Giving away free tickets to concerts, handing out free singles as sales promotion, setting a song as an incentive in the Web are just few examples of the limitless possibilities. According to *Kusek* and *Leonhard* (2005: 99) the Internet is a primary channel of attaining new information for the present day kids that mistrust mass advertising. Thus the creation of brand experience for the younger audiences should start from the Web.

But the advertising also has its proponents. *Marconi* (2004: 56) reminds that advertising is paid publicity and more controllable than PR. Thus advertising can be a better tool for image management because once a press release or an interview has been given the company has little or no control over the message. Marketers cannot affect how the marketing messages will ultimately be presented or if they will be presented at all. They cannot control what other information will appear within or adjacent to the story, and how much of the most valuable information provided will actually be introduced in the media presentation.

Music videos are constructed like advertisements. Producers can control the messages of both the videos and adds. *Virpi Koutu* (2000: 32) argues that music videos are an important part of strengthening an artist's image. According to *Banks* (1996: 139, 145) music videos are not expected to boost sales of new acts immediately, but rather, they are used as a part of a long-term promotional strategy designed to familiarise consumers with emerging artists. *Banks* also claims that music videos have had a huge impact to the market as a gatekeeper and a filtering system of aspiring artists. *Banks* suggests that music video has influenced record companies' criteria for signing artists. Apart from singing, performing and song-writing talents record labels are paying more attention to the importance of a musician's visual appearance.

3.5.2. Managing media and publicity

Publicity can bluntly be described as free editorial or free coverage on television, radio, papers and magazines. Publicity is designed to turn advertising into news. (Turner et al 2000: 31).

Publicity, promotion and public relations are often used as synonyms. According to *Marconi* (2004: 22, 46) public relations is an umbrella term that covers a variety of areas and functions, including communications, community relations, customer relations, consumer affairs, employee relations, industry relations, international relations, investor relations, issues management, media relations, member relations, press agentry, promotions, publicity, public affairs, shareholder relations, speechwriting, and visitor relations. Although the tasks and the possibilities of public relations are abundant, there is a common goal to be recognised. The common **goal of the public relations efforts is to generate awareness for the product**.

Rojek (2001: 76) argues that a common technique in PR-campaigns is to require the celebrity to participate in out-of-face encounters with chat-show hosts. Plugging a product on TV is more effective if celebrities use the occasion to open up, and reveal personality layers that are hidden from the screen persona. Celebrities may slip out of the role in chat show interviews so as to appear more human. But what must be kept in mind is that if they do so continuously they neutralise the charisma on which their status as exalted and extraordinary figures depends.

According to *Wicke* (1987: 133 - 134) the apparatus of promotion is constructed so that it creates a field of reference, which draws in the listener as an active participant, thereby influencing him in a subtle way. The listener himself must find the record presented to him so important that he recognises its existence and possibly even buys it. The repeated playing of the record on the radio, press comments, interviews with the musicians, and television appearances tend to lead to the conclusion that this record must be important. The buyer is not persuaded to feel like this, nor directly forced to, rather the rules of the whole system rely on his free, voluntary and active participation. It is not the music that makes the record more important but the frame of reference in which the music industry places it.

As *Rojek* and *Wicke* described, promotion is about affecting the consumer's mental and emotional processes by making the consumer feel that the artist and his music are important. Thus *Ikävalko* (in Uimonen 1996: 194 - 195) argues that media publicity is considered to be more effective than advertising because messages published as news are perceived more neutral and trustworthy than messages transmitted by paid advertising.

Also according to *Kimmo Valtanen's* (2003: 183) research findings publicity is seen as the most important part of the marketing in the record industry. Artists with strong identities have the power to evoke interest in the media. If the message born as the result of the branding process is strong enough the effect of publicity exceeds the effects of paid advertising.

Uimonen (1996: 19) reminds us that image creators act in a media environment in which journalists have the role of a gatekeeper. *Ikävalko* (in Uimonen 1996: 190, 206, 209) continues by claiming that journalists have the power to decide which messages are published and which are not. Apart from public service broadcasters media companies are commercial enterprises operating in a competitive enviroment in which their goal is simultaneously to please audiences, advertisers and collaborators. Intensity of the competition brings its own share to the communication process. Thus **competition regulates how the media relates to the objects it is presenting.**

Apart from commercial grounds decision-making in the media is based on ideological objectives. For instance public service broadcasters such as Yleisradio (Finnish Broadcasting Company) in Finland has tasks in relation to the maintenance and strengthening of national identity. All the same, as *Koutu* (2000: 30) points out, it is not only the artists and the record companies that wrestle with image questions. *Koutu* notes that also the **media has its own**, carefully planned **image**. Therefore an artist who aspires to gain publicity in order to build his image has to think carefully which publications and electronic media he wants to link his name and face with.

Thus the creation of media publicity is a two-way street. The media reflects – and often emphasises – values that artists communicate with their actions and words (Ahokas et al. 2004: 129). But also the journalists' and the media's values and conceptions affect the image formation of organisations (and artists) as they are blended into the communications process (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 190).

Because of the media's own objectives, record companies need to match their record project's objectives with the media's interest. According to *Marconi* companies' media-savvyness and willingness to comply with media requests can however also bear negative results. *Marconi* argures that sometimes the companies might even act against their own best interests in the search for publicity. (Marconi 2002: 118). Apart from the companies' willingness to manipulate the messages to match the media's objectives, the nature of the media presentation and harsh competition set their own requirements for the creators of marketing messages. *Erkki Karvonen* argues that **public images presented in the media are** usually **reduced and simplified images** because it is easier to make sense out of different phenomena in the complex world with simplifications. However, **simplifications lead** unavoidably **to stereotyping and lack of diversity**. (Karvonen 1999: 19). To record labels the media environment and the nature of the media presentation bring a challenge. When seeking publicity for an artist's record project the companies need to consider every time if the message delivered by the media gives a correct image of the artist and his music.

Another distortive aspect in relation to marketing communications efforts is according to *Marconi* (2002: 117) connected to the fact that *"today's media has a large appetite for bad news"*. *Marconi* argues that the concept of unbiased, objective reporting has

been de-emphasised in favour of more colourful presentations, while also the lines between hard and soft news have been blurred. *Turner, Bonner* and *Marshall* (2000: 93 – 94) add that media exposure can fairly easily get out of control. While there may not be such a thing as bad publicity, most publicists would agree that exposure can be dangerous if unforeseen or unplanned. They argue that a poor handling of media interest can destroy professional careers. Thus media management also involves restricting the flow of information to the public, by regulating the media's access or by deliberately lying.

Media publicity can never be gained by force. According to *Ahokas*, *Nikula* and *Pesonen* (2004: 123) media interest is not created by pushing an artist to the media. The media does not become interested in an artist until the artist's work and the audience have grown to be significant enough.

3.6. The Future of Brand Marketing

Whilst consumers have historically purchased products, people now want to immerse themselves in positive experiences that address their needs, concerns, hopes and aspirations. Companies therefore need to provide brand experiences that go beyond the functional attributes. (Duffy & Hooper 2003: 6).

Our economy is in transition. The Service Economy is gradually transforming itself into an experience emphasising economy. The music industry has warmed up slowly to the changing economical environment and new technologies, which has plunged the industry into turmoil. The Service Economy has accustomed us to customised and intangible products. In the Experience Economy audiences seek for fully personified and memorable sensations whose value is preserved and developed further in the course of time (Pine & Gilmore 1999: 6). Instead of customised services future successors will market personified experiences and emotions. If we think of the record industry and the fact that a notable amount of its products are still published in tangible forms, and the marketing is still concentrated on selling physical records with no extra value involved, it seems that even some Service Economy principles have been disregarded. According to *Pine* and *Gilmore* (1999: 6) the ideology of selling standardised, tangible products (such as CDs) prevailed and flourished in the Industrial

Economy. Of course no clear time limits can be set to determine the beginning and ending of different economical eras for they overlap on each other. Instead it can be noted that sticking to a mass production of standardised tangible products has not been a good business idea for a while – not at least for the past ten to fifteen years.

Apart from being a promotion channel for artists and music the Internet is also a market place. Thus *Kusek* and *Leonhard* (2005: 57) predict that in the near future "*marketing will be distribution*" As the consumers find a marketing message from the Web they can immediately purchase the product with one bush of a button.

The globality of the Internet is another strength this new medium posesses. The Internet enables instant global distribution without huge capital investments in traditional distribution networks. The consolidation of marketing and distribution also enables instant on-demand distribution. On-demand distribution refers to the fact that music can be distributed via Internet and mobile phones, or it can be mechanised to a physical format such as a CD or a hard drive on the basis of a placed order. This saves music distributors from having their stocks full of unsold records. The new technology can also be utilised in traditional record stores. In practice the consumers would select various songs from a catalogue, which the store personnel would then burn to a CD simultaneously as they print a cover to go with the record, while the customer awaits. When record industry capital is no longer needed to cover manufacturing, storage and distribution costs of unsold records, more money is left to other activities such as marketing. Some artists have already utilised the new digital business model by deciding to produce and distribute music themselves. Record companies were in the old days needed to finance manufacturing, distribution and marketing costs of records. As it has become possible to reduce record projects' expenditure, artists have been able to make more money to their own benefit by taking over activities belonging formerly to record companies.

It is not only artists who benefit from the new digital business model. To customers the new form of trade means that they are no longer forced to buy 12 songs from one artist at one purchase. In the future economy customers can build their own customised collections of their favourite tunes by various artists through the Internet and order the package to their computers, telephones, TV-sets, and media players. *Kusek* and

Leonhard (2005: 13) argue that such empowerment of consumers is not, however, what most record labels desire. If music will not remain a physical product, it becomes more difficult for the labels to control people's music consumption habits and consumer behaviour.

There is also another "but" in this glorious picture of future music business environment. To record companies and artists the new business model does not only mean cost reductions. After covering recording and mixing costs record companies need to reach customers with information about their new releases. That of course is more easily said than done. How should record companies market an intangible good, i.e. music when it is not sold in a tangible form? What is actually the future product of record companies? Should record companies be in the business of selling records, music, songs, artists, or brands? What is the role of celebrity value in the future business model if physical formats cease to exist?

As demonstrated above in the Experience Economy record companies need to develop their sales methods and distribution channels. More emphasis must be put on developing pull-push sales strategies. In the pull-push model record companies no longer set CDs into shops waiting for a customer to come and buy them as a result of an inspiring advertisement on television. Instead, record companies need to start creating publicity increasingly through other channels besides the traditional mass media. One interesting method of marketing music could be provided by word of mouth, which in my opinion has not been utilised effectively enough in the music business. Word of mouth is not the most efficient way of communication in relation to masses but it is by far the most credible and effective way of communication. Would you not believe your best friend when he praises an artist's most recent record to you?

Nothing works better than word of mouth as a promotion when the message is positive. But word of mouth can also break the reputation of a brand. *Gobé* (2001: 267) argues that word of mouth has credibility – it is trusted – because it is based on someone's personal experience.

Also rumours and gossip can be used as a part of marketing communications. While the effect of such media treatment may be unpleasant and destructive in many

instances, it can also carry benefits. Gossip operates as a form of social bonding. It helps to negotiate norms for social behaviour. It also plays an important role in providing information and social knowledge. Through gossip a celebrity is virtually added to our social circle. (Turner et al 2000: 12, 14 – 15).

Urban myths are even more efficient as a marketing communications tool than gossip. *Grant* (2003: 202) argues that urban myths with a good story structure last longer than gossip. Myths, on the other hand, are the creators of legends.

3.6.1. The significance of dialogue in marketing

John Grant (2003: 4) argues that brand image marketing is old-style marketing. He claims that brand images ruled the second half of the 20th century and now in the beginning of the 21st century the marketers should concentrate on expanding people's minds with new concepts rather than hypnotising them with brand images.

Grant (2003: 146) bases his ideology on cognitive science. To him, brand-image building is all about attention and memory, and its disadvantage is that it does not require any active cognitive involvement. According to him true learning and adaptation requires active involvement from the audience. Brand image suites well to passive reception for it has low cognitive demands.

In the launching process of a new record and an artist record companies are in fact educating audiences to become emotionally involved with their product. *Grant* argues that any learning process is utilised most fully only if it is based on a dialogue because "*conversation builds trust*" (Grant 2003: 192). In engaging in conversation, for example in word of mouth and gossiping situations, people automatically try to create consensus between the discussing parties. If brand marketers manage to engage their target market into a dialogue with each other and with the artist, for instance in a chat room built on the Web, the brand has a better chance of attracting acceptability. And as demonstrated earlier in this thesis, acceptability among the audience has the possibility to lead to brand preference and brand loyalty.

3.6.2. The Internet as a dialogue and a brand-building medium

Aaker and *Joachimsthaler* (2002: 233, 237 – 240) argue that Web is all about experiences. It is interactive and thus involving. In the Web the role of the audience is an active one. According to *Aaker* and *Joachimsthaler* for brand building on the Web marketers can use Web sites, E-mail, Web PR, advertising and sponsored content together with the company's intranet and extranet that connects the company members and customers. Web sites can be tailored to the needs of the brand and the customer-brand relationship. E-mail can be used for personalised contacts between brands, brand-makers and consumers. Web PR involves Web communication that is not controlled by the brand, such as personal home pages, news- and gossip-oriented sites, discussion groups, and chat rooms. Intranet is used for identity and brand re-enforcement within the organisation. Customer extranets open up a part of the intranet to customers linking them with the internal system of the company behind the brand. Extranets usually allow the customer to access information, process orders, and receive backup support, just as if the customer were a part of the organisation. Advertising and sponsored content are most often banner ads and other paid Web placements that provide visibility and associations to stimulate people to click through to sponsors' or advertisers' Web pages.

Gobé (2001: 242 – 243) ads that the Web provides inherent opportunities for the marketers to express the emotional components of brands. One of the most effective concepts on the Web is the idea of unhindered communication. Brand communities can be fostered around the fact that buyers can communicate with each other, learn from each other, and help each other.

3.6.3. What has changed?

Kusek and *Leonhard* (2005: 57 – 60) point out that for the past seventy years or so, the major record labels have controlled the marketing and distribution of music, along with their radio and retail partners. They note that now as the new digital interactive media is gaining a more prominent role in the marketing and distribution of music, also the promotion tactics are changing. Promotion of new music in commercials (e.g. collaboration of U2 and iPod), video games, toys, mobile phones and on the Web is

gaining more ground. As the result the symbiotic relationship between radio stations, DJs, promoters and record labels has started to crumble. *Kusek* and *Leonhard* argue that so far the consolidation of controlled and programmed playlists has made it nearly impossible for independent artists to get any relevant radio airplay. The lack of regionally and individually controlled radio programming has made traditional radio a far less attractive means of marketing music. According to *Kusek* and *Leonhard* this is one of the primary reasons why the recording industry is in such trouble. The marketing channels record companies have traditionally used have not served the purposes of launching new music and new artist careers efficiently enough.

Besides the marketing possibilities offered by the Web, record labels have turned to product associations and the placement of songs in film, video, and television programming. Music has been marketed to some degree via product tie-ins for many years, but sponsorships have increasingly been used to introduce new music and services to the public. Also mobile phone technology is increasing its share in the promotion of music. Using a combination of text messaging and picture transportation, mobile phone owners can now receive information such as tour dates, album releases, special events, and songs. Studies in Europe show that SMS-marketing is a much more effective method of advertising than television or radio, or even e-mail. (Kusek & Leonhard 2005: 64, 69 - 72).

Kusek and *Leonhard* (2005: 66 – 68) further note that record labels have traditionally mass marketed music to the fans. Because of this the record labels have not had a real idea of who has purchased the label's CDs. Labels and fans have not had a direct relationship before. Direct marketing, when properly done, is a way of establishing a direct relationship between the company and its customers. If music companies were to develop direct marketing techniques, they could deliver music and other artist related merchandise directly to fans for instance through mailing lists and fan clubs. The Internet works at its best when used to reach a targeted market niche. *Kusek* and *Leonhard* claim that knowing the audience and then engaging them – encouraging them to recommend an artist to friends, finding other artists like them, and expanding the relationships – all can lead to an engine that propels careers forward. Pay-for-access music subscription sites, which include live chats with artists, backstage passes, priority tickets, personalised merchandise, clothing, posters, games, and samples from

forthcoming albums, create entirely new experiences for music fans and strong relationships between the company and their customers.

The primary aim of today's recording industry should be in the creation of attraction and need for industry's products. The industry should perhaps even take a more active role in the development of the market and new trends in order to increase sales. Emphasis in the development work should be put on new technical solutions and more luring content. When a customer feels a need for a product or a service he is willing to invest lots of energy in obtaining it. In the pull-push tactics audiences must be educated to be active and to look for products and services they know to exist. For the record companies the challenge here lies in the solutions with which the customers' attention is reached. In the Internet gaining customer attention is far more challenging than it has been with the radio and television. The Internet users must search for information actively while the traditional mass media can be consumed fairly passively aside of, for example, driving or cooking. Additionally, record companies need to be able to differentiate their products from the ones of their competitors. If a customer can be tied emotionally to a record label or an artist, he is more likely to use that company's services or to buy the artist's future records. Branding has proved to be an efficient and effective tool for creating visibility, attraction, and customer loyalty. Strong brands that are connected to a record label and its artists send a clear message of a chosen value structure and a life world that either appeals to customers or appals them. Either way strong emotions and publicity are created.

4. IMAGE MANAGEMENT AND BRANDING IN PRACTICE

Record companies' core product is traditionally conceived to be a record and the music in it. The limited business area limits record labels' possibilities to utilise artist brands. One of the interviewees, marketing manager *Mia Salo* from EMI Finland explains the record companies position as follows:

> *"Record companies sell music because artists aren't their property. Thus music is the core product of the recording industry. From the point of view of the whole music business the artist is the core product. Also for an average consumer artists are in the core of branding. But for the music lovers the music is in the core – they go and buy a certain song. And generally it's the songs that raise the interest of the audience to go and buy an artist's records." (Salo 2005).*

Three different kinds of interests affect branding practices in the music business. These are the interests of the recording industry, the music industry (record business + music publishing + touring + merchandising), and the audience. In this thesis it is presumed that in the development of brand preference and brand loyalty artists have a significant role not only in the music industry but also in the recording business.

In this section, seven record company professionals discuss the praxis of artist branding. This section provides answers to the following questions:

1. How are the concepts of image, artist image management, and artist brands conceived in the Finnish recording industry?

