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Brand development and marketing communications plan for the stand-up comedian Ray Zambino

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study was to develop a branding and marketing communications plan for the stand-up comedian Ray Zambino. The questions asked in this study were, what are the most common themes that arise in relation to brand building and marketing communications in the Finnish stand-up scene in particular, what are the key elements that set the brand identity for the stand-up comedian Ray Zambino, and what is this brand's target audience?, and using knowledge of the Finnish context and the brand identity of the performer Ray Zambino, what are the most efficient ways of marketing communication to convey this brand to its target audience? Firstly, a literature review was conducted to give a solid theoretical framework. Qualitative interviews with four industry professionals were then conducted. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis gives context to the Finnish scene. This context was then applied to identifying and developing the brand of Ray Zambino by utilising the classic branding models explained in the theoretical framework. These models were Kevin Keller's brand pyramid, Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller's brand aspects, and David Aaker's theories on brand identity. After the brand identity of Ray Zambino was developed, a target audience could be determined using psychographic and demographic market segments along with information from the interviews. A marketing communications plan was then made that was informed by all the previous knowledge. The results show that the biggest factor for the marketing communications plan was social media and that you can identify and develop a personal brand using traditional models with some caveats. It was discovered that if you are both a personal brand and the product being sold then every piece of communication from you becomes a brand communication. Ideas for future studies include tracking the brand equity generated by this branding in a real life context by interviewing audience members and comparing personal branding models with classical branding models then using surveys to determine which one is the stronger brand in the eyes of the public.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The art of performance has always attracted an audience, from the tragedies of the Greek amphitheatres to Shakespeare's plays on the stage of the Globe Theatre. Although it is a relative newcomer to the entertainment world (Zoglin, 2019), stand-up comedy retains that mass appeal and attracts large audiences with its breakout stars that vary in popularity. The comedian's main product is of course the humour they create on stage, but customer will also often be aware and buy into the personal brand of a particular comedian. From a business point-of-view, the stand-up comedian is then in quite a unique position, one person being both the brand and the product simultaneously. This setting in mind, this thesis will apply branding models and contextual knowledge from the Finnish stand-up scene to devise a marketing communications plan for the author, a Scottish stand-up comedian performing under the name Ray Zambino, in order to further a career in the comedy industry.

1.1 Background

Stand-up comedy is a stage act where a performer tells jokes and humorous material to a live audience, speaking directly to the viewers and sometimes also interacting with them. Comedians often perform as fictionalized versions of their real selves, and stand-up includes a wide array of comedy styles ranging from observational to surreal to political. The roots of stand-up comedy can be found in the music halls in the early 20th century UK and the minstrel shows of the 19th century USA, and the most established stand-up scenes are still found in the English-speaking world. (Zoglin, 2019) Previous research on stand-up concentrates mainly on the sociological and artistic side of the performance, for example the works "British comedy, global resistance: Russell Brand, Charlie Brooker and Stewart Lee" by James Brasset (2016) and "Comedy as freedom of expression" by Paul Sturges (2010). There is currently very little research of stand-up comedy in the

business context, which gives the study at hand broader value also beyond a personal benefit.

In Finland, stand-up comedy started in the mid-1990s and came out of the Finnish theatre setting. The first comedy club was established in Jyväskylä at the university, and it still runs regular performances and festivals today. (Jyvälä, 2013, p.4) The Finnish scene started by emulating already established scenes from the USA and the UK, which allowed for rapid development, as typical pitfalls and teething problems could be avoided by having a rich history to study and learn from. Besides Toni Jyvälä's thesis "Koomikon rooli; Ajatuksia stand up -komiikasta" (2013), which discusses what it means to be a performer, any research on the Finnish stand-up context is extremely scarce. The fact that there is no research related stand-up comedy in Finland from a business and marketing perspective is thus a strong motivating factor for this thesis.

Currently the Finnish comedy scene is worth 10-15 million euros to the economy, according to the latest estimations from Suomen Stand Up -Club and Ohjelmakauppa (T. Westerlund, personal communication, 15th September, 2020). This figure is mainly comprised from the few significant companies, which are Suomen Stand Up -Club, Ohjelmakauppa, WT Comedy, and Sam's Comedy Club. There are three individual performers that considerably add to this estimate, Sami Hedberg, Ismo Leikola and André Wickström. The amount of revenue they generate depends on whether they are touring in a given year. Despite these figures, stand-up comedy in Finland remains a relatively small section of the live entertainment market, so there is definitely room for growth and better business practices to be implemented.

1.1.1 Personal background

My own entry into stand-up comedy happened by chance in Glasgow, Scotland, in the year of 2011. For nine years now I have been involved in all aspects of the comedy industry, starting out as a beginner, an "open mic", all the way to a paid headliner, and everything in between. Although I had to start again as an open mic after I relocated to Finland in 2014, I have managed to make comedy my job here also. Besides performing, I have been running five regular comedy clubs with a business partner, for example the

Secret Comedy Club in Bar Base in Helsinki, and clubs in Dynamo, Turku, and Porvoon Paahtimo in Porvoo. I also have work experience in consulting on the running of other comedy nights and writing scripts and sketches for companies and Finnish television. Due to working in stand-up performance, I have been immersed in the practical employment of marketing when promoting myself or an event that I am the organizer of. I applied to Arcada to the International business program with a view to studying marketing to support what I was already doing, to learn what I wasn't doing, and how to apply that learning to an industry where only a few people have formal business training.

1.2 Theory and method

In order to be successful in their field, comedians need to market both their future events and performances as well as their personal brands to their target audiences. Based on personal experience within the stand-up scene, I believe comedians already use some classical brand development techniques without realising it. Extrapolating this further, this study will apply the tried and tested company brand building models to achieve a successfully high level of personal branding for the performer Ray Zambino. The central theories used here are existing models of brand development: David Aaker's brand equity model (1996), Kevin Keller's brand resonance pyramid (2013), and Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller's brand aspects (2016), as well as analysis of the targeted audience. Once the performer's brand has been identified and developed, Kotler and Keller's model of the marketing communications mix (2016) can then be utilised to create a plan for effective promotion and strengthening of said brand, leading to growth within the industry.

In addition to existing theoretical framework on branding, a qualitative, semi-structured interview study will be conducted in order to gain insight to the brand building and marketing in the Finnish stand-up setting specifically. The four interviewees all have a long background and knowledge of the local context, either as performers or producers of stand-up comedy. Due to the restrictions set by the pandemic, the interviews will be done over the phone, recorded, and later transcribed. The interviews will be guided by a list of relevant questions, and a thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions will help in highlighting the main themes that come up in relation to stand-up in Finland

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1.3 Aim of the study

This thesis aims to develop a strong personal brand identity and to create a marketing communications plan for the performer Ray Zambino, by using established branding models and marketing communications techniques, along with specific knowledge of the Finnish stand-up context gained through qualitative interviews with industry leaders. This is done in order to both further advance a personal career in the field, as well as to contribute to the study of comedy performance from a business perspective more broadly.

This study aims to answer to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the most common themes that arise in relation to brand building and marketing communications in the Finnish stand-up scene in particular?

Research Question 2: What are the key elements that set the brand identity for the stand-up comedian Ray Zambino, and what is this brand's target audience?

Research Question 3: Using knowledge of the Finnish context and the brand identity of the performer Ray Zambino, what are the most efficient ways of marketing communication to convey this brand to its target audience?

1.4 Demarcation

This thesis will be limited to the branding development and marketing communications of Ray Zambino as a stand-up comedian and not simply as an individual or in other areas of the entertainment sector. It is not personal branding in the sense of seeking to project a better corporate self. It will only be focusing on the Finnish comedy scene. The study will not be tracking the success of the developed brand and marketing communications plan as it will be more efficient to actually implement the marketing communications plan in the future career of the performer rather than an artificial conceit used only for this research.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis will be made up of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic and gives some background information on it. The method of the thesis is briefly mentioned, and the demarcation of the thesis is set out. This chapter contains the aim of the thesis and the research questions that will be answered by the end of the thesis.

Chapter two is a theoretical framework. All the key concepts and theories that will be used in the thesis are set out in this chapter.

Chapter three is the method. This chapter sets out the way that the data that will inform the models from chapter two will be collected and analysed. It also tells who the data came from and why they were selected.

Chapter four is the analysis of the data talked about in chapter three.

Chapter five is where the analysed data from chapter four is adapted into the theoretical models from chapter two. This is where the branding development and marketing communication plan is formed.