2. From which components is an artist brand constructed?

3. What does the process of artist branding include?

4. How are artist brands developed and reinvented?

5. How do the artist brands differ from product-based brands?

6. How do the record companies market artists and their music? How does the artist brand influence the marketing practices?

7. What kind of role does the media have in the formation and development of artist brands?

8. What are the future trends that might affect artist branding?

4.1. Defining the Artist Brand and Artist's Image

According to *Pekka Nieminen* (2005), Marketing Manager of Helsinki Music Company Ltd, people in the field of music shun away from the terms of 'image management' and 'branding'. *Nieminen* argues that music professionals are often insulted when commercial ideas and language of the advertising agencies are brought to the context of music. *"Most people are in the music business because they love music. Methods used to increase the sales of chocolate bars and tampons do not fit in this picture. The core product, i.e. music, is so highly respected that commercial viewpoints are rather pushed away."*

Nieminen (2005) further explains that the concept of image management has gained a negative tone in the Finnish music business due to the *Hannele Laurila* indicent in the 90's. In the 1990's manager *Hannele Laurila* made a brand of herself as a creator of stars. When *Laurila* did not show any real substance to her claims, her artists started to rebel and *Laurila* was forced to take a lower profile. *Nieminen* claims that for nearly ten years the media was stuck with the idea that one of the main tasks of record companies was to influence artists' images. *"The public still thinks that record companies build artificial images for artists in order to make money. This is the reason why the recording industry wants to get rid of the term image".*

In opposition to *Nieminen*, marketing manager *Mia Salo* (2005) dislikes the tone of branding. She would rather use the term 'image' in relation to artists. In her opinion 'image' describes better the actual work she does in connection to the formation process of mental pictures.

Kimmo Kivisilta (2005), Marketing Director of Universal, notes that the terminology of image management and artist brands are never used with artists. *Kivisilta* feels that there is no need for artists to know about the lingo of the marketing department. In fact he points out that it is extremely important for artists not to feel like they are treated as products. It is a part of the artist's image management that the artists do not see themselves as commodities. *"Every artist must feel that he is unique and different. Artists are in this business with their hearts bleeding."*

But *Nieminen* (2005) also recognises the importance of product differentiation in the recording business. Record companies must be able to differentiate their artists from the ones of their competitors. And from this point of view *Nieminen* argues that it is correct to talk about branding. *"Branding is about differentiation. The only difference between the music industry and other industries is that in music the brand creators need to get to the core of their product even to a greater extent."*

Brand manager *Marko Alanko* (2005) from Sony BMG argues that every artist always develops to some kind of brand. With some artists the brand is born through a more carefully thought process, while with some the brand is born on its own as a result of the artist's natural behaviour and vision.

4.1.1. The difference between artist's image and artist brand

> *"If we think from the marketing perspective 'image' and 'brand' have a slight difference of meaning. Image is more about how the artist talks and behaves. Brand is an entity constructed from the artist's image, record company's marketing efforts, the logo and the photos." (Alanko 2005).*

Nieminen (2005) argues that is easy to connect artificial styling to the concept of image. In the end however it is a thin line that separates the two concepts from one another. Image is an immediate mental picture of an artist. It is a part of the brand.

Also *Kari Hynninen* and *Mia Salo* conceive the artist brand and the artist's image as similar kinds of concepts. *Hynninen* (2005) from Suomen Musiikki Oy points out that for example in the case of *HIM* vocalist *Ville Valo*, the original image of an intellectual rocker that smokes in a chain has developed to a brand along the years. *Salo* (2005) complements *Hynninen's* thoughts by adding that a brand operates in a wider context. *"Brand is about the artist's whole career."*

The ambiguity of the two concepts becomes evident in the A&R-specialist *Asko Kallonen's* notion.

> *"I have never understood the difference between 'image' and 'brand'. To me a brand is an image with consistence. For example the politician Ilkka*

Kanerva has an image of a ladies' man. Due to his consistent behaviour this image is about to become a brand." (Kallonen 2005).

To *Hynninen, Salo* and *Kallonen* a **brand means recognisability built by consistent artist behaviour.** A&R-director *Pekka Ruuska* from Warner Music Finland adds that a brand is also something the consumers can trust (Ruuska 2005). Trust in a brand is based on consistency – knowing that the brand offers what is expected of it.

Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) challenges the previous opinions by arguing that as processes, branding and image management are two different concepts. According to him, in branding the record company is the locomotive, the engine that gets everything started. *Kivisilta* sees branding as a tool in the launch of a new artist. After the launching phase and the creation of the artist's brand it is the turn of image management. To *Kivisilta* **image management is taking care of the brand**.

4.2. How Is an Artist Brand Formed?

4.2.1. The components of an artist brand

In the formulation process of an artist's brand A&R-specialist *Kari Hynninen* recognises the importance of finding out **what makes the artist unique** (Hynninen 2005). This approach has to do with the differentiation of artists. With differentiation record companies try to create competitive advantage.

Generally an artist **brand is built on the artist's identity, his values and the vision** the artist has about his future (Nieminen 2005). Values are discussed by the marketing and promotion personnel as they create a background story for the artist in order to pitch the project to the media and to the public (Alanko 2005).

As *Alanko* (2005) pointed out in the previous chapter, **the artist's image is affected by the artist's conduct and the way he expresses himself verbally**. According to *Hynninen* record companies can try to affect the identity formation through speech by coaching artists to confront the media. He argues that often artists do not recognise what is important from the media's point of view. Sometimes artists simply do not

think before they speak. Thus in some cases record companies advise their artists on interview conduct in order to prevent unwanted utterations that affect the artist's image. (Hynninen 2005). Apart from proactive coaching there are not many other possibilities to control what kind of image the artist creates for himself in interviews.

Also the **musical content and the music genre affect the artist brand**. *Nieminen* (2005) takes an example from the Finnish schlager and pop music genres. According to him in Finnish schlager music artists are encouraged to take an image of a "girl next door". But in pop music familiarity and safety are not the values of an appealing artist. In the trendier pop scene artists have to be mysterious. *"It's a part of the current pop culture that you need to be distant."*

After discovering the qualities of an artist's basic identity together with the choice of the music style, the process of brand formulation turns to finding out the special features from the exterior. As marketing manager *Mia Salo* (2005) points out: *"Nowadays it's seldom enough that the mere content, the music, is good and properly produced."*

Hynninen (2005) argues that in artist image management a good record cover is everything**.** The content of the record and the artist culminates in the record cover. Also the photos are extremely important. For the most part the audience's mental picture of an artist is based on his visual appearance rather than his music.

For the photos the artist needs a stylist to perk up the physical appearance so that the favourable features of the artist become noticeable. But as marketing director of Universal *Kimmo Kivisilta* points out styling is not branding. Styling is a part of branding. (Kivisilta 2005). The optimal situation would be that after a suitable look has been found for the album cover, the artist would also demonstrate these features in his public performances for the whole record cycle. But according to *Salo* (2005) it is unrealistic to expect that the record company could regulate what the artist wears or how he styles his hair for the next year. The initiative must come from the artist. In *Salo's* opinion *Maija Vilkkumaa* is a good example of an artist who styles herself for her gigs in the same way as she looks in her previous album cover.

For *Hynninen* (2005) the optimal situation in the process of image building occurs when **the core of the artist can be crystallised in one or two sentences**. For example *"Antti Tuisku is Finland's equivalent to Justin Timberlake"* is a clear message. In the 90's when *Hynninen* worked with *Apocalyptica* he pitched the band to the media and the public with a story: *"Four cellists from Sibelius Academy play Metallica with their cellos"*. In *HIM's* case the brand can be condensed to two words: *"Love Metal"*.

Based on the previous notes we can find four different layers in the artist brand. In the core of the artist brand is the artist's identity as an individual and an artist. Besides the personality traits the artist's identity is defined by his skills as a musician and a performer. Also his values, vision and ways of conduct are found in the core. In other words the core of an artist brand is formed from the artist's personality and talent. In *Elisa Ikävalko's* image formulation process this phase corresponds to the phase of identity recognition and definition. In the process of identity definition answers to the following three questions must be found. Firstly, why does the artist exist? Secondly, what are the basic qualities of the artist's "true self" and how do these qualities relate to the needs of the market? Thirdly, what are the qualities of the artist's identity that could make him distinct and memorable? In *Aaker's* and *Joahimsthaler's* Brand Identity System this layer would correspond to the Brand Core. The Brand Core is the property that contains the associations that are most likely to remain constant as the brand travels to new markets (Aaker 1996: 85). What most probably remains constant with an artist that has no mental illnesses is his personality. The personality develops as a person grows older but the core of the personality is fairly unchangeable. The artist's talent is also intrinsic. The artist can develop his skills if he wishes to.

Now we come to the question whether music belongs to the core of the artist brand or not. According to *Valtanen* (2003: 182) in the recording industry the product the record companies produce and market is conceived as a combination of the artist, his music and the associations created by the two. But if we think of *Aaker's* Brand Core definition we can also interpret the question differently. Music is not a part of the core if we think of the fact that the artist can change the style of music as for example *Isto Hiltunen* has done. Formerly *Isto Hiltunen* was a schlager music singer and now he is the lead vocalist of the rock-band *The Communists* (www.tosiviihde.com/istohiltunen/ main.html). On the other hand the music genre defines to which musical subculture the

artist belongs. But if *Aaker's* theory is interpreted strictly, music is not in the Brand Core even though music definitely defines what the artist stands for.

The elements of the artist's visual appearance (make-up, hairstyle, clothing, jewelry, weight, height) and his products (album cover, photographs, Web pages, merchandise) belong self-evidently to the Extended Brand. These are features that can be modified in order to underline certain features of the Brand Core. *Aaker* (1996: 87) limits the extended identity to include elements that provide texture and completeness to the brand by adding details that help to portray what the brand stands for.
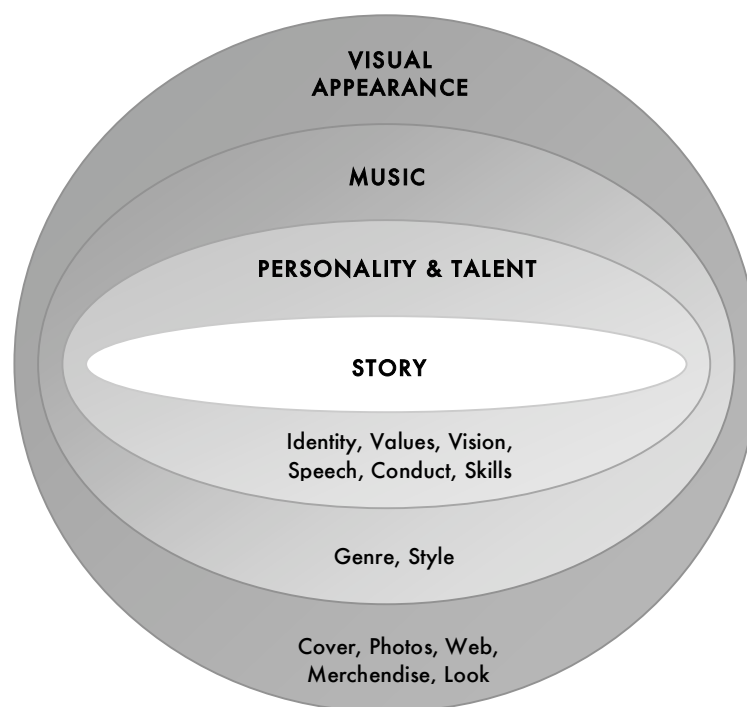
Figure 3: Components of the artist brand inspired by Aaker and Joachimsthaler

Aaker's and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Essence is analogous with 'story'. The story is what *Hynninen* (2005) describes as crystallisation of the artist's image and *Aaker* and *Joachimsthaler* (2002: 45) as a statement that draws together the Brand Core and the Extended Brand. The story is an abstract that helps the audience to recognise and remember the brand. Artists' visual traits can be presented in photos, album covers, videos and in the Web. The music is heard on radio and records. *Valtanen* (2003: 183) confirms that the crystallisation of an artist brand occurs merely through letting the recipients listen to the music and see the pictures. Thus I argue that the story should be about the artist's unique personality and exceptional way of doing things.

Ikävalko's profile creation phase presents questions that can be partly interpreted to fit the revelation of the Brand Core and partly the creation of Extended Brand identity. Image creators must be able to differentiate the artist from the others on both the Brand Core and Extended Brand levels. They must find the areas of talent in which the artist excels. They must also find ways in which the artist's talent and qualities can be processed to a more distinct entity. The question of what kind of impression the organisation wants to reflect outside from the artist is implemented in the marketing communications and in the artist's conduct in the public eye. The need for the creation of different profiles for different interest groups must be taken into consideration in the publicity strategies. Record companies must be able to find different angles about the artist's life when offering a story to a rock publication or a woman's magazine.

Public image formation in *Ikävalko's* theory has to do with the reception of the marketing messages. In the record industry the effective utilisation of this tool would be realised in an audience survey and the analysis of the survey results. According to brand manager *Marko Alanko* (2005) from Sony BMG record companies however often have to base their decisions on the personnel's and the artist's experiences, because data from surveys and other research is not generally available.

According to *Nieminen* (2005) a more interesting starting point than the Marketing Mix in the formation of artist brands is the 4-T-model presented first in *Kimmo Valtanen's* 2003 thesis for Helsinki School of Economics. The four T's come from the Finnish words 1) tuote (product), 2) tahto (will), 3) tyyli (style), and 4) tarina (story). (see also Valtanen 2003: 190 – 192 and Ahokas et al 2004: 157 – 159).

> *"'Tuote' (product) contains the physical features of the product. The artist brand contains the artist and his recordings together with the artist's ability to perform live. 'Tahto' (will) is the same as vision and mission. 'Will' is presented in the artist's will to do promotion and gigs for his success. The artist's will is the factor that defines the amount of marketing tools the record company has in its use. 'Tyyli' (style) defines what genre or product category the artist and his music represents. Style is presented through visual traits and through music arrangements. 'Tarina' (story) is the angle that makes the artist interesting to the media and the audience. 'Story' makes the artist different from other artists competing in the same genre and for the media's attention. (Valtanen 2003: 190 – 191).*
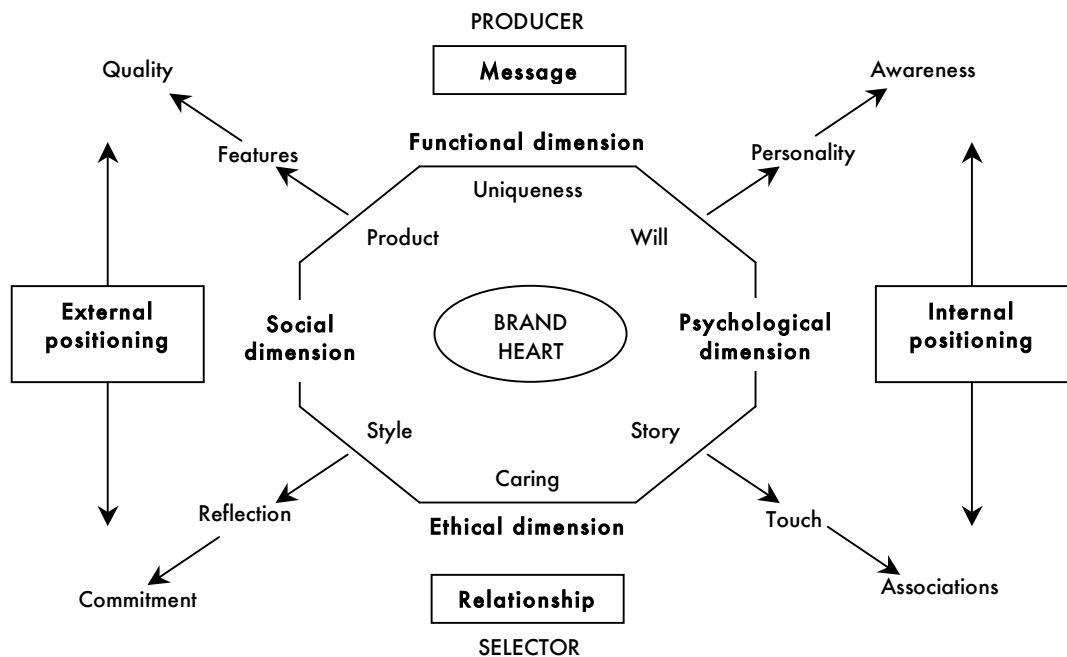
Figure 4: Brand Identity Model in the Recording Industry according to Valtanen (2003: 190).

Valtanen (2003: 49, 189 – 193) bases his Brand Identity Model in the Recording Industry on *Jean-Noel Kapferer's* Brand Identity Prism, *Thomas Gad's* Brand Envelope and *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* theorem on brand equity dimensions. In *Valtanen's* model the Brand Heart is connected to four components out of which the 'story' corresponds to the story discussed earlier in connection with the Brand Essence. The story is expected to touch the recipient. Out of this process 'associations' are evoked which help the consumer to place the brand to a meaningful context in his life. With 'reflection' in relation to 'style' *Valtanen* points to the fact, originally presented by *Kapferer,* that consumers reflect an ideal picture of the ideal product user on themselves. Out of this process 'commitment' towards the product is created. To *Valtanen* 'will' defines the direction and intensity of the artist's actions. To him *"will corresponds to personality"*[7] In the consumer the artist's personality is expected to evoke awareness of the artist's existence and uniqueness. 'Product' *Valtanen* connects to features and quality of the product. 'Product' and 'style' help the consumer to position himself in the society while 'story' and 'will' build a relationship between the consumer and the brand on mental and emotional levels.

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[7] In Finnish *Valtanen* uses the expression: "Tahto vastaa persoonallisuuteen."

To *Valtanen* (2003: 189 - 190) the Brand Heart bears to some extent same associations as *Aaker's* Brand Core. *Valtanen* motivates the usage of the term 'heart' with the fact that as the brand and the consumer always have a relationship it is easier to conceive the brand as the other partner in the relationship if the consumer experiences that the brand has a heart. *Valtanen* does not take a clear standing point on the question whether the four aspects of 4-T-model form the heart, or are aspects only connected to the heart. He himself expresses that the *"four elements leave from the heart defining the brand identity."*[8] Critique towards *Valtanen's* model is presented in section six.