Finally, chapter six is the discussion and conclusion. This is where the process of getting the data, analysing it, and, using it to build the branding and marketing communications plan is reflected upon. In this chapter it is determined if the thesis was successful in its aim and if the research questions were answered. It also contains thoughts on further areas of study.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this theoretical framework section, the author explores aspects of branding, marketing and how these two aspects intertwine and depend on one another. This section will define the basis of the brand development and preliminary marketing communications plan that will be developed for and by the author.

2.1 What is a brand?

Understanding what exactly a brand is, is important before it can be applied to the performer Ray Zambino. Catherine Slade-Brooking (2016, p. 12) argues that branding is an act almost as old as humanity itself, with ancient man delineating which tools belonged to him and his group by applying some sort of marking to them. In ancient Egypt, it has even been observed that sculptures and monuments bear the mark of its creator (Lindstrom, 2011, p. 16).

Branding as it is today developed in the 50's as the so called "mad men" adopted the ideas of Freud's nephew Edward Bernays. (Arons 2019). They realized that human beings like to form strong emotional attachments and have a fierce tribalist attitude and that this innate sense can be exploited for profit and loyalty.

Edward Bernays' book "Crystallizing Public Opinion", although not directly about brands, was the first to ascertain that companies can control what the public think about them. He suggested that this could be done by thinking of people not as individuals, but how human beings work as groups. This is the same aim as developing a successful brand. Brands target large groups of people with the aim that they would imprint themselves on their product and feel that the brand represents who they are in society and as people. This can be extrapolated further to the purpose of this thesis: by using the same techniques and applying them to an individual that is both the brand and the product.

The way we associate with a brand can colour our personality and who we are. This can be seen in a study by the Colorado School of Medicine, "Pregnant Mother's Diet Impacts Infant's Sense of Smell, Alters Brain Development", (Todrank et al., 2010) which tells about a mother who, during pregnancy only ate garlic or vanilla flavoured things. It was then observed that the resulting child had a higher than average affinity for these scents and flavours. Martin Lindstrom (2011, p. 23) uses this study in to illustrate that the brands we learn and use as children stick with us for most of our life and that they can remind us of home, safety and comfort. Wanting to return to this feeling is what helps to create brand loyalty.

Lindstrom (2011, p. 110) discusses an experiment where teenagers were split into 8 groups and asked to rank and download a selection of songs. Before they listened to the

songs the researchers told the teenagers which songs had previously been most down-loaded and it was found that which songs ranked at the top was completely different with each group depending on which songs the researcher had told them. So which song was a "hit" was "determined solely by whether it was perceived as already popular" This experiment was to investigate the power of social acceptance and inclusion can affect the success of a product.

This phenomenon of associating brands with social acceptance can be seen clearly in the way that Instagram influencers work. These influencers are usually people who are paid by a brand to wear or talk about the product in a positive fashion in the hopes that customers who look up to these influencers would buy said product. This is becoming increasingly more popular as it believed to be much more effective than other types of advertising in certain fields for example, in the fashion industry (Li et al. 2012). Bianchi & Andrews (2018) asserts, as social media use grew and marketers noticed that their core audience was all in one place, those social platforms became key channels to interact and spread their message amongst their followers.

So, brands are important to people on an emotional and societal level. Brands are now used not simply to sell, but to create a lasting relationship with the consumer and strengthen that relationship with every product and communication under that brand's label. That creates a feedback loop that encourages the customer to return to that brand over and over again.

2.2 Personal branding

Jerry S. Wilson & Ira Blumenthal (2008) state that we can build our own personal brands by looking at the examples that have been set by large successful companies such as Coca Cola or Google. However, some important distinctions that must be taken into account when trying to apply branding models on a 1:1 basis. Due to the very nature of it being personal to every individual, personal brands have a much more abstract nature and a more layered and complex narrative than traditional brands. A personal brand can be harder to maintain because the brand and the individual become intertwined and an action that the individual takes that they may consider to be separate from their brand might not be interpreted by customers as separate from the brand. It is difficult to convey a

consistent self because "People may adopt different personas for different situations (such as work vs. play) that will affect the dimensionality of their brand" (Keller, 2013 p.283).

Wilson & Blumenthal have simplified the way customers react to a brand with a simple formula of "promise + experience = relationship" (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008 p. 10). This simplification allows us to develop a brand understandably through conducting a simple thought experiment to figure out what is it that we are promising our clients/customers and what experience do we want them to associate with us? By answering these questions, we can, in theory, control what the customer's relationship to us will be.

Talent and skill in your own field is not enough and that people who develop their brand correctly can "use their power to attack their areas of passionate interests" (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008, p. 15) and thus connect with their customers and the public on a deeper level that nurtures a deeper brand loyalty. As an example, the musician Bono is used. His brand is that he is "more than a musician". This brand is reinforced through Bono's actions and how the public perceive those actions. He does a lot of publicly visible charity work and actively champions good causes. This is the key to personal branding, setting out how you wish to be perceived and then using everything in your power to deliver direct actions that contribute to that perception.

Wilson & Blumenthal argue that not only is your personal brand a tool to advertise yourself, but a key component in how you are seen by the world. By nurturing it you can develop "brand insistence" where people in your life, co-workers, friends, neighbours, will actively sing you praises to other people and help you achieve your goals. This "brand insistence" is crucial in the case of this thesis as in stand-up comedy your fellow comedian's opinions can make or break a career.

Wilson & Blumenthal (2008, p. 122) also state the importance of knowing one's own limits and to not overextend. To overextend would causes dissonance between the promise and the experience and in doing so creating a negative relationship with your personal brand in the mind of others because you are not aligning your plan with your output. By trying to project one image, but projecting a different image with your actions, customers

will become distrustful and associate their experience of your personal brand with a negative emotion.

2.3 Key elements of a brand

Now that we have defined what a brand and personal brand is, what are the key components? Kotler & Keller (2016, p. 282) state that there are six elements to a brand and have categorized them in two sets of three. The first set which are labelled as "brand building" are "**memorable**", "**meaningful**", and "**likeable**". The second set of 3 are more for "defensive", which here is referring to how a brand can adapt, and brand equity retained in the face of different opportunities, "**protectable**", "**transferable**", and "**adaptable**".

These are defined as,

1. **Memorable** – This refers to how easily the brand can be recalled and recognized

2. **Meaningful** – This refers to the thoughts conjured up by your brands name or image. It uses the inherent meaning in its name to define who might use the product or how it is perceived.

3. **Likeability** – This refers to how appealing a brand element is. Is it visually stimulating or does the name of the product invoke some familiar or wanted feelings?

4. **Transferable** – This refers to the brands ability to be used in other countries without upset due to local languages or if the brand is suitable to be used when introducing more in a product range.

5. **Adaptable** – This refers to how a brand can change with changing tastes or its ability to stay relevant, for example a brand updating its logo to look fresh.

6. **Protectable** – This refers to how easily a brand could be copied and if their brand elements are shielded legally, for example Apple's logo.

Kotler and Keller (2016, p. 281) explain that brand elements are "trademarkable devices" that can identify the brand and differentiate it from its competitors. A brand must have thorough testing and brand elements must go through many different tests such as, how

easily can the element be recalled, what would a customer guess that the product does based on the element, or how easily can the name can be pronounced. If a brand element sticks to the six criteria, then that element can build a deeper brand equity.

2.4 Brand identity

Brand identity is how you wish to portray your brand to the customer. It is everything that a brand does to "cultivate a certain image in a customer's mind" (Tarver, 2020). This identity must be visible and consistent throughout everything a brand does in order to create a positive relationship with the desired customers.

To build a successful brand, you must be able to clearly define your brand identity. You must understand where your brand lies in the market and what it stands for. To create a solid brand identity a clear picture of the values that you want your brand to represent must be present.

Aaker (1996, p. 68) talks about brand identity as analogous to one's own personal identity. He asks us to consider the importance of questions such as, what are my core values? what do I stand for? and How do I want to be perceived? He suggests that these personal identifiers are no different than how we would want to project the identity of our brand to the customer.

In Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 51) a set of eight guidelines are given out to help avoid common pitfalls and rookie mistakes in building a brand identity. As can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. "Creating Effective Brand Identity Systems" (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 51)

These guidelines are defined as:

Avoid limited brand perspective- Do not let the what the brand is and represents become too limited in its scope. A brand is more than a tag line or slogan. It is an easy trap to fall into to focus on only one aspect at the detriment of all others.

Link the brand to a compelling functional benefit whenever possible- One should not make only factual, tangible benefits of a product known. It should instead be the aim to invoke some positive emotion or feeling that is then associated with the brand. An example used in Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000, p. 55) is Volvo. Not only do Volvo advertise the practical facts of their product but they always try to convey the additional benefit of a feeling of safety when using their products.