4.2.2. Music in the core of artist brands

As discussed in the previous chapter music can be interpreted to belong to both the Brand Core and the extended identity. In this chapter the interviewees present opinions on why the music should be seen as a part of the core idendity of the artist brand.

A&R-director of Warner, *Pekka Ruuska* (2005), argues that in the healthiest cases the artist's core is found in his music. But record companies can sign artists based also on other grounds. Therefore the **only ground for signing artists is the artist's artistry**[9]. The artist must be exceptionally magnetic. He has to have **great appeal**. The record company personnel must have the feeling that the public wants to see, hear and experience the artist. *Ruuska* argues that in the context of artistry, **it is not enough that the artist can sing and play** and that his songs are good. An artist that sings badly or a band that cannot play together can have more artistry than an artist that sings and plays perfectly. One part of the artistry deals with **the attitude** the artist works with. Also the artist's stage presence, what he looks like on the stage and what kind of buoyance he is able to create in the audience are significant. However, the most important part of the artistry is the musical substance. The artist has to have a good song. **The song is in the core of the artistry.** *"It's not enough that the artist is star-like if his music is total manure"*. According to *Ruuska* **physical appearance does not keep the people interested** in the artist for long. *"For example the model Janina Frostell didn't succeed even though her looks are most appealing to men and*

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[8] In Finnish *Valtanen* uses the expression: "Brändin sydämestä lähtevät neljä elementtiä eli tuote, tyyli, tahto ja tarina määrittävät brandin identiteetin."

[9] In Finnish Pekka Ruuska talks about 'artistisuus'.

she's not a bad singer either. She also gained lots of media visibility but still something was missing, even though the best A&R-manager in Finland, Asko Kallonen, was working with her. People do not go and buy a record with twenty euros just because there's a beautiful woman on the cover. It's a different matter if you can connect a good tune to a beautiful woman, as was done, for example with "I can't get you out of my head" and Kylie Minogue." Record companies can exploit sex appeal only if they manage to combine an ingenious song with a super chick. *"In the end it's always about the song" Ruuska* argues. *"If this business was so easy that we could succeed with the looks of our artists we would found a company with Laila Snellman[10]. But it isn't. There are plenty of pretty girls in the world but not enough good songs."*

The co-owner of Helsinki Music Company Ltd *Asko Kallonen* (2005) accompanies *Ruuska* by noting that normally **the one thing that attracts record companies' interest is the music,** not the physical appearance of the artist. The requirement is that the artist has a good song and a good voice. Often only a good singing voice and a bundle of good ideas regarding what kind of songs the artist would like to perform is enough to convince the record company. In such projects the challenge for the record company is to find the right people to do the right things in the right way so that a good record is produced for the artist.

Also *Nieminen* and *Kivisilta* join *Ruuska's* and *Kallonen's* opinions. *Nieminen* (2005) argues that the music has to be interesting enough otherwise no one buys the artist's records. *Kivisilta* (2005) notes that in unsuccessful projects the music has not been good enough, i.e. consumers have not found the music appealing. *"If the music is bad, the records won't sell no matter what you do in image management and branding frontiers."*

A&R-director of Warner *Pekka Ruuska* (2005) has a good example of the power of the song compared to the insignificance of the artist brand from his own career. Before and aside his A&R-profession *Ruuska* has had a career as a singer-songwriter. In 1990 he released a record "Yhdestoista hetki" (The eleventh hour) that included the smash hit "Rafaelin enkeli" (Rafael's angel). According to his own words many months passed without anyone knowing what the singer of the song looked like even though

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[10] Laila Snellman is an ex-model and the owner of the model agency Paparazzi.

the song gained massive airplay and succeeded in the charts. *"I had to find the journalist and the photographer from the railway station when they wanted to make a story of me. They couldn't find me because they didn't know what I looked like."* However, the hype created by the hit tune did not last long, which has left *Ruuska* thinking that something was lacking from his artistry. *"In the end it's impossible to say which qualities are needed to make an artist or his record to succeed."*

Another interesting example of a project in which music was in the core of the product and the artist brand was practically non-existent was *Ella's* and *Aleksi's* breakthrough with their debut album "Lenni Lokinpoikanen" (Lenni the baby gull) in Christmas of 2004. *Ella's* and *Aleksi's* album included songs that were difficult to place in any genre. The music could be interpreted as children's music but simultaneously it was still rap, rock and pop. What also made the project special was that with *Ella* and *Aleksi* Warner worked with an artist that was never presented in the public. The small children, *Ella* and *Aleksi*, only provided their voices for the record. According to *Ruuska* (2005) also the music was such that it did not fit any existing radio format. *"What actually happened was that YleX[11] started to play the song "MC Koppakuorianen" (MC beetle). YleX's DJs didn't know if the song was ultra corny or camp neat."* At first the station played the song as a matter of curiosity. But after hearing the song the audience fell in love and withit started to wish for more radio airplay for *Ella's* and *Aleksi's* music.

4.2.3. Brand requires clarity and strong symbols

Normally the biggest problem in record projects and in artist development is that nothing is taken far enough. Too often artists think that they are repeating the same message time and again even though the artist's brand is totally unknown to the wider audience. (Hynninen 2005).

"A 'cancer' called 'band democracy' rules in many bands. In such bands all the members can look what they want to look like and everybody is allowed to bring in influences from different decades and music styles. The result is chaos." Kallonen

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[11] YleX is a radio channel aimed for the youth. YleX is owned by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (= Yleisradio or YLE) that is a national broadcaster.

(2005) notes that this is where record labels step in because for bands it is usually difficult to take the decisive step in determining what the right style of the band is. *Kallonen* compares this to having a role of an *"intermediator of different cultures"*. The originality of the band must be made clearer and simpler, after which the message can be magnified so that it will surpress the consumers' attention threshold. *"The bigger the artist wants to become, the clearer the symbols should become."* For instance with *HIM*, the band's core is crystallised in the Heartagram symbol and the concept of Love Metal. *Kallonen* claims that it is easier to be a fan if you can tattoo a symbol on your hand. It is easier to feel belonging in tribes in which everybody wears the same symbols.

According to *Kallonen* (2005) clarification and making the message simpler do not mean simpler songs. He argues that the paradox in the process is that at the same time as the message is clarified the artist must remain original, new and fresh. Often the clarification of music is demonstrated in the mixes in which the volume level of the singer's voice is taken higher in order to give the audience a chance to make sense of the lyrics. Additionally the songs normally include melodies and riffs that everybody can whistle. *"As one looks back on various artists' careers, it is noticeable that the bands have broken through to the mainstream after their music has become more organised. Their melodies are clearer, one can hear the vocalist better, and there are more hooks to the lyrics and the playing."* *Kallonen* refers to *Metallica* in this context. According to him even though the band has sold tens of millions of records, it has been able to hold on to its speed metal credibility. *"Normally old fans take a hike if the band starts to change its music too drastically."* So, when the songs are made simpler and clearer, the original identity and integrity must be cherished. Therefore the process takes time. The band has to mature and grow out naturally from the previous influences. Therefore artist development is always done in two frontiers: 1) on a professional level, i.e. music is better produced and the musical structures are clarified, and 2) at the artist's end. *Kallonen* claims that in the development of the artist's career the latter frontier is more important.

4.2.4. Artists with long careers and artists as phenomena

According to marketing manager *Mia Salo* (2005) artists are signed to record labels based on two grounds. Firstly, record companies seek for **artists** that have a possibility of **making a long-lasting career**. Such artists are in the long run the most profitable ones for the record companies, since a big amount of record companies' sales comes from the back catalogue, i.e. the old releases. For instance The Beatles, Pink Floyd, Iron Maiden, Neljä Ruusua, Agents, CMX and Sir Elwoodin hiljaiset värit are good examples of back catalogue artists. Secondly, there are **phenomenon artists**. *"Phenomenon artists are the probable reason why the audience hates big record companies."* *Smurffit* (Smurffs) are a phenomenon even though they have already released 13 records. *Pikku G* (Little G) started as a phenomenon. *Mestarit Areenalla* (Masters on the Arena) was a phenomenon. *Salo* claims that all record labels want to find a phenomenon artist because with his record the label makes that year's profit.

As an example of the record companies' attitude towards phenomenon artists *Pekka Ruuska* (2005) takes *Pikku G* whose first two albums sold over 170 000[12] copies. *"It doesn't matter even if the band didn't come up with new material. The artist's career wasn't long but who cares when the two records sold so well. Pikku G has sold more with his two records than I have with my ten."*

The decisive difference that most of the interviewees draw between phenomenon and long-lasting artists in pop and rock music is the music writing talent. Usually someone else writes the music for phenomenon artists. Most artists that have had a long-lasting career within the pop and rock genres are singer-songwriters. However, in the schlager music scene this rule does not apply. Artists like *Katri-Helena* and *Paula Koivuniemi* have managed to be on the top since the 1960's even though they sing music composed by others. But how about artists that come to the public eye through the Popstars and Idols formats? Are they expected to make a long career or are they pheonomenon artists? *Pekka Nieminen*, Marketing Manager of Helsinki Music Company, sheds light on the matter:

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[12] A Finnish record gains the honours of a gold record after 15 000 sold copies, and platinum after 30 000 copies. The requirements are internationally high when compared e.g. to Great Britain and France. Applied to the Finnish population a British record would obtain gold with sales of under 5 000 copies and a French album with 8 000 copies. (http://www.ifpi.fi/ajankohtaista/ article.html?newsid=9).

"Popstars and Idols are demaning for all the parties. TV-formats are like raising guys a bit too quickly with hormonal therapy to become cannon fodder. But even though the careers of the artists are started in a fast pace, it's wrong to believe that their careers are created in a vacuum. First of all the people that take part in such competitions want to become artists from the bottom of their hearts. Secondly they are filtered from hundreds of talented people. It's difficult to understand why, for example, the Idols concept is so hated. Why is the only right way to start a career that you first play ten years in people's cellars and wait for the record company to contact you after you have send your demo tape to them? Isn't that a bit old fashioned? There are plenty of talented people out there who for some reason aren't able to hook themselves up with the cellar scene. So far those artists have ended up to compete in Tangomarkkinat[13], because it has been the only way to get some attention." (Nieminen 2005).

With the Popstars and Idols formats the aspiring artists have got a new channel in the search for record companies' and audience's attention. While Tangomarkkinat has traditionally created stars for the schlager music scene Popstars and Idols create stars for the pop scene. Through Idols it is even possible to find a rock artist. According to *Asko Kallonen* Popstars and Idols are creating a new music culture in Finland.

"The music scene in Finland has always been different from for instance Sweden, England and the U.S. We have lacked the pop music scene. Therefore many talented aspiring pop singers have ended up singing schlager music because before Popstars and Idols the choice had to be made between schlager and rock." (Kallonen 2005).

But there are also differences between the two television formats. According to *Nieminen* (2005) the bands that are created in Popstars are in a different position compared to the artists found through Idols. In the Popstars format the record company put a band together. *Nieminen* considers that to be a far more demanding task than in the Idols in which the record company looks for a solo artist. Therefore in Popstars the starting point is more artificial. With Popstars bands the group dynamics play a

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[13] Tangomarkkinat is a festival in Seinäjoki, a competition and a TV-format in which each summer a tango queen and king are chosen.

significant role. Because of this Popstars does not necessarily create as long-lasting artists as Idols does.

> "A band that is brought together from the outside, as it is done in Popstars, does not usually last for long. The best guarantee for a long-lasting career is that the artist comes up with the ideas himself. If the artist is not burning for his art, it's easy to give up when things get tough. It is fairly easy for the record companies too, to lose interest in an artist whose records are not doing that well and who does not have an itch for his art. Bands that are brought together from the outside lack a common dream. What is also missing is the friendship that holds the band members together when it gets rough." (Ruuska 2005).

But it is not only the Popstars bands whose initial impulse comes from the record company or the television format. It is seldom that the Idols stars write music themselves. Usually the talents they have to offer for the project are singing and performing. Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* from Universal continues.

> "In Popstars and Idols nothing comes ready. Antti Tuisku has an ability to make music but not a vision. For him everything is brought from the outside. In such cases record companies often seek inspiration from other artists and their music. Antti provides an exterior that's filled with expertise. (Kivisilta 2005).

A&R-specialist *Kari Hynninen* (2005) who has worked with several Popstars and Idols artists points out that even though ideas for Popstars and Idols artists are brought from the outside it does not mean that the record company dictates what the artists must do. *"The artist is always taken into the decicion-making process. He can decide which songs are recorded and which not."*

In *Kivisilta's* (2005) opinion *Antti Tuisku* is the most genuine of the three Idols finalists from the first Idols round in Finland. He reckons that in *Antti's* case the record company has succeeded to bring out the best qualities of the artist. *Pekka Ruuska*, on the other hand, has a different approach to the matter. He contradicts *Kivisilta's* opinion.

"To me Antti's success is the most disappearing kind. Antti Tuisku is a phenomenon artist who does not write music. Sometimes phenomenon artists can last for a long time, but there normally is a special reason for that. For example Kaija Koo has been successful up to now because the composer of her songs comes from her family circle. Jani Wickholm has the best chance of the three Idols finalists to make a long-lasting career because he writes music. On the other hand if Jani's next album doesn't include good songs, he might fall into oblivion. The man and the guitar aren't a guarantee of anything." (Ruuska 2005).

4.2.5. Alternative artist brand cores

During the interviews I asked the interviewees to associate freely what makes an artist distinctive or what qualities are in the core of an artist's brand. Here are some alternative results.

The quality of the voice in the core of a female pop-artist's brand

"Anna Eriksson's core brand revolves around the fact that no one can sing so hard and high as Anna. Her voice has a unique quality of drama. Her Extended Brand has to do with her good looks, being young and looking fresh." (Kivisilta 2005).

Vocalist in the core of a rock band brand:

"In spring 2005 everybody was constantly talking about HIM in the U.S. The music industry personnel predicts that the next HIM album will make it big there. However HIM's music is not the reason that will make the band big. One record company employee said that HIM's songs aren't that great but Ville is a star. People say that when the vocalist Ville Valo enters a room everybody knows that a star has arrived. Ville as a person is considered a to be far ahead of HIM's music. But without the music he couldn't accomplish anything." (Ruuska 2005).

The singing talent in the core of an a cappella group's brand:

"The Brand Core of an a cappella band Club For Five is the singing talent and the fact that they can imitate different instruments with their voices." (Kivisilta 2005).

The amount of radio hits in the core of a pop-band's brand:

The brand of the band Neljä Ruusua (Four Roses) is based on the quantity of radio airplay. No other domestic band has had as many radio hits as Neljä Ruusua. They have earned their honours in the hit genre. The band has always regulated their media visibility in a hard way. They have also been very selective with the brand collaborations. Also the development of the band's visual side has relied on the band members. Neljä Ruusua is an old league's band. Maybe that's why they are the radio stations' favourite." (Salo 2005).

Niceness and cuteness in the core of a hiphop artist's brand:

"Pikku G's brand is based on him being a nice and a cute boy with a little bit of edge. Pikku G's values revolve around a youngster who is responsible and thinking. He has a harmonising effect rather than a disruptive one. According to him his mother and father are cool guys. Pikku G's parents actually rap in one of his songs. His message is socially harmonising and family-oriented." (Ruuska 2005).

Lyrics in the core of female rock-artists' brand:

"The difference between Maija Vilkkumaa and Jonna Tervomaa is that Maija is much more open and easier to approach than Jonna. Maija's lyrics open up her world while Jonna keeps her distance. Jonna wants to say big things but her message is expressed in a cryptic manner. Maija expresses herself more explicitely. You get the feeling from Maija that she is singing about her own life and things that are important to her. Because of this difference Jonna Tervomaa has sold 30 000 and Maija Vilkkumaa's first album sold over 120 000 copies." (Hynninen 2005).

4.3. The Process of Artist Branding

Marketing manager *Mia Salo* (2005) from EMI sees that an artist brand is constructed of everything that the artist does when he is working or relaxing in his spare time. Therefore there are elements in the artist brand and artist's image that cannot be controlled by the record companies. *Salo* claims that **only the artist can control his own brand**. *"Of course, the record companies try to manage both images and brands but on the practical level everything comes down to the fact that the formation of both includes elements that nobody can't control."*

"In Universal the signing decisions are based on how ready the artists are". In Finland the record companies' organisations are so small that it is not possible to start branding artists from scratch. *"And usually brand building from the outside doesn't function anyway. I don't believe that branding from the outside functions in any genre expect in Popstars and Idols. It's not impossible to build a brand from the outside but usually these artists do not last. Gimmel lasted for two years. Most of them last only for one record cycle."* According to *Kivisilta* the maintenance of an artist brand built from the outside requires a tremendous organisation that can support the brand also after the launch of the brand. (Kivisilta 2005). In Finland where the market is small the record companies do not have resources to hold the artists' hand all the time.

Thus according to *Kari Hynninen* (2005) from Suomen Musiikki Oy, brand building for an artist is more about outlining and organising than formulation. The branding efforts of record companies are focused on letting the artist to be himself. What the companies also try to do is to produce music that corresponds to the artist's personality. Record companies' task is to dig up the fundamentals, the core of the artist and to strengthen that message.

To *Ruuska* (2005) the artist is most interesting from the public's point of view when he has been processed as little as possible. He argues that the less the record company has to be involved the better the project will be. Thus record companies try their best not to interfere too much with artists and their music.

"Branding is not about the record company announcing to the artist in the first meeting that now we are going to make you a good-looking, sporty and a neat brand that attracts young adult females in Hotel Lappee's women's nights, and who takes 3 500 euros per gig, and sells 17 000 records. It is not that cold." (Ruuska 2005).

Ruuska (2005) notes that normally an artist brand is developed song by song and gig by gig. After a period of time everybody can see what kind of brand the artist has become. *Ruuska* defines the record company's role in the process as that of a helper that helps the artist to become a better artist. He says that record companies help the artists to find features in themselves that they cannot find on their own.

A&R-specialist *Asko Kallonen* (2005) accompanies his collegues. According to him the record companies' task is to find the originality that every artist has. *"In this context it's wrong to talk about a star-making machine. Stars aren't created. Stars are born after the originality is dug up, so that the promotion and marketing personnel can make a bigger phenomenon out of an idea that originally wasn't that big."*

The interviewees recognise that every artist is a case of his own which leads to the fact that individual projects are also different. According to *Salo* (2005) in some projects the marketing personnel becomes involved already when the music is being composed. In some cases the artist has such strong opinions about who he is and where he is going to that the record company follows the artist's vision. However, in all cases, as *Asko Kallonen* (2005) points out, the building material must come from the artist himself. *"The only moving part in the branding process is the ratio of how much the artist controls the process and how much the outsiders help the artist"*.

When the first preliminary mixes of songs are ready the record company personnel listens to the songs and starts mapping to whom the music is directed, i.e. they look for the target group. The target group the record company looks for at this stage is the early adaptors who are most likely to accept the artist's music first. At this point also the graphics designer and the photographer are involved in the process, and the planning of the album cover, photo session and the logo starts. Also the planning of the music video starts. (Alanko 2005).

The stylist starts working simultaneously with the photographer and the graphics designer in order to build a unified style to the artist for the photos in the album cover. As mentioned earlier the optimal situation would be that the artist could hold on to the album style all through the record cycle. But as the record companies do not have control over the touring business and because no one can control the artist's spare time but the artist himself, the record companies choices are scarce. It all comes again down to the artist and his maturity. *Asko Kallonen*, the co-owner of Helsinki Music Company explains:

> *"Hair and clothes meetings are held with artists that don't master the style issues. But for example in the case of HIM and Ville Valo, the record company has not had anything to say about the band's style. Ville cuts his hair, puts make-up and drinks whenever he wants to. It's more a myth that the record companies give advice to artists in these matters. Ville and other successful artists think these things for themselves. If they don't, they won't get very far. (Kallonen 2005).*

In the hiphop, dance and heavy metal genres the role of the record label is often far smaller in branding than it is with artists that do not write music themselves. This is because in hiphop, rap and dance the producers of the music do the preliminary branding work. Apart from the rock and hiphop artists also the schlager music artists are extremely aware of what they should look and sound like. (Alanko 2005).

Record companies are normally needed to manage things for artists that are starting their careers, and with artists that gain success suddenly such as the Idols stars. These artists tend to need more coaching because they do not have enough information about the music business. What is also lacking is the tribal culture that for example the indie rock bands have to support them. Record companies' goal is to coach artists to take care of their careers. Record companies direct every artist through a project a couple of times after which the artists are expected to take care of their careers on their own. *"It's the aim of the record companies, managers and other music business professionals to make the artists to survive without help."* (Kallonen 2005).

Kimmo Kivisilta (2005) from Universal sees **branding primarily as a process of positioning**. In positioning there are three definitions to be made. Firstly, the

companies need to know what the target group of the artist's music is. Secondly, the record companies have to define what the artist presents and what makes him unique. And thirdly, answers to the question why the artist is better than the other similar kinds of artists must be found. Through positioning the company is able to find the selling points that are used in marketing communications when the artist and his music are offered to the media, distribution channels and the public.

According to marketing manager *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) from Helsinki Music Company an unambiguous artist branding formula does not exist. Sometimes the record label brightens the artist's brand before it is introduced to the media. But many times the record company chooses to do nothing. The artist brand may just as well evolve by itself as the result of the reactions in the media and among the consumers.

Kallonen (2005) adds that **luck and coincidence** are also elements that are always **needed in the** artist's **success.** He describes:

> *"Nobody in the music business has found the philosopher's stone that would ensure that every band could be taken from the marginal to the mainstream with 100 % success rate. Record labels' employees are like truck drivers who drive strawberries to the market. They have no control over the sales of the berries. That's up to the consumers. The only thing the distributors can do after the strawberries have become ripe is to think about where the berries are sold and when." (Kallonen 2005).*

4.3.1. The development of HIM's Love Metal brand

When A&R-manager *Asko Kallonen* met *Ville Valo* from *HIM* he took a fancy to *Ville's* voice and the band's cover version of "Wicked Game" from *Chris Isaak*. For the record company the band was not a marketer's dream for in 1996 English language hard rock sung by a Finnish band was not a selling item. According to *Kallonen* (2005) from the beginning the band started to brand itself unconsciously by creating a culture of its own. The band was acting on intuition. *Kallonen* points out that **the role of intuition cannot be underestimated** in music. *"Usually bands intuitively know what*

should be done. If there are clever guys in the band the brand develops by countless of pieces of information as the time passes by."

Kallonen (2005) points out that rock bands are usually self-made. All the bands start from the marginal where the first fans are "tribe members", people from the same circles. *Kallonen* explains that a cross over becomes possible when the band starts to develop an appropriate style as their skills in composing and mastering the instruments improve. *"For example this happened to Metallica with Black Album and to REM with Losing My Religion".* If the band manages to make these changes slowly enough it is possible to maintain credibility also in the original tribe. *"This is how bands get big".* Thus when a record company signs a rock band, normally, the ideas, the music and the image only need sharpening and editing - *"digging up the content"* as *Kallonen* puts it. Normally nothing new is added to the image. *Kallonen* argues that usually something must be taken out in order to reveal the core of the band. The cleverer the record company is in the revelation of the core, the quicker the message becomes more lucid and reaches a wider audience. For example in 1997 *HIM's* Love Metal was an unknown concept. In England the record company forbade *HIM* to use the Love Metal concept because to them it was too strange. *"They had difficulties in understanding that HIM's heavy metal music had a female audience, and that the band used feminine symbols."* The Love Metal concept was brought up with the second album in which the message was sharpened also with the album cover in which *Ville Valo* poses in a rude position in front of a pink canvas.

4.3.2. PMMP – From Popstars to rock record of the year

PMMP's singers *Mira* and *Paula* met during the filming of the first Finnish Popstars competition in summer 2002. Both girls got to the final eight out of which the girl band *Gimmel* was formed. *Gimmel* retired in 2004 but *Mira* and *Paula* are still in the business. In fact their latest album "Kovemmat kädet" (Harder Hands) has received appraisal also in the rock circles. Apart from the youth magazines Suosikki and Mix that present current trends of the music and entertainment businesses also the rock publication Rumba gave four stars to the album. Suosikki and Mix also chose the record for the album of the month. In the evening paper Iltasanomat *Mikko Räisänen* reviewed the girls' album as the best Finnish album of the year. (PMMP TV-ad

campaign/MTV3). How did the girls manage to change their Popstars image to a rock band brand in two and a half years? *Pekka Nieminen* who has worked as a promoter for *PMMP* explains:

"We were lucky that the girls did not win Popstars!", Nieminen (2005) notes. In BMG A&R-manager *Kari Hynninen* started to work with the girls after the competition. From Turku they found *Jori Sjöroos* that started to compose and produce music for the duo. The girls themselves wrote the lyrics. It was agreed from the very beginning that everything would be done in a totally different manner than things were done with *Gimmel*. *"Gimmel was a candy – nice and pink"*. It was decided that *PMMP* would be anarchistic. Anarchism was accomplished by employing one of Finland's edgist rock photographers *Jouko Lehtola* and a punk rocker graphics designer to design the album cover and the logo. *Mira's* sister started to style the girls. She based the *PMMP* style to second hand clothes bought from UFF[14]. She tore and modified the clothes in order to create a personal style. With the choice of the photographer, the graphics designer and the stylist it was made sure that *PMMP* would not look too neat. Instead the purpose was to bring out ruggedness. The duo was also lucky. R-kioski (a kiosk chain) wanted *PMMP's* song "Rusketusraidat" (Tanlines) to their cider TV-commercial. YleX found the song from the commercial and started to play it. A rock band was acquired to back the girls up in their concerts. *PMMP's* first gig was in Sörkka jail. The record release concert was taken to one of Finland's roughest gay clubs, Hercules, in Helsinki. *"Everything around the girls was done with ruggedness, and it started from the girls. Girls themselves were after something else than sweetness."*

"Just before the record release we also had the Iltasanomat sensation". Nieminen (2005) explains that the evening paper Iltasanomat was insulted because the girls had lied about their age to a summer reporter. Iltasanomat drew several headlines out of the subject, which led to an increasing publicity for *PMMP*. *"Otherwise in the publicity front we decided to do action-packed and rough stories, and even work with tabloids, which normally aren't used in the promotion."* In the Katso tabloid the girls made the Europe's highest benji jump. In the Seiska tabloid the girls drove the world's fastest rubber boat.

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[14] UFF (U-landshjälp från Folk till Folk) is a Scandinavian based association that aims to support projects of development co-operation. UFF collects used clothes, which it either donates to its African partners or sells in Finland as second-hand clothes. (www.uff.fi)

As the result of the smash hit "Rusketusraidat" the album "Kuulkaas enot!" (Hear out, Uncles!) first sold 10 000 copies till the sales stopped. The record company decided to release the ballad "Joutsenet" (Swans) as a single and to support it with a video. With the help of a new TV-ad campaign the album finally sold 24 000. At the beginning of 2004 PMMP got an EMMA prize as a year's new act. (Nieminen 2005).

After the EMMA prize *PMMP* started to work with the second album. *Nieminen* (2005) notes that: *"It was entirely up to Mira and Paula that the second album didn't become a replicant of the first one."* The girls wanted to make an ambitious record that was not as radio friendly as the first one had been. In fact the first single from the second album, "Päiväkoti" (Day nursery), was too difficult for the radio stations. For instance YleX did not play the single even though they had supported *PMMP* during the first album cycle. For the record company this was a big setback. This time the record company and the girls were more selective when it came to giving interviews. On an individual level the girls had matured, as had their music, and they were capable of confronting the media with a more peaceful disposition. With their more mature behaviour the girls were now sending a message that was in unity with the more mature album. Finally, the rock publication Rumba published a decisive review in which the album was lauded up to the skies. As the result of the review also other rock journalists became interested. *Nieminen* started to receive phone calls in which stern-faced rock critics apologised for their miscalculations regarding the first album.

Nieminen (2005) argues that *PMMP* has succeeded because they have managed to create an individual style that is distinct, colourful and special. *PMMP*'s image cannot be crystallised in a couple of words, but you still recognise the style on the street if you see a person that has taken influences from *PMMP's* dressing. *PMMP's* music has also a distinctive style that cannot be confused with anyone else.

4.3.3. Anne Mattila –brand building by touring

According to *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) from Helsinki Music Company a good example of an artist whose brand has not been thought at all in the record company is the schlager music singer *Anne Mattila* whose records have sold over 100 000 copies. The record company started to work with *Anne* five years ago when she was only fifteen.

"Anne is a country girl with an exceptional talent and values. Her attitude towards Finnish schlager music and the work of an entertainer together with her relationship with the audience are exceptionally mature. We knew immediately that this girl was going to go far. We didn't need to feed the fire with the gasoline!"

Nieminen (2005) reckons that the audience is attracted by *Anne's* genueness. *"We have never felt the need to make her trendier in order to gain coverage in the press."* This is because brands of schlager music singers are primarily formed as a result of the consumer's actions after they have seen the singer on a gig. The media does not create artist brands in schlager music. *"With Anne we knew that the only way she was going to break through was to perform live."* Brands that are built like this are built on a firm ground. Usually, artificial worlds created around artists do not serve the artist's career in the long run.

4.4. Developing an Artist Brand

4.4.1. From marginal to mainstream

Every artist has a core target group, which is the fan base. Depending on the artist and his music the market can in some cases be widened. According to *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) the **widening of the market is often accomplished with a release of a "monster ballad"**. The first single with a rock band is often a rock tune that appeals to the core fan base. With the ballad the market widenes, and the artist becomes mainstream. *Kivisilta* claims that the record business operates through single choices. He explains how the widening of the market was done with *Don Johnson Big Band*.

> *"We knew that the early adaptors, the trendsetters and the opinion leaders in the media were already behind the band as the band came to Universal. YleX had already played the band's earlier record. We started to build the acceptance of the mainstream audience with a weird and catchy single "One MC, One Delay". Radio stations NRJ, Kiss FM and Nova took the song to their playlists. What happened in the end was that all the radio stations thought that they had found the band. The band did several TV-shows that had mainstream audiences. Also concert promoters became infatuated, and the band got good gigs. No TV-ad campaign was done. Yet the band became a huge phenomenon. At no point anything was changed in the*

band's image or brand. That is to say that the record company's task was to manage the band's image, to take care of the brand the band had created itself. The promotion strategy was build so that at the first stage we approached the credible media: the publication Nöjesguiden that promotes city culture, the format-free radio station Radio Helsinki, and the radio station YleX. In the last phase we approached the womens' magazines. As a niche artist Don Johnson Big Band sold 6 000 and as a mainstream band 30 000 records." (Kivisilta 2005).

4.4.2. Reinvention of the artist brands

According to the interview results all the interviewees agreed on that artists should always renew themselves to some extent as a new record cycle begins. This chapter reveals what is conceived as "renewal" and how it is achieved.

"Very often the record companies expect a bigger change from the artists and their music than the artists are willing to make." A&R-director of Warner, *Pekka Ruuska* (2005), explains that *The Rasmus* recorded their three first albums with Warner. After two successful records that included *Red Hot Chili Peppers* –like funky craziness *Ruuska* had a feeling that the "*band would start to eat itself alive if it didn't come up with new musical influences." Ruuska* suggested that the first single release from the coming album would be a ballad. *Ruuska* argues that it is easy for artists that have a strong brand to surprise their audience with a new style of music. In the end *The Rasmus* came up with "Liquid". The third record "Hell of a Tester" did not succeed as well as the two earlier ones but the ballad managed to attract international interest.

Ruuska adds that most often artists react to record companies' renewal suggestions with *"semi denial".* But he also argues that those who can take influences from the outside also develop as artists. *"Artists who have taken ill with the omnipotence syndrome don't usually succeed as well as the ones who can take advice."* But *Ruuska* also notes that renewal is not a value in its own right. Change requires control. He takes *Waltari* as an example of a band that renewed itself too drastically for every album. In *Ruuska's* opinion this is what destroyed the band. (Ruuska 2005). What probably happened with *Waltari* was that the core of the brand identity became unclear to the fans. The mainstream audience on the other hand did not have a chance to get acquainted with the band's original sound and the essence of what the band was about

because the essence was under constant renewal. As demonstrated in the previous pages the brand and the message must be strong and clear enough otherwise the attention of the media and the audience cannot be achieved.

Kimmo Kivisilta argues that **change in the artist brand must always occur through music**. He takes *Anna Eriksson* as an example.

> *"When Anna started all she did was sing. After she became more experienced as an artist she started to write material herself. As Anna started to write also her brand changed. The current Anna is not a schlager music artist anymore – she is a mainstream artist somewhere in between pop and schlager music. This image is sustained by the fact that Anna does not do gigs that are connected to the schlager music scene such as "schlager cruises" on ferries." (Kivisilta 2005).*

Another example of a schlager music artist that has reinvented her brand with the content is *Marita Taavitsainen.* According to *Kivisilta Marita's* career was going down hill when she was signed to Universal. Her artist brand that was formerly based on her Tangomarkkinat image was rebuilt by finding different kind of programme for her to sing. The brand reinvention started with a new song "André" with which *Marita* won the Syksyn Sävel[15] competition. The song created a new brand image for *Marita* that was more cheerful. The song also boosted *Marita's* career so that she won the EMMA prize as the year's female vocalist.

According to *Ruuska* there is an exception to the rule of renewal obligation. *"Everything depends on how the previous record has sold. If the record hasn't attracted the masses it's not wise to start changing an idea that is still unknown."* According to *Ruuska* in such cases the band should go on with the same message on the second album. The idea must only be developed further. *Ruuska* also points out that a band can create a brand around the concept of that nothing ever changes as AC/DC and ZZTop have done. (Ruuska 2005). An opposite example to these bands is *Madonna* whose brand promise has always been about renewal. As *Blackwell* and *Stephan* (2004: 174 – 175) point out one of *Madonna's* most lethal weapons in the war to remain relevant has been continual brand reinvention. She does not walk away from

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[15] Syksyn Sävel was a TV- and competition format in which the public chose a winning song every autumn.

a brand promise based on sex and sexuality; she just redefines sexy according to her current life stage.

Besides the changes in music another kind of change is also possible when the artist tries to stay relevant to his audience. *Ruuska* (2005) claims that for some artists the change in their look is enough to create an illusion that the artist has renewed himself. He takes *Maija Vilkkumaa* as an example of an artist who renews herself by changing her style for every album while the core of the music remains the same.

4.5. The Difference of Artist Brands and Product Based Brands

Mia Salo (2005), Marketing Manager of EMI, notes that the difference between other industries and their products and the products of the music business is that in music the products are creative artists that have a will of their own. If a record company recommends something it does not mean that the artists follow the recommendations. *"That's the reality of the recording business. But we must also remember that no one else cares about the artist's career as much the artist himself."* *Salo* has also noticed that very often artists that have a good self-esteem do not have problems with their image. *"At least the cooperation between the record company and the artist is easier with artists that have good self-esteem."*

As demonstrated in the previous pages Finnish record labels give lots of responsibility to artists in relation to their careers. This is due to the scarcity of resources and the fact that the record companies work with living brands that cannot be controlled the same way as a brand of jeans. So far artists' careers have also been administrated mainly outside the record companies because as *Mia Salo* (2005) earlier pointed out *"the artists aren't record companies' property."* What complicates artist brand development from the record labels' viewpoint is that allocation of resources and return on investment are not organised fairly in the music business. The lack of fair resource and investment allocation has led to a situation in which the artists feel that the record companies extort them with unfair record deals, and the record companies feel that their investment in the artist does not bear enough fruit. The investment the record companies put in the development of an artist brand bring revenues also to the touring and merchandising organisations. Thus the record labels rather concentrate on

record projects than developing artists' careers. Generally record companies have not had access to income generated by the artist's touring and merchandising businesses. An exception to the rule is *Robbie Williams* who in 2002 signed a contract in which a part of all *Williams'* income is accounted for the record company (Valtanen 2003: 181). It is difficult to say how big an effect the contract has had on the success of *Robbie Williams* but when it comes to his brand, the brand is doing more than fine. But with most artists the record deal includes only record production, marketing and distribution. The lack of common goals must be one of the reasons why the artist brand is not utilised to a greater extent in the music business. *Pekka Ruuska* (2005) condenses the record companies' business principle: *"Record companies run their business by letting the artists decide."*

Because of this principle record companies are willing to make mistakes even though the results could prove to be negative for the artist and the record label. *"Of course it's not possible to make too many mistakes. Record companies won't do anything at any cost", Ruuska* (2005) emphasises. He adds that if the artist is not willing to take the company's advice and he wants to make a bone of contention out of the subject, the record company often bends to the artist's wishes. This is because it is impossible to force the artist to act against his will. The record labels count on that if things go as the company predicted, the artist comes to his senses and listens more willingly to the company's advice in the next record project. If the artist continuously contradicts the company's advice the company must consider if it wants to go on working with the artist. According to Ruuska in these situations the decision whether to go on with the artist or not, is not solely based on the artist's conduct but also on commercial grounds, i.e. how the artist's previous records have succeeded.