Use constructs that fit and help – ignore others- This can be summed up with the adage "don't try to fit a square peg into a round hole". There are many facets of building a brand

identity and many questions to think about. This does not mean, however, that all questions and facets are relevant to what you are trying to achieve. There is no point thinking about how a product name translates overseas if you only want to operate in one country.

Generate deep customer insight- This is means that you should not only rely on surface level surveys and how customers feel about certain products. You should try and find out how customers identify with your brand in the context of their lives and compared to everything else. The book gives the example of Levi video-taping customers as they wander around a store and recording their comments about every product, not just their own.

Understand competitors- This is about avoiding the trap of only focusing on what you are doing. It can be helpful to see what the competition is doing and how they are allocating their resources. The aim here is to gain insight and filter that information into your strategy rather than doing the exact same thing that competitors are doing.

Allow multiple brand identities- If you have a brand identity figured out and a direction you want to go, it can be a detriment to belligerently continue with this single identity in a market that it does not fit into. Although a common theme is required with the identity, some markets may be better served by highlighting different aspects of the brand.

Make the brand identity drive the execution – This boils down to staying on message. If you make sure your brand identity is clear and understood at all levels, then every communication from the brand will be coming from the position of that identity.

Elaborate the brand identity – Although you may have a very clear idea of what the brand identity is, that may not fully come across to everyone when it is represented by a slogan or a few words. You must make sure that you are communicating the brand identity clearly and understandably to customers, staff and clients.

2.4.1 Brand image

Brand identity becomes brand image when the identity is established in the mid of the customer. Brand identity is the way that you envision the brand and want it to be perceived

and the brand image is how the customers view the brand in reality. A strong image that resonates with the public is an important key factor to attracting and maintaining a solid, loyal customer base.

This relationship between brand identity and brand image can be seen in Figure 2 from Jean-Noël Kapferer (2008, p. 174). This model shows that the sender, that is, the brand, creates and sends out the brand identity through messages. These messages take the form of marketing and brand communications, other people talking about the brand, how the product is received and, where the message is heard. Before those messages reach the customer, they are interrupted by other brands trying to market and communicate and customer's everyday lives affecting how that message is received. Once received and contextualised in a customer's mind, you get the true brand image.
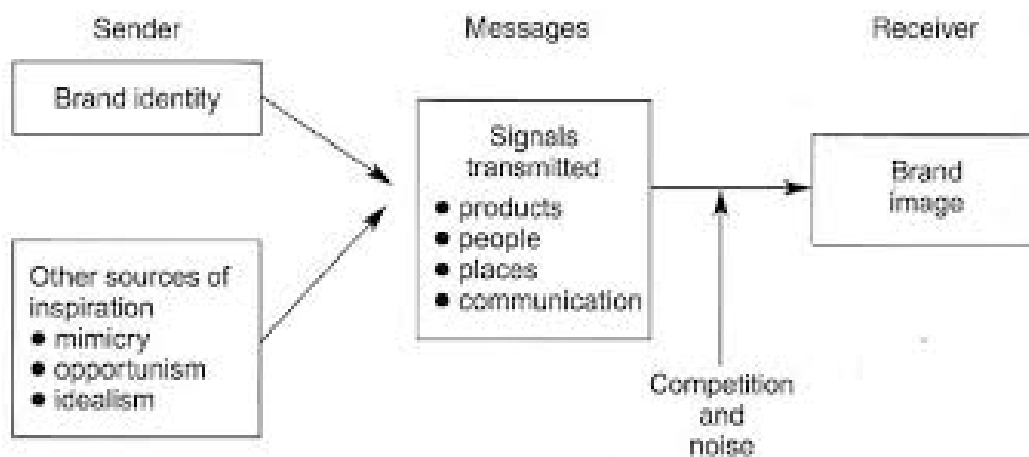

Figure 2 Brand identity. Kapferer (2008, p. 174)

2.5 Audience

Once a brand has been developed, it must be determined who the target audience is. That target audience must align with the identity that a brand is trying to establish. There is no point trying to engage an audience that will not be receptive to what the brand represents. (Adcock et al. 2002, p. 117)

Having a more targeted approach when to comes to marketing to potential customers can yield better results. Rather than marketing the product, to everyone available, a few segments of the potential customers are chosen (Adcock et al. 2002, p. 117). The segmentation process allows a more precise form of communication. Only people who have been identified as having an interest in the product will receive the communications instead of the communications being ignored by the population at large (Khan, 2006, p. 13).

There are several types of segmentation, such as, psychographic, geographic, or demographic. Psychographic segments people based on personality, attitudes and lifestyles, geographic segments people based on location, and demographic segments people based on things like, age, education level, and marital status. (Khan, 2006, p. 14)

With a clear target audience in mind the communication can start to form. The target audience determines how a communication is delivered tonally, when a communication is delivered, and where the communication will be delivered. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008, p. 231)

Adcock et al. (2002. pp.120-121) mentions four requirements for a market segment to be useful. They are, definable, reachable, sizeable, and relevant. To clarify, definable means that the segment is easily understood and has clear limits that can be quickly described, reachable means that there is a way to communicate with the segment easily, sizeable means that the segment must be large enough to sustain the brand, and relevant means that the segment must have an interest in the style, tone or identity of the brand.

2.6 Brand equity

Brand equity is the meaning and value that a customer gives to a product or service. (Kotler and Keller, 2016, p. 151). It is what determines how a customer feels and acts towards a brand. The brand equity is linked to many parts of the brand, such as the name, the slogan and the logo.

"A powerful brand is important, but what it really represents is a profitable set of loyal customers" (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). The way in which these customers become loyal is through building brand equity. David Aaker (1996 p. 8) breaks down brand equity into

four main categories: brand name awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. It then follows that having strong brand equity would cause customers to view the brand favourably and chose it over a competitor.

Aaker (1996, pp. 1-6) uses the example of Kodak as a brand with good brand equity. He tells the story of Kodak's commitment to quality from the beginning when their innovative "dry" plate, that had simplified the process of photography, had a problem with a component and started to lose sensitivity and Kodak made the financially risky move of recalling the products. The owner, Eastman, realized that the way to keep customers coming back is to maintain the best quality. He then describes Kodak's understanding of how their customers perceive their brand with their easily recognisable logo. He asserts that Kodak's commitment to quality and innovation lead to customers associating the brand with simplicity and family. This example encompasses the four categories of brand equity mentioned previously. The example is a story of how a company utilised this brand equity to deepen their relationship with their customers successfully in a way that the customers would want to keep using the Kodak brand.

Aaker (1996, p. 9) shows these concepts together with a visual model as seen below, in Figure 3.

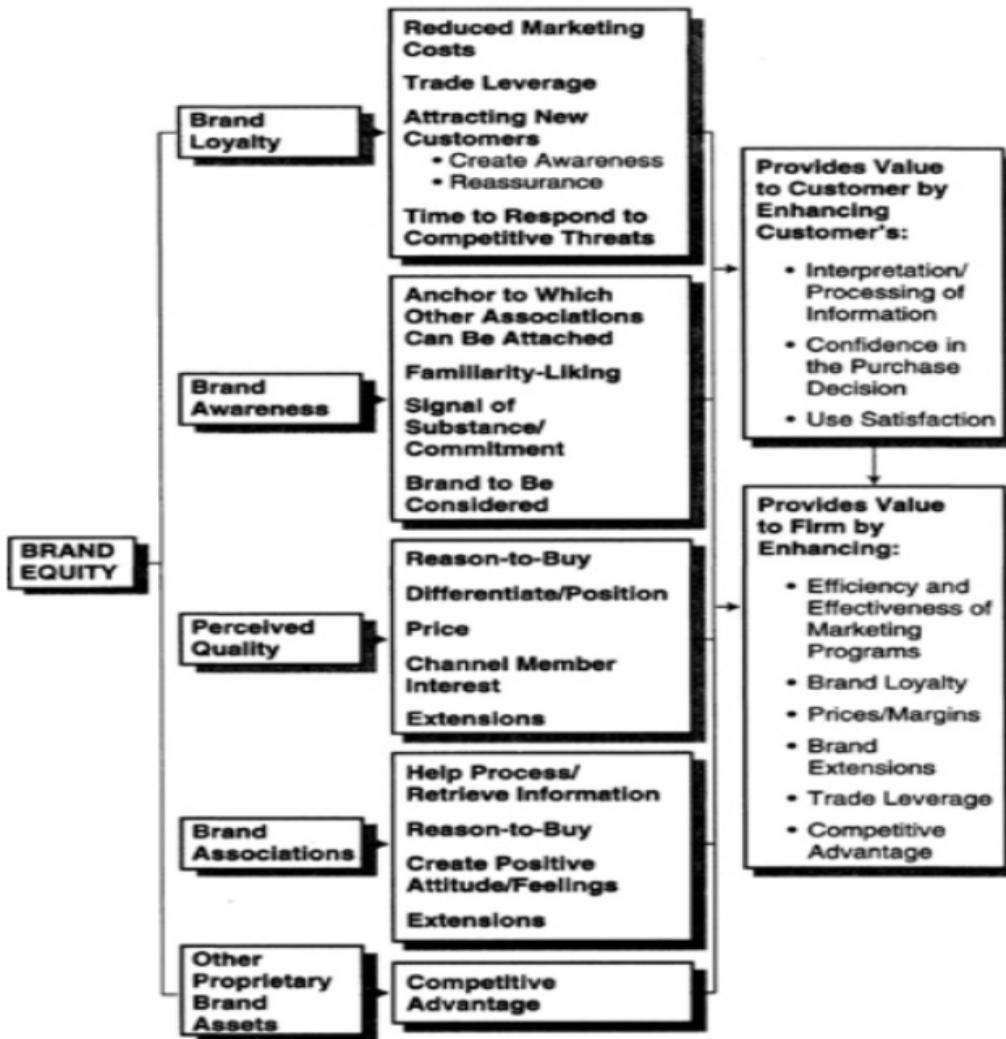*Figure 3 "Brand equity". (Aaker, 1996, p. 9)*

This model demonstrates that all the factors that go into brand equity that lead to providing value for the customer. This in turn also provides value to the company in the form of loyalty and willingness of a customer to recommend the brand to a friend. The more positive experiences a customer has with the brand, the more it will affect how they feel

and interact with that brand. This then allows the brand to market effectively to a customer base that is already invested.

2.6.1 Brand feelings

Brand feelings are tied to brand equity. They are the emotions that a brand conveys or the feelings the brand evokes in a customer. This could be how the customer feels about a product or how the brand makes the customer feel about themselves and their relationships with others. The six feelings that a brand should try to evoke are, warmth, fun, excitement, security, social approval, and self-respect (Keller 2013, pp.119-120).

The reason for the brand creating a feeling in the customer is to target a deeper need in the customer than just the use of a good product. It aims to deliver a sense of emotional fulfilment. It attempts to engage a human's aspirational nature and by doing so, keep a customer coming back to experience that sensation. (Gobé, 2001, pp. 305-306)

Not all customer segments will respond the same way to the emotion that the brand is trying to portray. An older customer might not respond to a brand that is trying to evoke excitement, for example. This means that a brand should think about what their target segment of customers is and what emotion would appeal best to them. (Gobé, 2001, p. 5)

2.7 Brand communication

The best place to start with brand communication is a "brand position statement". "With a brand identity in place and a value proposition identified. Communication objectives need to be established" (Aaker, 1996, p. 176). This "brand position statement" is a communication to the potential customers that clearly states what your brand identity is, what value you propose and what benefit you can give them over your competitors.

The identity and value proposition do not in themselves need to be concrete, concise statements as this is what the position statement is for. You also do not need to include every aspect of your brand identity or value within this statement. For example, if one

value that you have is cleanliness, it may not fit with the image you want to portray to put that in the position statement. It should be considered who your target audience is for your communication to know what sort of language or tone you want to convey.

A successful brand position statement is, brief, memorable, true to the core values, has a credible promise of what the brand delivers, differentiates from the competition, and can be used to check if business decisions align with the brand. (Hart, 2020)

Every piece of communication should be reinforcing some aspect of you brand, whether that's the brand's identity or its value. It must strive to be memorable and recognisable as coming from the brand. It is important to remember to construct communications not just for your primary audience but also to construct it in a way that will not put off any potential secondary audience.

The way customers feel or see a brand is through that brand's communications. It is therefore of the utmost importance to be consistent with the brand identity even as a company expands and grows. Customers will be confused and put off if your communications are at odds with what you claim your brand identity is.

Although it is normally used in the context of brand development, we can use Keller's brand resonance pyramid, as seen in Figure 4, to check if the communications are achieving their aim to resonate with our customers. This can be used in this way since brand communications need to convey aspects of the brand and the pyramid makes us think about what those aspects are.
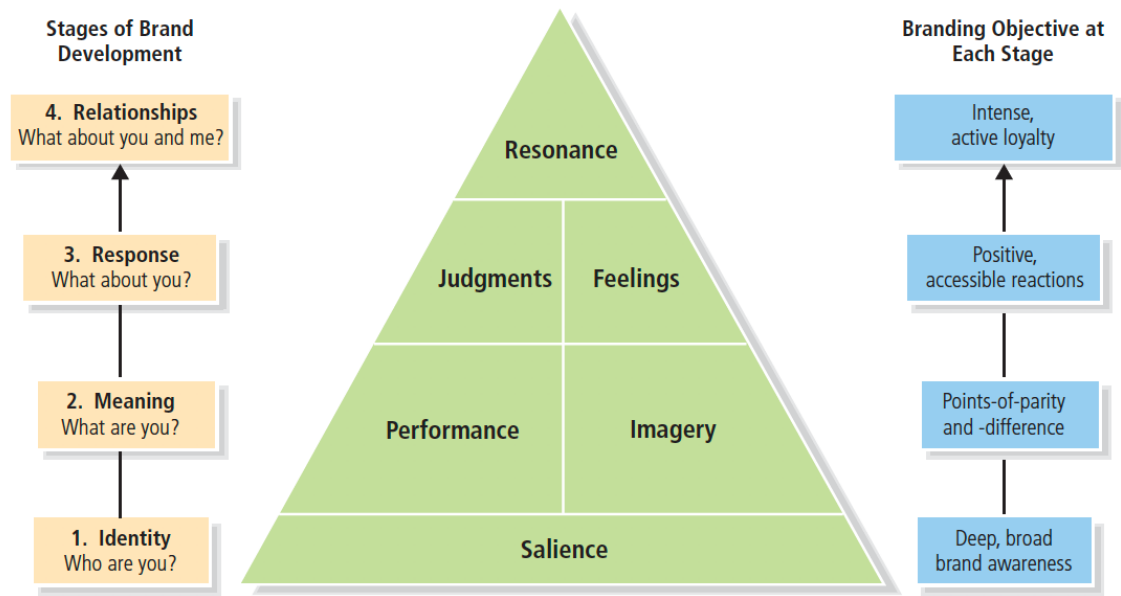
Figure 4 The Brand Resonance Pyramid (Keller 2013, p. 108).

If we wish to run a communication, we can check it against the stages of brand development in Figure 4.

1. **Identity -** do the customers know who we are? Do we need to state this within the communication? Will the brand be recognised?

2. **Meaning –** are we clearly showing what our values or brand identity is with this communication? Can the customers tell what those are if they are unfamiliar with the brand?

3. **Response –** what will the customer feel with this communication? What do we want them to feel? Is that in line with the brand?

4. **Relationship –** will our customers identify with this communication? Will it reaffirm their thoughts and experiences with the brand? Will it make them interact with the brand?

In the context of personal brand, because you are the brand and the product, the lines between what is a brand communication and what is a marketing communication become

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blurred. Every communication shared by a personal brand, even adverts, reflect back to that personal brand and how they are perceived.

2.8 Marketing communication

Marketing communication is a deeply important and complex part of any brand or companies marketing effort in the current era. It is the method employed by a brand to convey to their customers what they are offering in an attempt to persuade those customers to make a purchasing decision. This can be done either directly or indirectly. Through these communications a brand can attempt to open a dialogue with the consumers and try to nurture a mutually beneficial business relationship.

 Alan J. Kimmel (2005, p. 64) suggests that customers not only actively engage and interact with a brands marketing communication but influence them as well as future products. "Customers actually become part of the brand building effort and shape its direction. These consumers are drawn together by a common interest in, and commitment to, the brand and a social desire to bond with like-minded others″ (Kimmel, 2005, p. 64).

Marketing communications can perform various functions like, telling a customer how a product should be used, why it should be used, who it should be used by. The communications allow customers to learn who makes the makes the product and what he company or brand stands for (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p. 535).