Ruuska (2005) gives an example of a situation in which the artist's brand and the record sales were affected negatively by the artist's actions. *Mariska's* previous album "Memento mori" included a song called "Mari-Johanna", which Mariska pronounced in the record very close to "marihuana". *"The song was about a girl called Mari-Johanna who was the most beautiful flower of them all."* According to *Ruuska* it was easy to interpret the song as drug promotion, and thus *Ruuska* concluded that the album had to survive without the song. *Mariska* resisted *Ruuska's* suggestion, after which *Ruuska* tried to convince *Mariska* to change the name of the song. *Mariska* did

not agree, and the situation became difficult. After thinking the situation over *Ruuska* decided to submit to *Mariska's* wish thinking that *"record companies aren't temperance committees or societies of adult education."* As the album was released the song created quite a fuss. *Mariska* lost gigs. *Ruuska* himself had to explain on national television what the song was about. Also *Mariska* was bombarded with questions about the song. *"Media's attention couldn't be drawn to anything else".* In the end the album sold 5 000 – 10 000 copies. *"The record didn't ruin Mariska's career but it developed temporary difficulties."*

"On the other hand record companies stay humble because it has been proved several times that in similar situations the artist has been the one with the right conviction." For example in the case of *Maija Vilkkumaa's* first album "Pitkä ihana leikki" (The long, wonderful game) *Ruuska* (2005) wished that *Vilkkumaa* would change the lyrics in "Satumaa-tango" (= Dreamland tango). *Vilkkumaa* refused. In the end "Satumaa-tango" proved to be the biggest hit in the album. Had *Vilkkumaa* changed the lyrics as *Ruuska* wished *"the song would have lost its charm".* *Ruuska* says that the record companies do not have the luxury of pretending that they know everything. *"What we have is our best understanding and with that we must survive."*

Also *Hanna Pakarinen* is an example of an artist who has acted against the record company's advice. *Hanna Pakarinen*, the winner of the first Finnish Idols, wanted to sing in English even though the record label believed that in the Finnish language *Hanna* could make a longer-lasting career. But *Hanna* insisted and she got to make the record in English. To *Nieminen* (2005) this kind of action is a sign of the *"record companies' humane way of thinking".* But he also raises a question in relation to the record label's responsibility. *"Is it more important that Hanna is kept happy now or that she will be happy after making five immensely successful records in Finnish? I think that the record companies are often critisised for nothing. In reality record companies just want to help artists create a long career."*

4.6. Marketing Artist Brands

The starting point in marketing communications is that the messages delivered by the media to the public must be based on facts. If the artist's public image is based on lies, the audience will always find about it sooner or later and it will result in disappointment. Marketing communications create expectations. If the expectations are not met, the recipients might turn against the artist. (Salo 2005).

Kari Hynninen (2005) claims that: *"Marketing is like compiling a puzzle"*. Everybody around the artist must send a unified message. However the content of the messages does not need to be the same. Every player sees the artist from a different angle and they should communicate that particular viewpoint.

But what if the record company is sending a message of a rock artist as a bat-eating Satanist in the launching phase of a new artist and the manager wants to emphasise the artist's private self as a devoted husband and a caring father? Don't these messages contradict one another, especially if we think of the fact that the audience does not yet know the artist? Marketing manager *Mia Salo* is much stricter in her viewpoints than *Hynninen* regarding the marketing communications strategies.

> *"With a new artist it's essential that the visual appearance of the artist is unified on the album cover, in his gigs and in his every day life. If the artist's appearance changes too often the public doesn't conceive that the different looks belong to the same person. It's a ground principle in marketing that several messages can't be delivered simultaneously. A new product must be launched through one message. This is also the reason why the song the radio stations play the most ends up to be presented on a video and television. A song doesn't give a face to the band but the video does. Thus with a new artist the record company ponders extra carefully if the artist can live with his new look twelve months ahead. But as mentioned earlier, no one can dictate what the artist does." (Salo 2005).*

Salo (2005) also points out that the same one-message-principle should be applied to the media exposure of the band members. She claims that it is essential that every band can be personified to one or two people. **Directing the audience's attention to one band member helps in getting the band's message through.** The public remembers

better one face than four faces. In *Salo's* opinion *Coldplay* is an excellent example of a band that seems to be faceless. Nobody knows what the individual members look like because the band is always presented as a group. *"Well, some can afford to do that."* In reality it is very seldom that publicity can be created using the whole band. *Salo* emphasises that every band needs a face. She asks what would *HIM* be without *Ville Valo*? According to *Salo* bands created in Popstars are exceptions to this rule because the audience has already got to know the band members through the TV-series.

To A&R-specialist *Kari Hynninen* (2005) the biggest marketing decision is the signing of the artist. With this statement *Hynninen* points out to the fact that as the artist has a big role in his branding, the artist's natural image sells him the best. Also as the record labels' resources are limited the artist has a decisive role as the originator of the marketing messages. *Kimmo Valtanen* (2003: 191) points out in his 4-T-model that the will of the artist is in a decisive role in relation to the marketing tools the record company has in its use. *Valtanen* points out that if the artist is not willing to do interviews with certain publications or if he refuses to perform in a department store or in a television show, the tools the record company has in the promotion are narrowed down. Thus *Hynninen* has a point with his statement.

4.6.1. The promotion process

According to *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) from Helsinki Music Company the promotion of a record usually starts with radio stations if the music style is such that it fits the radio stations' profile. After that comes the possible music video distribution. The music video is made if the record company can obtain some showings for it. Interviews for the print media follow the radio and the video exposure. Record companies think thoroughly about which publications bring the best benefit to the project, and in which order the record company should contact the publications. The choice of the publications is dependent on which audience segments the company wants to reach. The audience segment determines whether the music press or the women's magazines are approached first. With the first wave of the press interviews the record label aims to reach the primary target audience.

Brand manager *Marko Alanko* (2005) from Sony BMG points out that there is no single formula that can be applied to every project when it comes to promotion. In relation to acquiring radio coverage *Alanko* notes that in the luckiest cases it is enough that the artist's music is burned to a CDR and taken to a hit station. But *Alanko* also recognises the existence of record projects in which the music has not been enough to evoke the media's interest. There are also cases in which the interest is created through artists' photos. Most often this happens with artists whose music is not as hit-oriented as the radio stations require. *Alanko* gives as an example in *Indica,* whose music no radio station wanted to play at first. In the end an awareness of the band's music was created through the print media. The increased awareness was accomplished through youth magazines and the evening papers that became interested in *Indica's* visual appearance and the story suggestions the record company had to offer to them. The print media promotion was supported with a fairly heavy TV-ad campaign.

Kimmo Kivisilta (2005) adds that it is fairly difficult to find radio airplay also for bands that have been categorised as boy bands. This is surprising because the music of the boy bands is often hit-oriented. *Kivisilta* gives an example of *Uniklubi* whose music YleX and NRJ did not want to play until the radio personnel saw the band performing live. During the gig the radio station representatives realised the band's talent. As *Kivisilta* puts it: *"You can easily see from the boys in Uniklubi that all they want to do is to play."* When the record company was able to take this message to the radio stations the stations started to play *Uniklubi*. To *Kivisilta* this signals that the media's interest is evoked if the journalists can find artistic qualities from the artist.

As shown in the previous passages **publicity for an artist's music can be created through his music, his visual appearance, public performances and the stories that evoke the** media's and audience's **interest.** Nevertheless, it is not only the tools that must be thought about when planning a promotion campaign. Also the timing and the profile of the medium must be taken into consideration. The profiles of the artist's and the medium's target audiences must be similar. *Pekka Nieminen* explains:

> *"In promotion you need intense concentration because you are dealing with different media that compete with one another. The promoter has to be able to make choices – you can't give an interview simultaneously to two women's magazines. First you give a story to Anna and after three months from a different angle to Me*

Naiset. When we search for possible angles we first find out what interests the magazines and newspapers. The promoter has to know what kind of identity each publication has. Some are interested in family life while another magazine prefers to use lots of photos. With magazines that do photo based stories the record company might even suggest a photo idea and pay part of the expenses." (Nieminen 2005).

The promotion respects the artists' will. *Nieminen* (2005) notes that record companies do not force the artists to do *"just any kind of interviews"*. The promoter always discusses the story ideas first with the artist. If the artist does not like the idea, the interview will not take place. *"The promoter's job is to understand both the media's and the artists' viewpoints, and to try to make them come closer."*

The owner of Suomen Musiikki *Kari Hynninen* (2005) notes that in the planning of the "media round", the promoter has to take into account that there are always three phases to the creation of publicity. The first media round is constructed around the record label's efforts to make their artists known to the public. At this stage the promoters feed the media with stories written by the record label personnel. If the media is interested in the new act the second round revolves around the media's will to make their own stories about the artist. At this stage the journalists contact the record company and ask for the interviews. The third phase is the quiet phase. According to *Hynninen* in the building of artist brands it is important to keep the artist fresh. Freshness is achieved by keeping the artist away from the public eye every now and then.

4.6.2. Finding the target audience

The definition of the target audience is important in branding, because the artist must relate to the interests and values of the selected target group. As the previous chapter showed also in promotion the target audience plays a crucial role as the promoters try to find channels for their marketing messages. How do record companies define the target segment for each of their projects? Or could it even be possible that record companies would create products and artists to fullfill existing needs of an audience segment? How about, can record labels create demand in the market?

Kimmo Kivisilta (2005) notes that it is very seldom that record companies look for audience segments that are missing a certain musical product or an artist. Thus record companies do not usually create artists to match with an existing demand. *Asko Kallonen* continues by stating that even if to the public it may seem that the record companies' task is to create demand for their artists, the reality of the companies restrict the creation of new markets. Kallonen notes that it is very seldom that the record labels meet an ultimate artist, an imaginary star that would be a perfect, faultless brand. In reality, at its best the record labels have a chance to sign a person that can sing, play, compose and write lyrics. And that person comes with the physical appearance he was born with. (Kallonen 2005). It is very difficult to create a market for a product the features of which the company cannot control.

According to *Kari Hynninen* (2005) there is not much of target group thinking in the Finnish recording business. This is because targeting is most effective in the niche markets. In practice the record companies target their products to different audience segments with the choice of the media. For example rock acts are directed to YleX because YleX has a rock image. *Kivisilta* (2005) adds that in music business the target group segmentation is usually based on consumers' life styles rather than age.

According to *Marko Alanko* (2005) from Sony BMG there are very few research results on different audience segments' values and their relation to branding within the music sector. Thus the record companies must mostly rely on their own and artists' opinions when defining the target audiences. *"The artist always knows his genre."*

4.6.3. The role of advertising on television

Marko Alanko (2005) notes that present day's TV-campaigns do not have the same effect as TV-campaigns used to have ten years ago. This is because the television has got competitors. Nowadays games and mobile phones divide audience's attention. Therefore TV-campaigns are always risky. Sometimes a campaign is used already in the launching phase, and sometimes later when the record label receives indications that a TV-campaign would widen the market. These indications include for example that the single is placed well in the charts or that the album sells well. *Alanko* argues that TV-campaigns are good boosters for record sales if the sales have already started

well. With new acts *Alanko* is however cautious. He warns that often with new acts it is better to let the artist's career grow and wait for the second or third album before the marketing campaign is taken to the television. The latter comment contradicts *Kotler's* viewpoints on the role of advertising. *Kotler* (2003: 582) expressly recommends advertising in the introduction phase of a product.

Alanko (2005) also points out that lack of money leads to standardised TV-campaigns. Rather often the record company has to devide scarce resources between a TV-campaign and a music video. On the other hand he has also noticed that the content of TV-commercials do not affect record sales. *"We have done also more imaginative commercials, blown up cars and so forth, but it hasn't helped the sales anymore than the low budget commercials have done."*

4.7. The Role of Media in the Formation of Artist Brands

Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) points out that commercial radio stations are in the business of selling advertising. In this context music is used to profile radio stations so that they can lure advertisers. According to *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) profiling needs of radio stations affect the quantity and the quality of publicity that record labels manage to obtain to their artists.

> *"It's startling how quickly everything new is categorised. First the gatekeepers in the media categorise artists. As soon as they hear the first notes of a song they start to think to which genre this music belongs and how it fits our programming profile."* (Nieminen 2005).

Accoring to *Nieminen* (2005) the categorisation effect was the reason why it came very close that *PMMP* did not become a one-hit-wonder. *Nieminen* claims that the smash hit "Rusketusraidat" nearly destroyed the band. *"The media categorised the girls as bimbos thinking that they only have this one song."* The bimbo image dominated *PMMP* until the second album was released. *Nieminen* says that despite of the critisism regarding the first album, journalists expected to find a hit like "Rusketusraidat" also in the second album, and when they didn't they were disappointed. *"Music reporters are somewhat schizophrenic."*

Credibility of an artist is on one hand dependent on that he produces songs that gain radio airplay. The present day's radio environment in Finland is rather homogeneous and hit-oriented. This means that artists must be able to produce hits. But on the other hand the media that acts as a gatekeeper and only allows hits through its distribution channels, despises artists that are too commercial. *Pekka Ruuska* from Warner has an example of an artist with whom the record company had significant difficulties in finding radio airplay in the launching phase.

> *"In 2003 when Warner decided to sign Pikku G, the hiphop boom was over in the trend circles and no record company was signing hiphop artists. Nevertheless Warner wanted to take a risk and to find out if the masses still lacked the ultimate hiphop artist. In the clothing industry hiphop was still at its prime. But no radio wanted to play Pikku G. The idea with Pikku G was that his songs were nice. His songs were about family values and puppy love. For instance Radio Mafia (later changed its name to YleX) seemed to think that Pikku G was children's music, and that the band was a result of the record company's calculated process. However this was not the case. Pikku G's producer introduced the concept to Warner. Nevertheless, the media considered Pikku G to be too chewed up and branded which led to a situation in which no radio channel granted airplay to his music. Then suddenly the record started selling like crazy! Nobody knew what happened. One of the reasons for the increase of the awareness of Pikku G was most likely a TV-programme called Summeri broadcasted by Yleisradio (Finnish Broadcasting Company). Boys between eight and ten found the band through the programme." (Ruuska 2005).*

Marketing manager *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) from Helsinki Music Company argues that it is difficult to find radio stations that would want to play music of new artists. He claims that radio stations are often very insecure about new projects. *"Very often stations want to wait and see if some one else takes the song to its playlist first."* Traditionally as *Ruuska* (2005) points out, "this some one else" has been YleX. YleX has been considered to be the gatekeeper of the media world in Finland. No one has had the courage to go along with a new project unless YleX has started to play the artist's music. However, the gatekeeper's role of YleX is crumbling. For example *Pikku G* and *Indica* are bands that broke through with the help of Kiss FM and NRJ.

Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) from Universal reminds that in the positioning of marketing messages for the media it must be taken into account that

journalists do not want to hear about target markets and brands. Journalists want to find artistic values and uniqueness from artists. *"For instance when we launched Tiktak we wanted to emphasise that the 15-year-old girls were actually playing themselves."* In Finland where the public broadcaster Yleisradio has a big role in delivering new music to the public, **artists must have non-commercial appeal**. It has happened several times that Yleisradio has dodged too commercial projects.

According to *Ruuska* (2005) apart from that the media is selective it can also be illogical. For example Yleisradio that refused to play *Pikku G's* music because he was considered to be *"too commercial"*, has been criticless with Popstars and Idols. Even YleX that has profiled itself as a rock station has been in the front line of promoting Popstars and Idols. *"I suppose they have felt that they can't afford to leave themselves out of such huge phenomena."*

4.7.1. Cracking the headline cycle

Kari Hynninen (2005) claims that chances to manage publicity are at their best when an artist is just starting his career. After the artist becomes popular publicity management becomes harder. This is because in the beginning journalists do not know what the artist stands for. They have to base their stories on the information they receive from the record label. As the awareness of the artist and his music grows journalists develop their own opinions. According to *Hynninen* at this point the record company can no longer control what is written and when.

When it comes to obtaining media visibility *Mia Salo* (2005) reminds that media coverage does not necessarily correlate to record sales. For example violinist *Linda Lampenius* was the press' favourite but *Linda* never had the chance to talk about her music in the interviews.

Linda Lampenius gained reputation when her nude pictures were published in Playboy. Also *Linda's* boyfriends, exhaustion and strange illnesses were regularly displayed in the headlines. What can record companies do when their artists are captured in a headline cycle that does not support the sales of records or the artist's brand as a

musician and a songwriter? Are there ways to control publicity, its quantity and its quality?

According to *Pekka Nieminen* (2005) record companies do not have tools with which they could revert negative headlines to positive ones. *"Only the artist can do it with his choices and actions."* *Nieminen* reveals that usually record labels know about artists' crises before the media finds out about them. In such cases the label can try to persuade the artist to bring the problem out to the open voluntarily because the media will write about the subject regardless of whether the artist gives interviews or not. It is always better that the artist speaks for himself than that the media bases their reports on rumours. *"But artists are human beings and normally it's very difficult to talk about personal problems in the public eye."* *Nieminen* gives a classic example of a situation in which perhaps more harm was done with the artist's choice to stay quiet.

> *"When Anssi Kela fell in love with the formula driver Sanna Pinola the negative headlines revolving around the incident affected Anssi's record sales. With the lyrics of the Nummela album Anssi had been profiled as a man that has a wife and a kid in Nummela where Anssi also walks his dog. The public still thought of Anssi as a father and a married man. Anssi didn't want to talk about his relationship with Sanna to the press. And then came the paparazzi photos and everything! Anssi's record stopped selling immediately. In reality the situation wasn't that tragic. Anssi had moved away from Nummela and separated from his wife a long time before the media found out about his affair to Sanna Pinola. There was no unfaithfulness involved. But the media and Anssi's fans didn't know about it because Anssi wouldn't talk about his situation. (Nieminen 2005).*

Nieminen (2005) notes that the media always finds a way of keeping interesting topics in the headlines. The only efficient way to control one's public image is to lead a life that includes interesting aspects but which is not too dramatic so that the artist does not end up in the headlines. But as *Nieminen* points out that kind of living is difficult. A certain kind of honesty, openness and regret in dealing with problems help the artist and his brand. It is easier for the fans to identify themselves with an artist that has human qualities than with an artist that never fails.