Kimmel (2005) states that marketing communication is ever evolving. Marketers have an ever-expanding playing field of channels through which to spread their communications. Gone are the days of simply having one television or newspaper campaign. ″Now it is much more pertinent to spread the message across multiple channels and utilize every available outlet because the customer base is now so widely spread out that being fluid and multiplicitous is the only way" (Kimmel, 2005, p. 161).

2.8.1   Marketing communications mix

The Marketing communication mix is a set of models that can be implemented in various combinations with varying levels of focus to fulfil the communication's functions as said in Chris Fill (2006, p. 23)

Every marketing decision a company or brand makes must use some model from the marketing communications mix. According to Kotler & Keller (2016, p. 536) the six elements of the marketing communication mix are:

Advertising— Any form of non-personal promotion of services or products by a clearly defined party. These are visual promotions that can be found in print media, on television, billboards or any electronic media.

Sales promotion— This encompasses many short-term incentives that could encourage the customer to purchase such as a coupon, a sale or a sample. In a B2B context this could take the form of a competition between sales staff or some form of trade promotion such as display allowances.

Events and experiences — These are company sponsored activities or programmes that have the aim of engaging a customer to interact with the company or brand on a daily or special one-time basis. These events can take the form of sports, arts or special invitation to a new product launch.

Public relations and publicity— These take the form of programs, both internal and external that promote the company or brands image or protect that image in the case of an ongoing negative narrative towards the brand/company.

Direct marketing— This is a direct approach using phone numbers, mailing lists, internet databases and social media to directly market to a specific customer set.

Personal selling— This is when you promote a product or service directly to the customer face-to-face where you can make presentation, answer any questions or handling orders directly.

Advertising	Sales Promotion	Events/Experiences	Public Relations	Personal Selling	Direct Marketing
Print and broadcast ads	Contests, games, sweepstakes, lotteries	Sports	Press kits	Sales presentations	Catalogs
Packaging–outer		Entertainment	Speeches	Sales meetings	Mailings
Packaging inserts	Premiums and gifts	Festivals	Seminars	Incentive programs	Telemarketing
Motion pictures	Sampling	Arts	Annual reports	Samples	Electronic shopping
Brochures and booklets	Fairs and trade shows	Causes	Charitable donations	Fairs and trade shows	TV shopping
Posters and leaflets	Exhibits	Factory tours	Publications		Fax mail
Directories	Demonstrations	Company museums	Community relations		E-mail
Reprints of ads	Coupons	Street activities	Lobbying		Voice mail
Billboards	Rebates		Identity media		
Display signs	Low-interest financing		Company magazine		
Point-of-purchase displays	Entertainment				
Audiovisual material	Trade-in allowances				
Symbols and logos	Continuity programs				
Videotapes	Tie-ins				

Figure 5. "Examples of the Six Common Communication Platforms". (Kotler & Keller, 2016, p.537)

Figure 5. shows which platforms are most suited for each of these six common types or marketing communications.

3   METHOD

This chapter will contain a general overview of the techniques and methods used to conduct this study that explores and creates a brand development and preliminary marketing communications plan based on the brand identity system in Figure 4. (Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2000) brand equity model in Figure 2, Keller's brand resonance pyramid, as seen in Figure 4, Kotler & Keller's brand aspects, and the marketing communications mix also from Kotler & Keller (2016) Figure 5.

The main sources of data to correlate these models with the Finnish context will come in the form of semi-structured qualitative interviews. These interviews are conducted with key members of the Finnish comedy scene.

After the brand has been developed using the appropriate models, informed by these responses for the Finnish context, a preliminary marketing communications plan will be made.

3.1 Qualitative interviews

Semi- structured qualitative interviews were chosen as "With qualitative research interviews you try to understand something from the subjects' point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experiences." (Sayrs, 1998).

It is important that before the interviews even begin that an interview guide is created, see appendix 1. Even though these interviews are more free form, and the respondents should be able to speak freely, the guide is there to prepare for the eventuality that the interview falters and comes to halt. The interview guide is simply a series of questions that can be relied upon should the situation call for it. As I will be using semi-structured interviews, it is possible that points within the interview guide could be answered without specifically being asked.

The semi-structured interview format was chosen as it allows for a freer form conversation where the comedians may state things, they have done themselves, heard others do or that they have thought about doing to help their brand development and marketing communications that may not have arisen if it were simply a survey with strict limits on the questions. The questions may also help the respondents to recall or recontextualise things that they have done that they did not realise helps their brand development and communications. (Sayrs, 1998)

There are seven steps to the qualitative interview process. These seven steps are as follows, thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and, reporting. (Kvale, 1996, p. 88)

Thematizing is just knowing why you are conducting these interviews. Designing is creating the questions with the theme and overall interview in mind. Transcribing is writing out the audio in full. Analysing is the most important part where I will interpret what the interviewee has said and if it can fit into the final branding plan. Verifying is when you check that you did what you set out to do and finally to report your findings is self-evident. In the case of this thesis, these seven steps apply as follows:

Thematizing- These interviews are being conducted to inform how to develop a brand and preliminary marketing communications plan for Ray Zambino. They will be used to answer the problem statement of this thesis and answer the research questions laid out in Section 1.4.

Designing- The questions are designed with the goal of trying to answer the central research questions of this thesis. They are designed to get answers about branding and marketing communications without using technical theory or language.

Interviewing- 4 interviews will take place with industry professionals and the responses recorded.

Transcribing- The conducted interviews will be transcribed. The podcast episodes will also be transcribed as if they are a primary interview.

Analysing- The transcriptions will then be analysed using thematic analysis. The amount of times these themes occur will be noted. However, numerical data will not be provided as during the course of a semi-structured interview the same questions will not be asked of all participants.

Verifying- This will be to double check that the themes and data are relevant to the topic and the work as a whole.

Reporting- This will be in the results section of this thesis.

There are, of course, drawbacks to using these semi-structured qualitative interviews that should be considered. Biases from the interview could accidentally colour the responses of the interviewee or the interviewer could ask questions that lead the interviewee to say what it is that the interviewer wishes them to say, as opposed to what it is they actually think or feel.

3.2 Sample selection

The respondents have been chosen because of their years of experience within the comedy scene in Finland. They have also been chosen as they occupy different positions withing the industry. This includes performers themselves, producers that book high profile events but do not perform, and a person who straddles both categories. They have been chosen they can provide the broadest range of opinion and thought while still being specific enough to stay on topic.

They are all industry veterans with 15+ plus years within the industry and thus have been witness to many trends, changes and schools of thought about how to "grow your audience", develop their brand and effectively utilise marketing communications within the context of the Finnish scene.

The respondents have remained anonymous to protect their sensitive information. As there is a pre-established relationship between the respondents and the interviewer, they may name others, talk about monetary issues, or reveal sensitive information about their personal lives.

3.2.1 List of respondents

Respondent #1. A professional comedian with 20+ years of experience.

Respondent #2. A comedy producer/company owner with 25+ years of experience.

Respondent #3. A comedy producer who has worked on Finland's biggest comedy tours with 15+ years of experience.

Respondent #4. A comedian who currently sells the most tickets for stand-up in Finland with 20+ years of experience.

The interviews that were personally conducted for this thesis were recorded in the time span from November 2019 to June 2020. They were recorded through a Zoom chat as in person meetings were not possible due to the ongoing pandemic.

3.3 Interview guide

The interviews are semi-structured, which means that an interview guide has been created with curated questions to keep the interview relevant and on topic. The whole guide can be found in Appendix 1.

The creation of these questions was informed by the theory section of this thesis. Without getting into technical theories, the aim was to get the respondent to speak about brand development and marketing communications in a natural manner as it applies to their experience. For example, by asking who they think their audience is and how they market to this audience, they will inadvertently be talking about market segments, how they think their brand appeals to said segment, and how they communicate that to the segment.

The 15 questions were:

1. What is your experience in the comedy industry?
2. Are there any key points that a comedian should be doing to market themselves?
3. How has the industry changed in relation to marketing over the years?
4. Is there anyone example of someone who, in your opinion, has marketed themselves particularly well?
5. How do you think they achieved this?
6. How would you build an online presence?
7. Are there areas that you think are not as important? Why not?
8. What do you think a typical stand-up audience member is like?
9. Do you try to specifically target this audience? How?
10. Do you feel that there is an untapped audience who currently does not attend stand up?

11. Who are they and how could you market to them?

12. What is your opinion on a comedian's "brand"

13. How could someone hone that brand?

14. Do you feel that brand resonates with audiences?

15. What do you think is the number one factor for a comedian to advance their career?

3.4 Data analysis

"Data interpretation and analysis involve making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place and integrating what different people have said". (Patton, 2015, p. 471)

For the purposes of this study, hard numerical data will not be presented. This is due to the nature of semi-structured interviews. As all the respondents will not be asked the same questions or be using the same words for the same concepts, it would be an unfair representation of how often certain terms emerge. Instead, an overall sense of similar concepts will be distilled into proper themes.

Before proper data analysis can be done, the interviews must be transcribed into a written format. The results will come from studying, understanding and an analysis of what are the most important responses that also serve the main point of the thesis. This will be achieved by using the process of thematic analysis. This involves being extremely familiar with the data and looking for common threads, or themes then defining those themes and trying to organise the data under those theme headings. The process can be seen laid out in Figure 6.
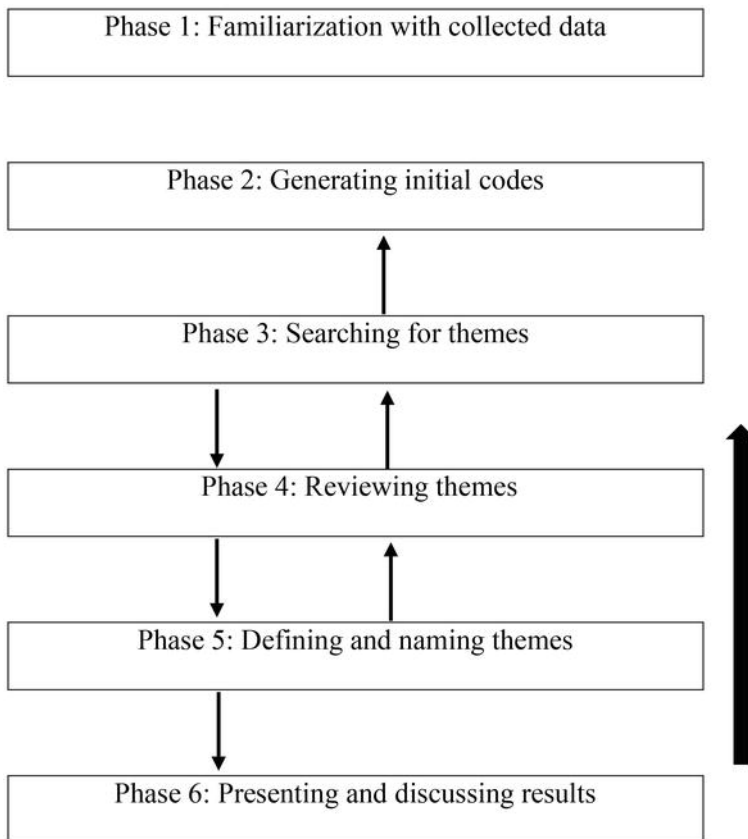
Phase 1: Familiarization with collected data

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Phase 3: Searching for themes

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Phase 6: Presenting and discussing results

Figure 6. Thematic analysis process.

4 RESULTS

The interviews were conducted over a month period in 2020, May, June and July. These interviews were originally planned to take place in person, but due to the corona virus situation they were conducted and recorded remotely using Zoom. The interviews were around 20-30 minutes long.

After coding and analysing the data obtained from the semi-structured interview according to Boyatzis (1998), several themes emerged that remained consistent across all respondents. These themes can be broken down into four main categories: social media, management, marketing, and touring.

These themes show that there is a consistent message being conveyed by differing sources, even in different countries. This bodes well for the main conceit of this thesis, as it shows that there is a clear pattern of what industry professionals believe is the correct path to take in the advancement of a comedian's career.

4.1 Social media

All the respondents mentioned the importance of social media throughout the interview. It was said to be a major factor in the growth and communication plan of any newer comedian. Respondent 1 stated:

> When I first started, it wasn't that big of a thing. It was only Facebook. Now we have tons of different kind of apps. I think if you really want to be on top of your game, you have to try out new things.

It was seen as something invaluable that is an inevitability rather than an optional tool that can be used to connect with an audience. Respondent 1 goes on to say "I mean, social media is such a good tool, but it takes a lot of time. I know it's very overwhelming for many people. But still, it's something you shouldn't just skip."

The sense of the power of social media, but that it is a daunting and confusing process was echoed with the other respondents. Respondent 4 says "[…] the thread goes off and as replies to the other replies but that are no longer connected, it's just too confusing"

Social media was often used as shorthand for any social media platform, but the constant was that it is a way to get your name known to the audience and share material, pictures and video that could resonate in a way that an audience would want to come and see you perform.

4.2 Management

Management is a concept that came up often in the interviews that was an unexpected factor. Although when talking about management it could be related to a few different

facets, its constant mentioning could not be ignored. The main way it arose was when talking about touring and having someone else manage your social media profiles if you do not have the capacity to do so. It was mainly about a division of labour and having someone with more experience help you to achieve what you want. Respondent 3 said "You can't be expected to know how to plan a whole tour by yourself, so why not use the experience of someone who does?"

4.3 Marketing

Marketing was not mentioned nearly as much as expected, but that was due to the implications of marketing when talking about other areas. If a respondent was talking about using social media or promoting a tour, they were implicitly also talking about marketing. The focus was on making sure that you reach the correct people with your marketing communications, and allusions to market segmentation.

An interesting detail was that respondent 2 mentioned that their analysis of ticket sales shows that women buy more tickets to shows than men, so they target most of their ads to women exclusively.

Respondent 4 had a broader approach to marketing as he talked about teaming up with other companies to cross promote for tours and simply to boost awareness and brand image, "many, many, many, many different kinds of concepts and advertising started with many different companies". This approach, while successful, is not easy to implement unless a certain level of success has already been achieved.

4.4 Touring

Touring was often mentioned as a way to "build your own audience". By "build your own audience" I believe what is meant is finding and directly appealing to your chosen segment of the market. Touring involves direct marketing, traditional marketing, online marketing, and brand awareness. It seems to be the single most effective way for a comedian to gain audience recognition and deepen the relationship between performer and consumers such that they would want to come and see the subsequent show or follow what that

comedian does. By having that in-built audience, it also encourages promoters to book that comedian for more performances, because their name will sell more tickets for their nights.

Respondent 4 said, "[touring is] kind of like doing a live survey, you are kind of having a focus group right there." This form of direct feedback and market research can be done in every city, every single night of a tour. This level of interaction with customers is something a large, branded company can only hope for. It would be remiss of any comedian to not utilise this level of access to customers. Planning a nationwide tour, however, can be difficult and without a certain level of success and proficiency a tour manager will not be willing to help.

5 COMMUNICATIONS AND BRAND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter will describe the process of developing the brand and preliminary marketing communications plan for the comedian Ray Zambino. This plan will be informed by the gathered and analysed qualitative data from the previous chapter and the models discussed in the theoretical framework.

To understand how to communicate and market the brand we must first determine what the brand is and what it represents (Keller, 2013). This will be done using Keller's brand pyramid, as can be seen in Figure 4. We will take those four steps and apply it to the comedian Ray Zambino whilst incorporating what was learned from the qualitative data. Kotler and Keller's brand aspects will then be applied. After this brand identity is developed, we can check for any common mistakes in the brand identity using Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000). Then, once the brand identity and direction has been determined, the target audience can be defined in more detail. When those steps are implemented, we can give a clearer voice to all marketing communications sent out by the brand as seen in Section 2.8.

5.1 Keller's Brand Pyramid

Going through the steps of Keller's brand pyramid will determine the most fundamental properties of said brand. These points will be applied to the comedian Ray Zambino to gain a deeper sense of understanding and a basis for the marketing communication plan.

5.1.1 Salience

The first step to Keller's pyramid is salience, or, knowing who one is and wishes to present. This must be weighed against what the target consumer wants so the target audience must be able to interpret the brand correctly and easily. The audience should understand the motivations and decisions behind any actions that the brand takes. It is essential to have clear and understandable selling points that are unique and for the audience to know how your brand fulfils them. (Keller 2013, 111.)

The target audience chosen in this case is the Finnish public as Finland is where Ray Zambino resides and works. Finland also has a lot of potential growth in the stand -up comedy sector and not currently too much competition, according to the qualitative data.

According to the semi-structured interviews Finnish audiences are growing weary of the older, more established ways of doing things as they have been in a state of stagnant tradition for many years. Finnish audiences also consume a lot of stand-up material from the UK and US through services like Netflix and YouTube. This drives a demand for more local, English language-based comedy.