4.7.2. The creation of brand credibility

As *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) already mentioned in the case of *Don Johnson Big Band*, artists can try to achieve credibility through the so-called "credible media". In the case of *Don Johnson Big Band, Kivisilta* named YleX, Radio Helsinki and Nöjesguiden as examples. The credible media is relational to the artist's image and his music genre. For example *PMMP* that originally had a pop image gained credibility through the rock publication Rumba. In the case of schlager music artists the credible media would be for instance women's magazines while for a punk rocker womens' magazines would be a bad choice at least in the launching phase of the career.

Credibility is not connected to the artist's status of whether he is still playing in the marginal nor whether he has already broken through to the mainstream. **The credibility** factor **is defined by in which media the artist is presented** and who does the presentation. Brand manager *Marko Alanko* from Sony BMG continues:

> *"Rather often from the music journalists' point of view it seems to be a terrible thing if the artist sells lots of records. Artists that appeal to the masses become credible only when rock critics start to follow the artist's career. This happened for example to Tiktak and Nylon Beat. When the rock publications Rumba and Soundi started to write about these bands they became credible." (Alanko 2005).*

Alanko also takes an example of *Bomfunk MC's* that lost its credibility in the core target audience when the band was connected to a wrong publication, and as the story got too far away from the values the band's "original tribe" cherished.

> *"The message sent of Bomfunk MC's got distorted at some point. Reiska, the leader of the band, recognised that the crucial moment was when the stories moved from the culture pages of Helsingin Sanomat[16] to the economy pages of Kauppalehti[17]. At that point the band's credibility was jeopardised. The core fan base left when too much money started to revolve around the band. When the band became mainstream the core target audience was lost. (Alanko 2005).*

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[16] Helsingin Sanomat is the biggest daily published newspaper in Finland. 1,1 million people read Helsingin Sanomat daily. (http://medianetti.helsinginsanomat.fi/mediatiedot/).

[17] Kauppalehti is the biggest economy newspaper in Finland. Its circulation is 80 894 copies and the amount of readers 280 000. (http://www.monster.fi/hinnasto/kauppal.asp).

4.7.3. The Finns want true stories

> *"There's something in the Finnish culture that affects the artists in such a way that they aren't ready to do just anything. It's easier to take a role you don't feel totally comfortable with for example in Great Britain where you can earn two million euros with a record. In Finland the equivalent amount is 20 000 euros. The Finns aren't a "small talk" people either – they aren't ready to buy plastic." (Kivisilta 2005).*

Also the other interviewees align their opinions with *Kivisilta* by stating that Finland is an exceptional market area. *Kivisilta* (2005) argues that it is impossible to fake in Finland because the media circles are so small. He says that the record company *"can only bluff once." Nieminen* (2005) accompanies *Kivisilta* by noting that in Finland the public wants to read true stories. He and *Kari Hynninen,* his former collegue in BMG, learned the hard way that the press also wants true stories.

In the end of the 1990's *Kari Hynninen* and *Pekka Nieminen* decided to try how a Finnish equivalent of *Doctor Bombay* or *Aqua* would do in the Finnish market. They found a roma girl who could sing and dance. They also found a songwriter from the girl's circle of friends. The girl was named the *"Coconut Girl"*. A fictional story was developed around her. The *"Coconut Girl"* was born 19 years ago in Hawaii as the result of a holiday romance of a Finnish nurse and a Hawaiian DJ. The promotion photos were taken in the botanical gardens. The girl also learned some Hawaiian. The record label managed to gain the first interviews in which the girl told her story. The tabloid Seitsemän Päivää (also known as Seiska) wanted to take the girl to Hawaii to meet her father. The promoter *Pekka Nieminen* managed to postpone the offer by claiming that the "Coconut Girl" was busy. Unfortunately the girl's real relatives started to call the press and uncovered the record label's activities. The revelation led to a small scandal. Magazines were angry. *"This is the difference between Finland and Sweden!" Nieminen* notes. He reminds that when *Doctor Bombay* was introduced to the Swedish and Finnish audiences everybody understood that he was a part of the *"pop cartoon". Nieminen* gives another example from Russia. The Finnish press bought the whole story of *T.A.T.U.* even though in their case the press was misled to believe that the girls were lesbians and much younger than they were. With *The Spice Girls* there were no problems in accepting that the girls were ten years younger than

they really were. *"They can do it, but Finnish artists can't!* In the case of *PMMP* when the girls lied about their age in the Iltasanomat fact file, the chief editor called the record company claiming that the girls were questioning the status of the publication as a credible news medium. *"In Finland everything must be real and true. People here don't understand the Pop Cartoon.* (Nieminen 2005).

4.8. The Future of Artist Brands

In their book "The Future of Music" *David Kusek* and *Gerd Leonhard* (2005: 81) state that the decline of CD-sales has had much to do with the way music has been marketed and distributed during the past decade. With this statement they refer to several factors that do not fit the current digital economy environment. They claim that the significantly reduced number of retail outlets, the non-competitive pricing of CDs and digital singles, the labels' unwillingness to experiment and develop really different artists, and the many competing forms of entertainment that exert magnetic power over the disposable dollars of the consumers (e.g. video games, wireless services, DVDs), have had an effect on the perceivable value of the record industry's products.

The previous factors were also apparent in the interviews conducted for this study. When the discussion turned to the current praxis of pricing and distribution the inteviewees admitted that the prices and distribution channels are standard and that the artist brand value has no effect on these issues. *Marko Alanko* explains:

> *"Artist's image and brand aren't utilised in pricing. An album that stays number one in the charts for weeks costs as much as an album in the tail of the charts. What affects the price is the life cycle of the product. As the record reaches the saturation point the price is taken one category downwards in order to boost sales. Some records are taken into a lower price category after a month, some after eighteen months."* (Alanko 2005).

Alanko (2005) also points out that in the current practice artist brands do not affect the choice of distribution channels either, but he admits that in the future, when Web distribution becomes more general, the brands might have a bigger role. *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) joins *Alanko's* viewpoint and states that it is possible that in the future record labels plan their distribution strategies in the same way that they now plan their

promotion strategies. This would lead to the analysis of which channels to use, in which order and at what time in relation to the product's life cycle. He suggests that sales campaigns could for instance start in specialised stores that reach the core fan base. Later the record could be put on sale through channels that reach a wider range of consumers. But *Kivisilta* also sees problems with this vision. He reckons that the big retailer chains might not be satisfied with a system that narrows down their market. As the chains have lots of power, if willing, they could destroy the system with their demands.

Pekka Nieminen (2005) predicts that the basic essence of the music business will remain the same even if the distribution will be done in intangible formats. *"It doesn't matter how the consumers get their music as long as they get it." Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) sees the possibilities of the digital distribution from a different angle stating that *"it makes all the difference"* if people can purchase music from their homes. He argues that the new technology opens up markets for record companies because the Digital Economy changes consumer behaviour. He points out that nowadays music is mainly sold to people under 27 years of age. Music tends to be forgotten when people get married and have children. *"People with families do not have the time and energy to go and buy records."* If the consumers can purchase music from their computers, the record companies have a possibility to widen their markets and increase sales.

As the sales of the recording industry's products shift to the Web the marketers have to start developing new marketing techniques in order to make their marketing messages visible and audible. In the new media people have to find messages themselves. Passive advertisement consumption is not an option. What does this change in the marketing strategies of record companies? *Mia Salo* would like to see that the recording industry would take more influence from the book publishing industry.

> *"After reading a book the customer can leave a review on Amazon's Web site. Those opinions are peer group opinions. The book publisher was not trying to influence you. An average music consumer has difficulties in finding the music he likes even though his favourite music is published every day. Most of us aren't that devoted to the cause that we would spend lots of energy in finding the music we like. A market place like Amazon would solve this problem. When you have found a product that matches your taste the Web shop starts giving you recommendations*

for similar kinds of products. This is not the only thing in which the book publishing business is better organised. They have bookfairs and book sales. And think what is the value added tax on books compared to records? It's much lower. The book publishing business is more organised and has taken care of its interests better than the music business. Books are culture, music is pop. (Salo 2005).

When inquiring the interviewees how the record companies have utilised or plan to utilise new marketing techniques based on word of mouth and dialogue marketing, e.g. viral marketing[18], buzz marketing[19], and guerrilla marketing[20], the interviewees generally mentioned street teams that according to *Topi Hanhela* (2004: 5) are normally conceived as a part of guerrilla marketing. According to *Hanhela* a street team is a team of voluntary workers, often fans that want to help the artist they idolise.

Mia Salo (2005) notes that the new marketing methods are not actually new; they have just now been named. But she also admits that in Finland the utilisation of these methods is not organised and effective. In theory however, *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) sees potential in street teams as a first-hand contact interface when the record labels try to reach opinion leaders. He clarifies that street teams consist of people who influence people's opinions and buying decisions in their buddy circles. In practice the influencing occurs in face-to-face encounters, in chat rooms on the Web, and in the distribution of stickers and posters in public places. As a reward the street teams get merchandising and record and concert offerings from the artist's organisation.

Marko Alanko emphasises that street team marketing can be very efficient in the brand building phase. He also notes that street teams are most effective in subcultures such as in the hiphop genre. He points out that it is not worth trying to build a brand for a schlager music artist by glueing stickers all over the city. (Alanko 2005). The prime audience of the schlager music artists is not on the streets, but in dance pavilions.

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[18] Viral marketing is a marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message (www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/viral_marketing/).

[19] Buzz marketing is a viral marketing technique that attempts to make each encounter with a consumer appear to be a unique and a spontaneous personal exchange of information instead of a calculated marketing pitch choreographed by a professional advertiser. (http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid11_gci939341,00.html).

[20] Guerrilla marketing is unconventional marketing intended to get maximum results from minimal resources. (www.marketingterms.com/dictionary/guerilla_marketing/).

4.8.1. Can brands beat piracy?

As the digital formats and distribution networks have become more general, this has led to a new kind of unauthorised copying and distribution of music, i.e. file sharing. *Kusek* and *Leonhard* (2005: 41) claim that there is no direct proof that file sharing itself is hurting the overall music industry. In fact, they argue that file sharing is the cheapest form of music marketing. But they also admit that it is not a profitable way of marketing the products of the recording industry.

From this point of view it is understandable that when I asked the interviewees to consider what kind of effect artist brands would have on the prevention of piracy, there were not many favourable opinions on artist brands' impact. The general conception seemed to be that piracy can only be beaten with legislation, even though *Alanko* and *Kivisilta* see some potential in the utilisation of artists' brand value.

Marko Alanko (2005) admits that brands can help in the prevention of piracy if the artist has devoted fans that want to obtain the original product. *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) explains that brand value and its effects have been tested in the context of piracy prevention. In these experiments the effect of connecting exclusive user rights to an artist's concerts, merchandising and music with a CD purchase have been tested. *Kivisilta* argues that a brand can work against piracy if the consumer can obtain more than just a tangible product in the purchase process. To the record companies this means that they need to find a way to package the product in an appealing manner.

4.8.2. The rise of fast-food music consumerism

Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* from Universal predicts that in the future the record companies' main task is to manage the rights connected with the usage of the labels' artists' music. In that context he wants to question the significance of brands in general. He reckons that it is possible that **in the future record companies merely concentrate on producing and marketing hit songs**. He also notes that no one knows at this stage how music consumption will change as the result of the Digital Economy. Traditionally the consumers that are now in their forties have conceived music in a wider context than just in the context of a single tune. *"But is it so also in*

the future?" Kivisilta asks. He argues that there are signs that for today's 10-year-olds **music might merely be junk food**. (Kivisilta 2005). For the junk-food fans that are not attached to an artist, hit songs are every day commodities that are not allowed to cost much. This could also explain why file sharing has become so popular. As there is no respect towards artists and record labels that are conceived to exploit their artists, there is no will to pay for the music.

The co-owner of Helsinki Music Company *Asko Kallonen* clarifies the possible results of fast-food music consumerism. In his opinion the fast-food audience buys records on the basis of which band happens to make the best hit tune of the year. For instance for rock bands that write music themselves this kind of consumerism is a threat. After the band has managed to break through from the marginal to the mainstream with a hit tune, the audience and the media are expecting to get a new hit tune every year. (Kallonen 2005). If this does not happen the band loses its credibility and the audience's acceptance.

The future business model would provide opportunities for projects that *Pekka Nieminen* considers a part of the Pop Cartoon. In the Pop Cartoon artists are not expected to be long-lived. They are merely expected to perform catchy songs that various songwriters write for them. The fast-food music consumerism as a business environment would increase the significance of music writing talent. But artists' brand value cannot be forgotten either. One would think that in the Pop Cartoon branding-from-the-outside would increase. But neither performing or song-writing talents is easy to find. In relation to performers I would not be surprised if in the fast-food music environment record companies would resort to virtual artists. We already have experience of them. In August - September 2005 the *"Crazy Frog"* occupied the number one spot in the official Finnish album charts for five weeks (www.yle.fi/top40/). To me the *"Crazy Frog"* is the ultimate artist brand. His talent, conduct and visual appearance are fairly controllable. Even though the *"Crazy Frog"* seems to be a wild and a spicy character – he is promoted as the most annoying thing in the world – I am sure that his bad days are fairly lame compared to the ones of the human variants the record labels currently work with.

5. THE PRAXIS OF FINNISH ARTIST BRANDING

In this section I will conclude the interviewees' notions presented in the previous section in order to outline how the Finnish record companies brand their artists. When appropriate the similarities and differences of the theoretical (see section 3) and practical (see section 4) levels of artist branding and artist image management are also discussed. A thorougher discussion about the applicability of the theoretical framework (see section 3) selected for this study can be found in section six. Section six will also present my notions on the discourse and the discourse method (see chapter 2.3.1.) used in this thesis.

According to the interview data image and brand management vocabulary is not generally used in the recording industry because these concepts are conceived as insulting in the context of music as an object of artistic aspirations. This fact is also shown as ambiguity in the interviewees' answers when they were asked to define the concepts of 'artists' image' and 'artist brand'. For the most part 'image' is conceived to be a preliminary stage of a brand. Image includes elements connected to an artist's visual appearance, conduct and ways of verbal expression. Some want to see the brand in a wider context that apart from the image components includes the record labels' marketing efforts in the form of marketing communications and product packaging of both records and artists. Thus the brand formation includes more elements that can be controlled from the record label's part even though all admit that neither the artist's image nor the artist brand can ever be totally controlled. The only person who can manage his image and brand to some extent is the artist himself. But even the artist cannot influence how the media chooses to display him in the end. As 'image' is a construct based on the artist's personality traits and genetic heritage the artist brand has the potential of being the result of premeditated and conscious actions. An image is turned into a brand with consequent behaviour from the artist's part and with consequent communications from the record label's part.

The findings presented in the previous passage can however be disputed. Marketing director *Kimmo Kivisilta* connects the formation of the brand to the introduction phase of new artists to the market. The artist brand is gradually born in the introduction process, as the audience becomes acquainted with the artist and his music. When the

artist brand has become existent it must be taken care of. *Kivisilta* calls the process of taking care of the brand image management. As a conclusion from *Kivisilta's* and other interviewees' answers it can be summed up that if the brand comes first, as *Kivisilta* argues, and image management is taking care of the brand, image management in this context would mean that as the result of the record company's brand management efforts only the image related components of the brand would be updated. This is not necessarily what *Kivisilta* originally had in mind but nevertheless as a conclusion of the interview data this hypothesis does make sense. When a strong brand has developed, the core of the brand that consists of the artist's personality, talent and disputedly his music should remain the same if the brand wants to fulfill its brand promise. These components of the brand are either impossible to change or slow to develop if the credibility of the brand is an objective. In this case the only remaining component left for "managing" is the Extended Brand that includes components connected to the artists' packaging. With packaging I am referring to the style chosen for the artist. The style manifests itself in the artist's clothing, make-up, hairstyle and perhaps even in his behaviour. These are also the elements that are conceived to form the artist's image. Thus *Kivisilta's* image management as an extension of brand development is justified. But it must also be kept in mind that changes to the Brand Core are possible. The artist can develop his singing, dancing, and music writing talents and as the years go by also the personality traits of the artist are certain to develop one way or another.

When it comes to the branding process, all the interviewees agreed that artists cannot be branded in the same way as traditional products. However, two different kinds of approaches of developing artist brands were recognised. Firstly, artist brands can develop on their own without the involvement of the record company. In this case the artist brand is the result of the media's and audience's reactions to the artist's actions based on his intuition and vision. In a way this can be seen as "branding-from-the-inside" because the process is longer and it allows the artist to grow up with the expectations of the media and the audience. Additionally, in this model the artist also has a huge input in the brand formation because the record company does not have an active role in the process. Secondly, artists can be branded from the outside. "Branding-from-the-outside" refers to projects in which the record company brings in the music, styles the artist and coaches the artist to confront the media and the public.

The artist's role is to bring in the singing and performing talents. I would imagine that most recording projects are somewhere in between these two opposites. This is also the notion of the A&R-specialist *Asko Kallonen* (2005) who argues: *"The only moving part in the brand formulation process is the ratio of how much the artist controls the process and how much the outsiders help him"*. *Kallonen* also reminds that in every case the building material for the artist brand must come from the artist himself. That is to say that the artist's image and the artist brand must have a starting point in the artist's identity.

On the whole Finnish artists have a huge impact in the formation of artist brands. Even in the case of Popstars and Idols that at the moment come closest to the branding-from-the-outside –method, the artists have an excellent chance of influencing what kind of music they sing and how they sing it. In several interviews *Hanna Pakarinen* was taken as an example of an Idols artist who has stood up against the record company in the question of the language she performs in.

According to this research branding-from-the-outside is not as effective a way of developing artist brands as branding-from-the-inside is. If the branding object, the artist himself, does not feel comfortable in the brand role, his career will end quickly due to lack of motivation. In Finland the motivation must be based on the needs of self-actualisation. Here the motivation cannot be based on hopes of commercial success due to the small market in which huge profit making is impossible. In bigger markets artists are more willing to make compromises in their professional lives because of the possibility of gaining affluence with their records.

In the praxis of artist branding of Finnish record labels, artists have lots of freedom but also lots of responsibility. Thus it is justified to ask why are the record labels willing to give so much power to the artists even though it is the record companies' business that we are talking about? If the record companies were to take a more active role in controlling their assets they would probably make more profit for themselves and for the artists. The only reasons that I can come up with concerning the record companies' passive role have to do with cultural, economic, and educational factors.

The research data points out that Finns are people who appreciate "real things". Neither artists, record companies, the media nor the audience are keen on the popular cultural phenomenon that *Pekka Nieminen* calls the "pop cartoon". In the Pop Cartoon fantasy worlds are created for artists in which they play the roles of fictional characters providing the performance and possibly also the song-writing skills to their characters. For the Finns branding seems to be a part of the Pop Cartoon. Both branding and the Pop Cartoon seem to have collected meanings that are connected to artificiality and dishonesty. In section three, *Joshua Gamson* (1994: 77) argued that: "*Fictionalising frees up the celebrity producers to compete against one another*". So far in Finland it has not been possible to utilise fully the power of story telling in the music business. This has led to standardised artists and record projects that have difficulties in attaining the attention of the media and the consumers.

As a market area Finland is small which means small turnover. *Mia Salo* (2005) pointed out in her interview that the annual turnover of the Finnish recording industry is the same as *Kesko's*[21] annual profit. As there is no big money going around no one can afford to think big. The building of fantasy worlds and characters and their maintenance cost money. The smallness of the market also makes it impossible to keep secrets for long.

Branding is not necessarily equivalent to building fantasy worlds and fictional artists. It can be that but it usually is not. Thus the third reason, lack of relevant education, must also be a factor in the scarcity of the branding praxis. The Finnish recording industry has traditionally employed "music lovers". For example the group of interviewees in this thesis consisted of songwriters, musicians, ex-radio DJs, and an ex-concert and event promoter. Unless the music enthusiasts have decided to study business practices or communications they do not have knowledge of branding and image management, which would provide tools for business development. If the employees do not see the possibilities of the branding tool, it will not be used nor developed to suit the music industry's needs.

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[21] Kesko is among the two largest trading companies in Finland. Kesko currently widens its market also in the Scandinavia, Baltic countries and Russia. Kesko's field of activities cover for instance food and daily products, building and furnishing products, agricultural products and machinery, and cars. (http://www.kesko.fi/index.asp?id=FF60B08E63C34667A8261A0B08FC2365).

In Finland celetoid projects have so far proved to be impossible to carry out, because of the media's and audience's need to transmit and consume real stories. The concept of 'celetoid' comes from *Chris Rojek* who calls celebrities that receive their fame through drastically manipulated appearances and staged authenticity 'celetoids'. (Rojek 2001: 20 - 22). However the recording industry personnel makes a clear distinction between the artists that have the possibility of building long-lasting careers and artists that are phenomena. The artist's "status" is not relational to his commercial potential. Long-lasting artists bring profit for the companies in the long run with their ten albums, while the phenomenon artists gain the same amount of sales with two albums and less investment. Generally it could be gathered from the interviews that long-lasting artists and song-writing talent are connected to one another. In the case of long-lasting artists branding-from-the-inside is often used. Phenomenon artists' music comes usually from the outside. In their case branding-from-the-outside is used more.

It seems to be a general notion that "produced" artists belong to the pop genre while in rock music, bands make their brands. Thus it is a challenge to obtain credibility for a pop act. Credibility is in direct connection with cultural relevance and brand acceptance. In the classic division of the Finnish music scene into rock and schlager music, rock artists have been granted the position of being credible artists. This also shows in the formation of publicity. The rock media is often considered to be more credible than women's magazines that have traditionally displayed schlager music artists. Time will tell how pop artists born as the result of Idols and Popstars booms will find media that matches their needs of credibility creation. The emerging pop music culture will evidently affect the way the media profiles itself.

Record companies see themselves to be in the business of helping solo artists and bands to break through from the marginal to the mainstream. The breakthrough is attained with marketing communications and content production methods that transform the sub-cultural cult code to a message perceivable by the masses. In the transformation process record companies aim for simplicity and crystallisation. Record companies strive to reveal the core of the artist's talent and his uniqueness. The talent and the uniqueness are concentrated to a short story with which the artist is pitched to the media that transmits the message to the public. In the message creation it must be taken into account that the media in Finland looks for artistic values and non-

commercial appeal. Projects that are too commercial are ignored. Paradoxically, media also have their own profiles because they need to meet commercial objectives in the sales of advertisement space. When a medium profiles itself to provide programming for a certain target market it automatically leads to categorisation of artists and their music. Music and artists must match the needs of a radio station's target market. What also limits the record companies' possibilities to find display channels for new music is that there are not radio stations for every kind of music. Thus this should be one of the considerations as the labels sign new talents. The talent's music must fit the existing media field. The interviewees in this study admitted that the record companies do not create demand in the market. This leads to a conclusion that the record labels then must play with the existing rules, and work out their publicity strategies to fit the media supply.

According to the interviewees music is in the core of the artist brand. Finding and selecting the right songs is considered to be the most effective way of brand creation, brand development and brand re-invention. In relation to brand development the clarification of the message in music is manifested through mixes that allow the audience to hear the vocalist and the lyrics better. More riffs for the instruments and hooks in the lyrics are also created.

As the interviewees were asked to consider what kind of significance the artist brand would have in the future business model, the general conception was that the digital media and the marketing methods that thrive from the interactive nature of the new technology are not utilised efficiently. Thus the results of artist brand utilisation in the new business environment remain slim. The interviewees lack experience and thus opinions. It is amazing that the music industry has not invested more in experimental marketing and digital distribution of music even though, according to *Kusek* and *Leonhard* (2005: 90), over 82 percent of the Finns are online.

As the study proceeded a rather surprising research result came up. *Kimmo Kivisilta* (2005) argues that it is possible that in the future the record companies concentrate on producing and marketing merely songs. In the environment of fast-food music consumption hit tunes could be the offerings of the record labels. In this context he questions the need for artist brands. *Kivisilta's* notion is understandable because as

Salo (2005) pointed out, the artists are not record companies' property like the mechanised songs are. If the music industry does not begin to incorporate the recording, publishing, touring and merchandising businesses, the only way of staying alive would probably be to focus on song production and distribution. Efficient and effective artist brand utilisation is possible only if the record labels get their hands on the income from touring and merchandising business. To the artists this kind of business model would present a new kind of problem in the form of interest supervision. If one firm were to administrate all the rights of the artist, malpractice suits would most likely increase. To avoid malpractice disputes artists would need to be proactive and start using managers and attorneys to secure their interests. But more turnover must be generated in the Finnish music business before the usage of managers and lawyers becomes possible.

When I asked *Pekka Ruuska* (2005) to define what the artist brand consists of, he replied that decisions to sign new artists are based on the artists' 'artistry' (artistisuus). In the discussion we did not get to the bottom of what 'artistry' means, but it is clear that artists are signed onto labels because of their appeal, attitude, physical appearance – not in the sense of beauty or handsomeness, but more like a style – and songs. Just as also my other interviewees, also *Ruuska* (2005) emphasised the importance of a good song in an artists' success. Artists need songs to attract attention and to open the communication channel to the public. Without a song the artist's voice will not be heard. A rider without a horse is not a rider. But the artistry, the song and the record companies' marketing efforts are not enough to make an artist succeed. Whether being an artist of a long-lasting kind or a sparkling phenomenon, artists have to have luck and coincidence on their side. When an artist becomes successful the timing, the place and the combination of creative and marketing resources have been right. And that is where luck steps in.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been about the creation and development of artist brands in the Finnish recording industry. In the first section I defined the significance of celebrity culture and the usage value of artists in the context of recording industry. Through the hypotheses of *Rojek*, *Wicke*, and *Varilo* together with *Kusek* and *Leonhard* it was noted that a celebrity status of an artist can be used to promote products and services of the recording industry. The celebrity status can also be used to promote non-material values, beliefs and ideologies of collaborate brands. Publicity management was found to have an important role in the development of artist brands, because as *Rojek* (2001: 13) argues, mass media representations are the key principle in the formation of celebrity culture.

In the second section of the thesis I concentrated on defining background for the research. The theoretical framework of this study was constructed around selected theories of branding and marketing communications together with theories of image management and image communications. All the theories were treated in the context of popular culture and reflected against the hypotheses of *Pine* and *Gilmore* on the concept of 'Experience Economy' and *Kusek* and *Leonhard* on the concept of 'Digital Economy'.

The theories of branding, marketing communications and image management were presented in the third section. The core of the branding hypothesis was constructed around *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Identity System. In the marketing communications I relied on notions of *Kotler* together with *Rope* and *Mether*. In the field of image management I presented *Elisa Ikävalko's* notions on the development of organisational image. I applied *Ikävalko's* thoerem to artist image development and added a subsequent step to complement her argument. After defining the artist's identity, profile and his public image, a logical step of 'formation of reputation' was added to the hypothesis. Through the reputation formation the theories of image management and branding received a touching point which led me to draw a conclusion that *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Identity System and *Ikävalko's* theory of image development can be applied to artist brand development in a very similar manner.

Publicity management was also dealt in section three. In the context of publicity the main arguments included *Erkki Karvonen's* (1999: 19) notions that public images presented by the media are normally reduced and simplified images, which leads to stereotyping and lack of diversity. *Karvonen's* argument was accompanied by *Kotler* (2003: 565), who argued that a communicator's task is to strive for simplicity, clarity, interest, and repetition in order to make his message perceivable among the hundreds of messages that consumers have to face in their every day life. It was also noted that marketers must be able to match artists' images with the ones of media, because the media's own ideological backgroung, and as *Ikävalko* (in Uimonen 1996: 209) argued, the competition from the share of advertisers regulate how the media relates to the objects it is presenting.

In section four, seven record industry professionals had a chance to explain how artist brands are created and developed in practice. Section five concluded the interview results. Section four started with definitions of the terms 'artist brand' and 'artist's image'. The majority of the interviewees conceived 'image' to be a part of 'artist brand'. 'Image' was connected to an immediate mental picture born as a result of an artist's visual appearance, behaviour and a way of speech in a given situation. 'Artist brand' includes the elements of image together with elements created as a result of the record company's marketing communications and styling efforts in connection to the artist's music, album covers and visual appearance.

The development of an artist brand begins from an artist's artistry (artistisuus) that the record companies hold as a starting point when signing talents to their labels. *Pekka Ruuska's* (2005) term 'artistry' is a complex concept that can be condensed to include an artist's appeal, attitude, style and music. In fact all the interviewees conceived the music to have a decisive role in artist brand development. Songs are used as a tool when record companies help an artist to break through from the marginal music culture to a wider market of mainstream audience. Songs are also used to reinvent artist brands when a brand has reached a decline stage in its life cycle.

In the process of artist brand development record companies see their role as a "clarifier" of artist's music, vision and mission. Record companies' task is to find the

artist's originality and to crystallise it to an understandable format for the mainstream audience. Simultaneously, in the process of clarification and crystallisation the artist's uniqueness and freshness must be maintained, so that the artist will not lose his original fan base. The process of artist brand development can be conducted as branding-from-the-inside or as branding-from-the-outside. In the first alternative the record company lets the artist brand to develop naturally as a result of the artist's interaction with his audience and the media. In the latter alternative the record company takes a more active role. However there is no single formula for artist brand development, and thus the tasks of the record company personnel in the method of branding-from-the-outside vary from acquiring songs for the artist to giving make-up instructions or advice how to speak to journalists. Branding-from-the-inside is most regularly used as a method with rock bands and artists that are singer-songwriters. Artists that operate in subcultures, such as hiphop artists are also often branded from the inside. Pop artists that do not write music themselves are most often branded from the outside. However in both methods artists have a significant role in the development of their brands. Record companies find it impossible to control an artist's brand, because in the end the artist does what he wishes to. The companies can only advise. The same applies to publicity management. The artist is the only person who can control the quality of his publicity.

When I compiled information for this thesis I found the theories of the Experience Economy and Digital Economy the most interesting. In my opinion artist brands would be a perfect offering in the Digital Experience Economy. Unfortunately I did not gain many supportive arguments for my hypothesis from the interviewees. What did come up was that no one in the current model of music business has the possibility to enjoy full benefits of artist brands. This is because the allocation of resources and return on investment is not organised fairly. Until the rules of the whole music business are reorganised, the utilisation of artist brands will remain scarce.
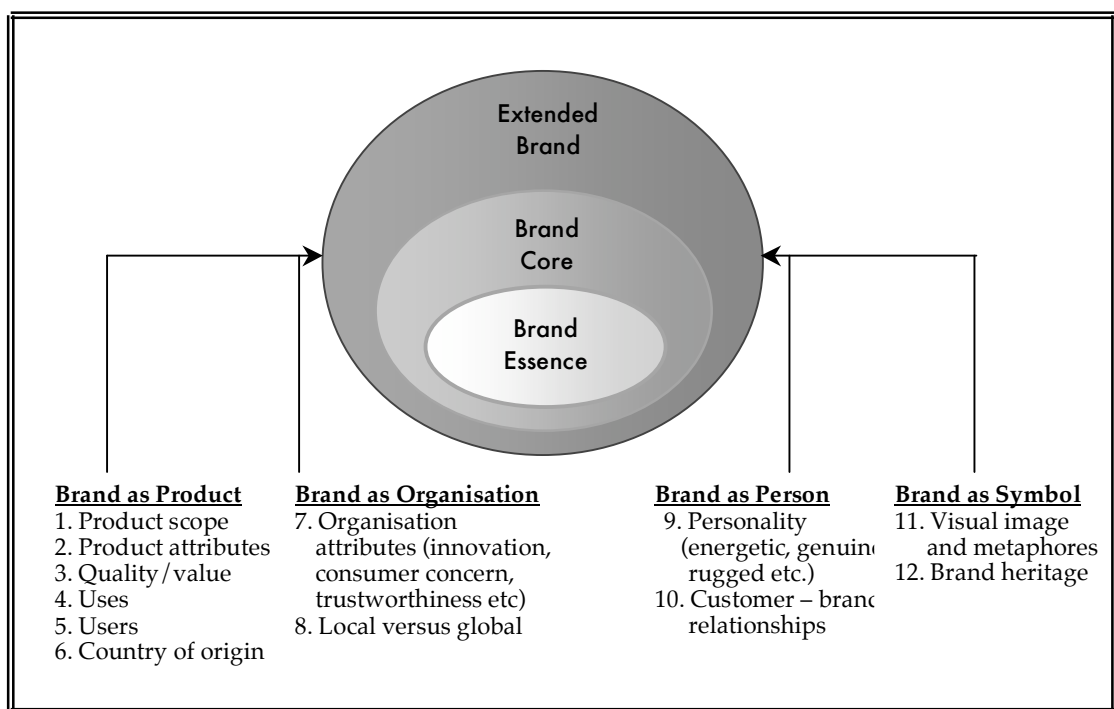
6.1. Do Theory and Practice Meet?

The theoretical framework of this thesis proved to be heavy to apply to the results gained from the interviews. I conceived the theories of branding to be especially difficult to apply to practice. The abundance of the theories that I had chosen to use as a point of reference also shows in the length of this thesis. But still I argue that artist brands should not be studied solely as products and through branding theories. But I do not think that theories about image alone could provide substantial support to the research of artist brands either.

On the whole the interviewees' opinions on the concept of image were in line with *Erkki Karvonen's* notions. All the parties acknowledge that 'image' tends to lead to connotations that are concerned with the visual appearance of the object. Also *Elisa Ikävalko's* hypothesis that image creators have no full power over image formation was proved true. The recording industry also formulates its marketing messages in the form of a short story in the same way, as organisations, according to *Ikävalko,* should communicate their identities. *Ikävalko* argues that a message turned into a story is fun to tell and easy to remember (Ikävalko in Uimonen 1996: 183). And this is also what the record labels try to achieve with their marketing communications. The media must become interested in the message, and it must feel that the message is convenient to transmit to the audience. Thus record labels aim to clarify and simplify their marketing messages. This is also *Kotler's* argument. *Kotler* (2003: 565) argues that a communicator's task is to strive for simplicity, clarity, interest, and repetition.

Theories and hypotheses about image formulation and marketing communications were well suited for the purposes of this study. However, I found the approaches of branding presented as part of the theoretical framework and as a new finding in the empiric part problematic. Both of these approaches, *Aaker's and Joachimsthaler's* Brand Identity System (see section 3) and *Valtanen's* Brand Identity Model in the Recording Industry (see section 4), bring out the difficulties of applying branding theories to practical work of artist branding. In *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Identity System the Brand Essence is more like a verbal expression, a clarification of the brand's identity components, not a part of the brand. It may be that some interpret the story as a part of the brand, but to me the story is merely an expression of the

brand. The Brand Essence, the story, is what the marketing and promotion personnel use as a selling point when approaching the media, the distribution channels and the public. The story can be told from a different angle to all three target groups. For the media the record company can emphasise the artistic qualities of the artist, for the distribution channels the commercial potential of the record, and for the public the sexiness or the cuteness of the artist. Thus the Brand Essence is not an essence in such a way that it would reveal the sole "truth" of the artist. It merely presents a chosen angle of the artist's world. This fits in fact *Ikävalko's* hypothesis of the creation of slightly different profiles for different target groups.

Brand as Product
1. Product scope
2. Product attributes
3. Quality / value
4. Uses
5. Users
6. Country of origin

Brand as Organisation
7. Organisation attributes (innovation, consumer concern, trustworthiness etc)
8. Local versus global

Brand as Person
9. Personality (energetic, genuine rugged etc.)
10. Customer – brand relationships

Brand as Symbol
11. Visual image and metaphores
12. Brand heritage

Figure 5: The brand identity structure according to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2002: 44).

What the Brand Essence does is that it provides a conceptualising tool when defining a brand. What is illogical in *Aaker's* and *Joahimsthaler's* brand formation process is that if you choose to use this tool you must start from the Brand Core, displayed on the second circle. Then you move up to the outer circle to define the Extended Brand and jump back again to the inner circle, to make a conclusion of the two outer circles. To me this has always been confusing. When processing the main findings of this thesis I also planned to develop an illustrated model of the artist branding system but came to a conclusion that it is impossible to draw a model that is simple enough and still would correlate to reality. Thus I understand the difficulties of presenting information in

illustrations. The problem with *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* approach is that it does not correlate to reality from the viewpoint of how the process of brand formation procedes. However *Aaker* and *Joachimsthaler* have provided an excellent checklist for the monitoring of the implementation of the plans of artist brands.