The language creates a two-tiered target audience. The primary target is local Finnish people, and the secondary audience is English speaking foreigners. The primary audience is native Finnish people as the secondary audience is usually brought along to shows via the primary audience. The qualitative interviews contained several references to an "untapped audience" in Finland. I believe this is younger Finns around 18-35 as they are the

demographic that is least represented in the live arena. Ray Zambino could appeal to this audience thanks to the aforementioned interest in English speaking stand up. Another way that Ray Zambino could appeal to this audience is by simply being closer in age to that demographic. Most of the professional stand-up comedians in Finland are over the age of 40 so, by being the younger alternative, Ray Zambino can more easily access this demographic by being a more relatable comedian thanks to simply being within the same 18-35 age range.

5.1.2 Performance and imagery

This step is about knowing what the brand represents and how that representation reaches customers who then relate to it and the feeling it leaves them with as they interact with it. It is desired that the brand will create a meaningful experience and generate "buzz" or word of mouth from its interactions with consumers.

Ray Zambino is about cultural observations and bringing people together through laughter. Ray Zambino's "story" is that he moved to Finland from Scotland for love and ended up with a deep appreciation for the country and its people, but that doesn't mean that he is above poking fun and pointing out where Finland may be a little strange. This builds on the phenomenon of Finnish people being surprised when anyone not from there knows about their culture or anything about their country and language. The outsider angle manifests and comes to fruition in the lampooning of the perceived normalcy of Finnish culture that may not have occurred to the average Finn as they have not done things in any other way.

Ray Zambino aims to provide an "alternative" to the mainstream Finnish comedians that have been the standard for over 20 years. Alternative in this instance means performing material that may be more silly, whimsical, or simply not about men vs. women or raising children.

5.1.3 Judgments and feelings

The third step in the pyramid is about how customers responses to the brand. These responses fall into two categories, judgements, and feelings. How the customers feel about a brand is coloured by their interactions with it and how that made them feel about themselves.

Based on the six brand feelings mentioned in Section 2.4.1, Ray Zambino, as a brand, wishes to convey a sense of warmth, fun, and excitement. Through shared laughter at cultural norms and recognition of the absurdity of everyday life, Ray Zambino also provides a sense of social approval. If you are in a room laughing about the same things, you are included. The warmth and sense of fun comes from the silly topics discussed and the stage presence of a friend telling you interesting and funny things. As opposed to a detached, logical style of comedy. Talking about fondly about Finland and my experience helps add to that sense of approval and warmth. Excitement comes from enthusiastic performances where I want to share my findings and thoughts with an audience.

Outside of the performance, which can be categorised as the product, off stage interaction with audience members should portray at least one of these emotions and leave the "customer" with a sense that they understand and know who/what Ray Zambino is. This also extends to all online content and communications.

5.1.4 Resonance

If we build all of these steps correctly, then a picture of Ray Zambino as a brand begins to emerge that can resonate with customers.

Ray Zambino's target primary audience is the Finnish speaking public with a secondary audience of other foreigners who speak English. Ray Zambino wants to present a fresh new approach to the Finnish stand-up scene and project an image of change that the general audience wants. It is a brand that wants to be at the cutting edge and not be scared to defy tradition or how things have always been done. It is a brand that wants to convey a

sense of warmth, fun, excitement, and social inclusion. This is conveyed through performance, off stage interactions and a consistent communication.

5.2 Kotler & Keller's brand Aspects

Keller furthers his work in defining a brand with Kotler when they assert that there are six aspects that a brand should include. As discussed in Section 2.3, these are: memorable, meaningful, likable, transferable, adaptable, and protectable. These aspects can then be used to further hone and discover the brand identity for Ray Zambino.

Memorable: Ray Zambino is a Scottish comedian in Finland. By performing in English with an accent is not usually heard it sets Ray Zambino apart and gives a hook to the customer. Even if they do not remember the name, they usually remember "the Scottish guy". The appearance of long ginger hair and beard is another recall point. By performing more whimsical material, this also sets Ray Zambino apart from other performers, giving more chance to stand out and be remembered.

Meaningful: Ray Zambino hopes to create a relationship with the audience by performing material that is either relatable or that creates new thoughts and associations within the customer. Comedy is subjective, so to find a person who has the same sense of humour that you and that you can share with your friends creates a meaningful relationship. Thanks to the YouTube and Facebook and various similar sites this relationship can develop even though the customer has never seen Ray Zambino in person. With more clips online this relationship with the customer can be expediated if the customer watches the clips in quick succession. This also leaves a sense of wanting more.

Likeability: Ray Zambino can foster likeability through a personable demeanour displayed in performances and off-stage interactions with customers. Being a personal brand does make this difficult as by human nature not everyone will like us. By correctly identifying the key audience the odds can be tipped through knowledge of said audience and what they like. As the business is stand-up comedy, there is a built-in level of likeability and charisma needed to be successful.

Transferable: Ray Zambino as a brand can be transferable to other countries that have a sizeable English-speaking contingent. Not all pre-written material, however, is transferable as it requires common knowledge and understanding of Finnish culture. The skills utilised by Ray Zambino can also be transferable like public speaking can be used for pitching events or writing material can be transferred into writing copy and speeches.

Adaptable: One advantage a personal brand has is that as it is only a singular person, they can adapt to emerging markets or changing tastes quicker than a company with many employees.

Protectable: Ray Zambino is shielded from copies as by the very nature of a personal brand it is personal. Anyone trying to directly copy any facet of Ray Zambino will come across disingenuous. It is very easy to prove if someone is using parts of a personal brand for anything as if the person is unaware of it, they did not authorise it.

5.3 Effective Brand Identity Systems

As a brand it is important to know where the common pitfalls are and how they can be avoided. Using the guide from Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2005), as detailed in Section 2.4 and the previous sections refining of Ray Zambino as a brand, these common mistakes can hopefully be avoided.

1. **Avoid limited brand perspective-** As the brand is based on an individual with varying thoughts and opinions that can change over time, by its nature a single perspective cannot be focused on. Ray Zambino has the potential to branch out into other areas of the entertainment industry and is not simply limited to live performance.

2. **Link the brand to a compelling functional benefit whenever possible-** Ray Zambino as a brand can invoke feelings of joy and acceptance. The brand can appeal to customers sense of inclusion and elevated mood that creates a sense of relationship with the consumer. The live performance has the added benefit of being separate from the real world, giving time and space to the consumer to forget their problems for an amount of time.

3. **Use constructs that fit and help – ignore others-** As Ray Zambino is the brand and the product, traditional marketing and events marketing can help as well as some aspects of the marketing mix. With stand-up comedy, the sector in which Ray Zambino operates, there is no point wasting time, energy and money to create a brand logo as this is not part of the industry.

4. **Generate deep customer insight –** A benefit of being a personal brand is that you are able to create a deeper connection with your audience/customer base. This factor added to the product being consumed at a live event creates the opportunity to meet the people face to face and have a conversation about what they enjoyed and what resonated with them. Usually if a customer has enjoyed the product, which is the performance, they will let you know without even asking them. This extends into the online presence also.

5. **Understand competitors-** Stand-up comedy is in a very unique position where your competitors are also you colleagues. By sharing experiences and watching what they do, a more rounded understanding of the customers wants, and needs can be developed and honed into your own brand.

6. **Allow multiple brand identities-** As it is with the nature of an art form, it is subjective. What one customer sees and identifies with in Ray Zambino can be completely different than what another sees. A customer could simply enjoy the performance as part of a collective night or enjoy some deeper thematic resonance if they chose to interface with the performance at that level.

7. **Make the brand identity drive the execution-** Thanks to Ray Zambino being a personal brand any decision or action taken is done in accordance with the brand identity. As there is only one person, there can be no mixed wires or misunderstandings about the identity coming from another department or person. Every undertaking is done so with the brand identity firmly in mind.

8. **Elaborate the brand identity-** As with the previous point, Ray Zambino being a singular person and a personal brand there is no ambiguity within the brand identity. Through personal and online interactions, the identity can be conveyed in a longer format that can easily be understood by customers.

5.4 Ray Zambino's Brand Identity

Taking Aaker's theories discussed in Section 2.4 and the previous sections, a clear picture of what Ray Zambino's brand identity is.

Ray Zambino is an entertainer who wants to inspire laughter and joy whilst taking a sometimes absurd or wry look at the world that we all inhabit. By espousing values of inclusiveness and identity Ray Zambino hopes to create a connection with the audience that makes them feel involved. Ray Zambino wants to be perceived as a friendly, welcoming face. Ray Zambino wants to be responsible for an audience losing themselves and enjoying the moment.