The brand components, the qualities and the features that are actually found in the artist himself as a product are in both theories mixed with aspects that are consequences of the artist's features or results of the record companies' actions. For example if *Valtanen's* model is applied to artist brand development the product (= the artist himself), the will (= a personality trait of the artist), the story (= a result of the marketing department's marketing communications strategy), and the style (= a personality trait of the artist and a result of the record company's implementation of marketing strategies) are presented on the same plane as if they all were components that define a brand from the same dimension. He also refers to the personality of the artist brand as if it was the manifestation of the 'will'. I would rather see that the 'will' is a manifestation of the artist's personality. Additionally the features and the quality of the product are not in the Brand Heart or next to it. *Valtanen* has chosen to place features and the quality aspects of the artist brand in the outer circle. His cause and effect relationships simply are not in place.
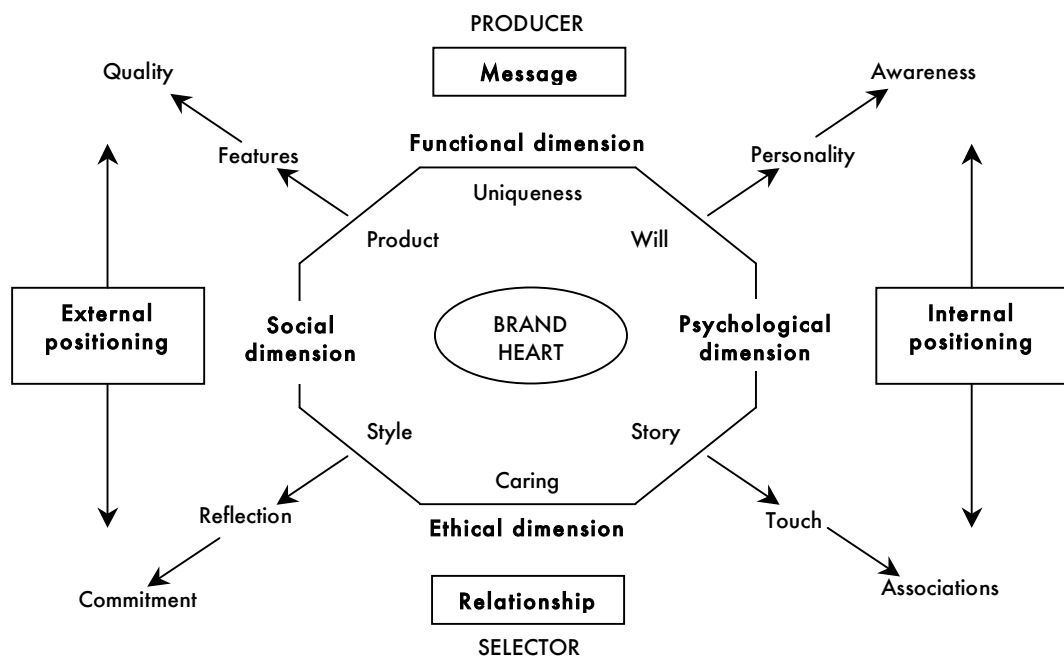

Figure 6: Brand Identity Model in the Recording Industry according to Valtanen (2003: 190).

Valtanen has made an ambitious attempt to combine *Gad's, Kapferer's* and *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* brand theories in one model. This has led to a model that requires solutions that lead to simplifications and false cause and effect relationships. As *Valtanen* has placed *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* Brand Equity dimensions, i.e. brand loyalty, brand associations, brand awareness and perceived quality, to the outer circle (compare Valtanen 2003: 192 and Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2002: 17), he has been forced to make consequent lines of features and actions that are not necessarily realised in that order in reality. *Valtanen* puts style – reflection – commitment, story – touch – associations, will – personality – awareness, and product – features – quality to a subsequent order. I argue that all the four Ts, i.e. style, story, will and product, have an effect in the creation of brand commitment, brand associations, brand awareness and perceived quality. It is not only the style of the artist that creates commitment, i.e. brand loyalty. It is not only the will of the artist that defines the personality of the artist brand and creates awareness of the brand's existence.

Also the cause and effect relationships between the ethical, psychological, functional, and social dimensions of *Gad's* theory remain rather abstract in the positions they now have been placed. Again I argue that *Valtanen's* four Ts have a wider effect on *Gad's* four dimensions than what *Valtanen* presents in his model. For example the mechanism of how a fan identifies himself with a user group through an artist does not solely occur through the artist's style and the product features. With story associations a fan can feel a deeper sense of belonging in a group. For instance *Antti Tuisku's* story: *"From the till of Siwa[22] to girls' favourite"* (Nieminen 2005) certainly creates social bonding among people who have similar kinds of aspirations and a background as *Antti*. Also the artist's personality creates social bonding within a group of people that identify themselves with the artist's personal traits.

A part of the problems in *Valtanen's* model originate already from *Kapferer's, Gad's* and *Aaker's* and *Joachimsthaler's* theories. What is good in *Valtanen's* model though is that it demonstrates the different factors that are in effect in the brand relationship between the brand and the consumer. These are also aspects that record companies' personnel ponder with when they create and develop artist brands. Nevertheless, not

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[22] Siwa is a food market chain that is known for its advantageous prices.

Valtanen nor *Aaker and Joahmishaler* have created a tool that would make a functionable model of defining human based brands.

6.2. Reflections On the Interview Methodology and Analysis

There are two reasons why I did not manage to acquire enough data in relation to brands in the Digital Experience Economy. Firstly, in each interview I took the subject up towards the end of the interview when the interviewees and I myself were already tired and the interviewees were hurrying up to their next meetings. But I also got the impression that the interviewees had not thought about the impact of the changing economic environment in full detail. It seemed that they lacked information and vision in relation to the effects of the changing economy. On the other hand marketers in record companies may plan new strategies as we speak, but the interviewees chose not to discuss these matters with me because their business secrets must be protected.

If I reflect the interview data and its analysis against *Norman Fairclough's* theorem of the critical discourse analysis, it must be said that on the whole the interviewees provided fairly homogenous answers. Many of the interviewees also talked about the same artists regardless of record company lines. I interpret this as a sign of the fact that the Finnish recording industry circles are small and thus do not allow nor generate diversity. The lack of heterogeneity can also be explained by the choice of the record companies. I chose the majors as my research target. Even though three of the interviewees represent smaller labels they all have a recent background in a multinational record company. My initial assumption was that the people working for majors that have their head quarters in the U.S. and the UK would apply branding theories to practice more frequently than the national and indie labels. I was proven wrong. I am fairly certain that the research results regarding brand formation and new marketing techniques would have been somewhat different had I chosen only indie record labels as my study subject. The artist brand would probably not have opened up more than it did now, but I would have expected the indie workers to be able to tell more about the utilisation of dialogue marketing.

All through the interviews and data analysis I was aware of the fact that A&R-managers who are responsible of the production of the record and the marketing

specialists who are responsible of the PR- and marketing campaigns wanted to stress factors that lie next to their core competence and interests. However it was pleasing to notice that there were no big differences in the interviewees' attitudes regarding artist branding and artist image management even though the interviewees had different specialities. The research data does not give any indications that the A&R and marketing personnel would relate to artist brands differently. For instance all seven interviewees emphasised the importance of the song in the creation and development of artist brands. The homogenous selection of viewpoints can be explained by the small market in which the discordant notes are quickly silenced under the demands of consensus created in the interaction by the record industry workers. Also the limited line of business narrows down the options of utilising artist brands. The limited line of business affects the record companies' employees' thinking processes by directing the employees to exclude certain possibilities and to accept other options as facts. The only difference I found between the two specialist groups was that the interview situations with the PR- and marketing specialists were slightly easier because I found a common language and terminology with them more quickly. The marketers also seemed to accept my starting point regarding the study subject more easily. I interpret that the differences in the establishment of the interview lingo and the acceptance of the research subject are based on the fact that the marketing personnel is more used to discussing branding and image management issues because they do it more frequently as a part of their every day tasks, while the A&R personnel act more through the content creation in which the content is evaluated by using different terminology. All the interviewees that specialised in marketing and public relations had also studied marketing and branding related subjects earlier in some form. The study background is also a factor that affects the interviewees' thinking and their way of speech.

As it was already mentioned earlier in this thesis, the interviewees were not afraid of contradicting my comments on issues in which their opinions differed from my side notes or line of questioning. The interviewees did not try to please me in the role of the interviewer but they rather wanted to come across with their opinions. What was also positive with the interviewees was that even though their duties in the interview situation included transmitting a positive image to the interviewer about the organisations they work for, the interviewees still were willing to provide information through examples of their unsuccessful projects. It is presumable that the interviewees

self-censored their speech to some extent but the self-censorship did not prevent the data collection significantly. This fact is also demonstated through the four very small alterations that only two of the interviewees wanted to do to their comments after this possibility was offered to them.

When it comes to the values and the vision creation of the major record companies – the values and vision reflected through the interviewees – it seems that the majors are still behind the technological and economic innovation. For instance, means against piracy are seeked more from legislation than from the product and service content innovation. Neither the possibilities of the Internet are used effectively. Marketing techniques based on the interaction between the marketer and consumers on the whole did not raise much of enthusiasm or questions on the applicability of the methods to the recording business.

6.3. Suggestions For Further Research

Although I did not find support for my initial idea on the role of artist brands in the Digital Experience Economy, I obtained an experience of another kind. The study results introduced a new possibility in the form of fast-food music consumerism. How would the market change if the consumers started to use music like they eat pizza slices and hamburgers on the run? I would imagine that some consumers use the services of a specific hamburger place because of the hamburger chain's brand. Others look for the best prices. In the music business the same principles would lead to a rise of record label, distribution channel and artist brands. The record industry would also have to develop new pricing strategies in order to survive the competition. The concept of 'fast-food music consumerism' would thus provide an interesting study ground. In this approach the researchers would need to look out in two directions. Firstly, what kind of effect do the record labels', the distribution channels' and artists' brands have on consumers' decisions to purchase hit tunes? Secondly, how would the recording industry have to develop the pricing strategies in order to differentiate their brands from the competitors? Price and distribution channels are the two Marketing Mix variants that the recording industry currently does not utilise in connetion with its brands.

Also the effect of brands in the Experience Economy and the Digital Economy should be studied further, not only on the level of artists but also in a wider context. It would be interesting to find out what kind of experiences the brands offer in relation to products and services? Is the brand the ultimate offering of the Experience Economy, or is it merely "old-style marketing" as *John Grant* argues? Earlier in this thesis *Grant* (2003: 4) claimed that *"brand images ruled the second half of the 20th century and now the marketing should be concentrating on expanding people's minds with new concepts rather than hypnotising them with brand images."*

Also the relationship of the new interactive marketing techniques and artist brands should be studied further. In this context direct marketing, sponsorhip, product placements and brand collaborations should be examined. There are clear signs that music marketing is shifting from paid advertising to collaborations that offer synergy benefits and save money to all the parties involved. Also the role of PR could be questioned because as this thesis has showed, marketing music through radio stations and the print media does not necessarily provide the best means of attaining hoped-for results.

This thesis has been about the artist branding practices of major record labels that use differentiation as their competitive strategy. It would be interesting to read a thesis that would study artist brands in relation to indie companies that concentrate on focus strategies in the search of competitive advantage. The results of the two theses would provide an interesting point of comparison. This kind of approach would have a starting point in *Michael Porter's* theories in creating and sustaining competitive advantage.

A suitable subject to go on with the subject presented in this thesis would be a follow-up study of the career development and brand formation of an artist or a band from the marginal, i.e. tribal cultural phase, to mainstream success. This approach would also provide a fruitful platform for studying the reception and perception of record companies' marketing messages. This approach would also provide a possibility to examine and develop the hypotheses of this thesis further.

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APPENDIX

Attachment 1

SKELETAL STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEWS (original in Finnish)

1. Background information and responsibility areas in the organisation the interviewee works for?
   - A short CV that will be edited and attached to the thesis
   - Title and practical tasks in the organisation?
   - What kind of role does the interviewee have in the processes of product development, marketing and promotion?

2. Is there image management or artist branding in the domestic music business? How is it manifested? (practical approach possible)
   a. In artist/publication (=product)
   b. Pricing
   c. Distribution
   d. Promotion, i.e how are the artist and his record made known
      i. Advertising
      ii. PR/media relations
      iii. Sales promotion
      iv. Personal sales
   e. In artist's/publication's backers? Can a punk rocker promote Helmut Lotti in a credible way? Can Polarartistit sell Kotiteollisuus in a credible way? Is it possible to publish Jane's album on Naxos label? (=people & firm brands)

3. Is there a need to brand artists? If there is, why and what for? What's the difference between a branded and non-branded artist? Does a brand sell better? Why? Is a brand a guarantee of better quality? (practical approach possible)

4. What is an artist's image? What is an artist brand? From which components are an image and a brand constructed? (practical approach possible)

5. What is the artist branding/image building process like? Where do you start from? What needs to be taken into consideration? What is the objective? (practical approach possible)

6. Who takes part in the branding process? What are their tasks? (practical approach possible)

7. What do record labels communicate with their brands? What kind of values the artist brands communicate in different target groups? (practical approach possible)

8. Brand clusters. What do record labels and artists communicate with their brands to potential collaborators? How different parties benefit from branding? The new faces of sponsorship: product placement, real-TV, etc. (practical approach possible)

9. What kind of experiences/opinions on so-called new marketing methods? (=entrepreneural marketing: guerilla-, viral-, and buzz –marketing)? What kind of role image and branding strategies have in entrepreneural marketing? (practical approach possible)

10. The significance of branding in the future business model? What is the future product record companies use? Is branding a weapon against piracy?

Attachment 2

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES

Alanko Marko, Brand Manager of Sony BMG Music Entertainment Oy

Marko Alanko has worked in the record business since 1995. From 1995 to 1998 he worked as a promotion manager in Sony. He continued as a product manager of the domestic repertoire in Sony from 1998 to 2004. Since the Sony BMG fusion in 2005 he has worked as a brand manager. Alanko has worked for instance with the projects of Bomfunk MC's, Tommi Läntinen, Jonna Pirinen, Aki Sirkesalo, Petri Munck, Fintelligens, Ricky Martin, Oasis, Aerosmith and Michael Jackson. Before his record company career, Alanko worked as a DJ and a concert and event promoter in 1989 - 95. Alanko has a Bachelor's degree in marketing.

Hynninen Kari, owner of Suomen Musiikki Oy

Before founding Suomen Musiikki Oy at the beginning of 2005, Kari Hynninen worked in his privately owned record label Zen Garden (1993 – 2000), which was bought by BMG Finland Oy in 2000. In BMG Hynninen worked as an A&R-manager. Hynninen has worked among others with Apocalyptica, Sub-Urban Tribe, Egotrippi, PMMP, Disco, Gimmel and Antti Tuisku. He currently works with Egotrippi, John McGregor, Fork, Samae Koskinen, The Millioners, Nana and C-4. In 2002 Hynninen was employed as a jury member in the Finnish Popstars 1 series.

Kallonen Asko, co-owner of Helsinki Music Company Ltd

Asko Kallonen worked for 11 years (1994 – 2004) as an A&R-manager in BMG Finland Oy. In BMG he worked among others with HIM, Samuli Edelmann, Don Huonot, Aikakone, Anssi Kela, Lordi, Jani Wickholm and Hanna Pakarinen. In Helsinki Music Company that was founded at the beginning of 2005, Kallonen currently works with Jippu, Bleak and HIM. Kallonen has been chosen asthe A&R-manager of the year seven times in the Musiikki & Media -event. Before his record company career Kallonen worked among other things as a radio DJ in Radio Mafia (later changed its name to YleX). He has also played guitar in the bands Päät and Keba. In 2003 – 2004 Kallonen was employed as a jury member in the Finnish Idols 1 series. Kallonen has a degree in hotel and restaurant management.

Kivisilta Kimmo, Marketing Director of Universal Music Oy

Kimmo Kivisilta has worked as a marketing director in Universal since 1998. From 1994 to 1998 Kivisilta worked in Warner as a promotion manager and later as a marketing manager. Kivisilta has worked for instance with the projects of Don Johnson Big Band, Tiktak, Anna Eriksson, Marita Taavitsainen, Club for Five, Uniklubi, Killer, Metallica, Eminem, Gwen Stefani, and Bon Jovi. Kivisilta has studied marketing and economics in Lund University. He currently studies in a MBA programme in England.

Nieminen Pekka, Marketing Manager of Helsinki Music Company Ltd

Pekka Nieminen started to work with domestic music in 1988 when he worked as a radio DJ and a music editor in a local radio station Radio Kolme. From 1995 to 1996 Nieminen was employed as a PR-manager by Sony Music Finland. From 1997 to 2004 Nieminen worked as a promotion manager in BMG Finland. Since the beginning of 2005 he has worked as a marketing manager in Helsinki Music Company. Nieminen has worked for instance with Samuli Edelmann, Anssi Kela, Antti Tuisku, PMMP, Disco, Jani Wickholm, Kirka, Anne Mattila, Aikakone and HIM. He has also coached artists since the mid 1990's through his privately owned company.

Ruuska Pekka, A&R Director of Warner Music Finland

Pekka Ruuska has worked in Warner Music Finland since 1994. He started as an A&R-manager and was later promoted to an A&R-director. He has worked with Maija Vilkkumaa, Zen Café, The Crash, Maarit, Pikku G, Mariska, Teräsbetoni and Rasmus, just to mention a few. Before and during his career as an A&R-director Ruuska has gained recognition as a songwriter and a musician. He has released nine solo albums and three albums as a member of the gospel band Livingstone. Ruuska was chosen as the songwriter of the year in Tapsan Tahdit in 1996. He also won the Junnu Vainio Prize in 2000. In 1981 Ruuska qualified as a primary and secondary school teacher after which he worked as a music teacher for nearly seven years.

Salo Mia, Marketing Manager of Oy EMI Finland Ab

Mia Salo has worked in EMI Finland since 1997. She started as a promotion manager of international and domestic artists. In the year of 2000 Salo began to work as a marketing manager. She has also acted as a lecturer of music business at Sibelius Academy in Helsinki from 2002 to 2004. Salo has worked for instance with the projects of Neljä Ruusua, Agents & Jorma Kääriäinen, CMX, Irina, Sara Nunes, Technicolour, Robbie Williams, Eternal, Pet Shop Boys and Beastie Boys. In 2004 Salo was employed as a jury member in the Finnish Popstars 2 series. Salo has a M.Sc in Economics.