5.4.1 Brand position statement

Based on the knowledge that has been developed for the brand Ray Zambino and theory from Section 2.6 a brand position statement can be constructed. This brand position statement is:

Ray Zambino provides English language comedy in Finland. For people who enjoy their comedy with a nice helping of wit and sarcasm. Enjoy some laughs and maybe even learn some useless facts.

5.5 Audience

With this picture of the developed brand a target audience can be defined using the theory in Section 2.5 and the qualitative interviews.

As Finland is a small country, the stand-up audience is already a very small section of the population, but if the overall market can be segmented properly, then there could be a large untapped audience that currently receives no communications about any events or performances.
In the case of Ray Zambino, the audience will be defined by psychographic and demographic segmentation. Using the four requirements from Section 2.5 the segment will be defined and the usefulness checked.

Definable- The market segment is comprised of Finnish and English speaking 18 to 35-year olds with an interest in English language comedy. They are mainly located in bigger cities with a university. They are the type of people who want something a bit different from their comedy than what can be considered to be the norm.

Reachable- This segment is reachable as they are the demographic most active in social media, especially on YouTube (Chen, 2020). YouTube is a good platform for performers as it provides the audience to view some clips and help them decide to make a purchasing decision Due to the nature of the product, the audience is also reachable at a live event after successful online communications, where future events can be directly told to them. These live events also provide an opportunity to promote social channels that can also keep the audience informed.

Sizeable- This segment is sizable as it targets individuals who are not already regularly attending live stand-up performances in Finland. This can lead to growth in the industry and better word of mouth marketing.

Relevant- The segment is relevant based on the chosen psychographic traits chosen based on previous experience and feedback from the interview respondent's opinion on what "Ray Zambino's audience" would be. The performance fulfils a want to see English language stand-up comedy in a live context, not just from a laptop screen.

5.6 Marketing communications

Having a clear brand identity means nothing if you cannot communicate that identity to any customers. So, by using the marketing communications mix from Section 2.8.1 a plan of how Ray Zambino as a brand and product can be conveyed.

Advertising- The data from the qualitative interviews indicates that the importance of marketing online cannot be overstated. It was mentioned by every interviewee that advertising on social media platforms was essential to reach customers. For Ray Zambino, these adverts will take the form of boosted adverts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to let customers know when there is an event and why they should attend. These platforms can also be used to promote video content of a performance that can strengthen a customer's understanding of the brand and create interest in upcoming shows.

Sales promotion- This aspect of the mix is not as relevant to Ray Zambino. If used it will take the form of 2 for 1 tickets or something similar.

Events and experiences- This could take the form of letting loyal customers see a new show before it is officially on tour or a special one-off exclusive night. It could also take the form of a question and answer session after a show or online, or a meet and greet for a more personal touch.

Public relations and publicity- This will again be mainly covered online using social media platforms. It will take the form of YouTube clips, interviews and podcast appearances. It can also take the form of a newspaper review or an article in a magazine.

Direct and online marketing- Online marketing is the most important factor for Ray Zambino's communications. Every other point in the mix will be through the lens of online and social media. This will cover posts on a "comedian fan page" on Facebook, clips of material posted on YouTube and cross posted to other social media platforms, event marketing, maintaining a website with all the latest information of where I will be performing, and backstage photographs and videos posted to Instagram. This will also take the form of creating an email list and sending out periodical newsletters to let customers know when a new tour or show is starting and when they can buy tickets.

Personal selling- When performing Ray Zambino can interact with the audience, let them know about upcoming shows and where they can find more information. It also allows for cross promoting social media platforms. After shows Ray Zambino can also answer questions and give information face to face if someone wants it.

All of these communications should portray the brand identity to the customer. As a personal brand is so intrinsically tied to the person then even a marketing communication represents who they are and what they stand for. In this way all marketing communications also serve as brand communications.

5.7 Future plans for Ray Zambino

As social media is of such importance to Ray Zambino as a brand it is good to have a plan for how those platforms can be utilised to develop the brand and success of Ray Zambino. It is also a good idea to plan a future tour and seek management or representation. This section is informed by the data from the qualitative interviews,

Facebook page- Although there is already a Facebook page for the comedian Ray Zambino it is not currently being used to its full capacity. Most of the audience in Finland have a Facebook account or interact with Facebook in some capacity so posting content that reinforces the brand or communicates an upcoming show should be a top priority. This was confirmed in Section 4.2 and by the authors own personal experience. Reposting or sharing content is made very through Facebook's native structure. The aim going forward is create a posting schedule and post original and shared content at least 3 times per week. This can be easily achieved through Facebook's scheduled post feature where you can set times and dates when posts will be published. This allows you to schedule far ahead and spend one day setting up scheduled posts rather than spending more time daily doing so. Posts can come in many forms, from a joke idea that can be commented on by fans or an edited video clip from a previous performance. You can respond to the fans comments and create a real dialogue that deepens the sense of loyalty to the brand. Ticket competitions can be conducted from the comedian profile page and that help visibility and engagement on the platform as well as also deepening the relationship with fans by giving away something for free. Facebook also offers the possibility of a more global audience to find your work.

Instagram- Not everyone is on Facebook, however. Instagram operates in a similar way to Facebook, but the content posted there should differ from the output on Facebook. This diversification of content on social media platforms drives engagement over many apps, rather than getting everything from one place, a customer is driven to be more involved to gain all content. Instagram is a platform for images. This gives a good platform to post behind the scenes and backstage photographs that audiences may not usually get to witness. Similar to Facebook posts can be scheduled and this should be updated 2-4 times per week.

Website- Having a website is not important to regular audience members, but it is an invaluable tool in the corporate performance sector as mentioned by respondent 3. A well-maintained website can be the difference between a company hiring you for a company performance or not.

Tour- As can be seen in Section 4.5 arranging a tour that goes around the country is important as it allows you to meet you audience and spread awareness of the brand. By touring extensively, you can gain new fans and strengthen the bond with the existing fans. The best way to do this is with a solo tour, a 1 to 2-hour show that is advertised using your brand. This utilises online and traditional marketing to raise that awareness and generate ticket sales. It also allows for the honing of brand image by exposing your brand identity to more people through your communications. Every tour should build upon the last. Through this tour you can also build up a mailing list that can be used to generate ticket sales to the next tour. It is a self-feeding cyclical process.

6   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to develop a strong personal brand identity and to create a marketing communications plan for the performer Ray Zambino, by using established branding models and marketing communications techniques, along with specific knowledge of the Finnish stand-up context gained through qualitative interviews.

Research Question 1: What are the most common themes that arise in relation to brand building and marketing communications in the Finnish stand-up scene in particular?

Research Question 2: What are the key elements that set the brand identity for the stand-up comedian Ray Zambino, and what is this brand's target audience?

Research Question 3: Using knowledge of the Finnish context and the brand identity of the performer Ray Zambino, what are the most efficient ways of marketing communication to convey this brand to its target audience?

Qualitative interviews were carried out to discover common themes related to brand building and marketing communications in the Finnish stand-up scene.
The results of these interviews showed that social media is the number one most important tool for marketing communications in the Finnish stand-up scene. All respondents mentioned social media several times throughout the interviews. Not only are the marketing communications delivered via social media, but everything is done through it. Selling

tickets, sharing videos, and testing material all involved social media. It had been expected that the respondents would have unintentionally used some facets of traditional branding models, but this proved to be incorrect. In further research I would interview comedians that have a higher variance in age. As it was in this study, all respondents were roughly the same age and had very similar views on how things worked and should work. With the high level of importance in social media a new study could be conducted that focuses only on building an online marketing plan.

Using Keller's brand pyramid, Kotler & Keller's brand aspects, and the knowledge gained in the interviews Ray Zambino's brand was identified and developed. The traditional models worked quite well for identifying and developing a personal brand identity, but some lines get blurred when you are both the brand and the product. When you are both of these things everything you say or do can be seen as part of the brand identity, even if you feel that there is a strong separation between a public persona and a private persona, customers will not see it that way. A main finding was that you must be consistent with a message or tone in everything, because being brand and product makes every single interaction a brand communication. To improve this part of the study, it would be useful to compare these traditional brand building models against newer personal brand building models to see where they overlap and where they do not agree.

After the brand was developed and identified from the models, informed by the interviews, a target audience could then be defined. A surprising result was that for Ray Zambino a lot of target audience are people who do not go to see live stand-up comedy in Finland. This can be an interesting area for growth within the industry.
In future research it would be best to also track the efficacy of the branding through the audience. It would be useful to interview or survey members of the audience so that data could be collected about the brand equity. It would also allow for deeper knowledge of how the audience actually perceives the brand versus the intention of how the brand is aiming to be perceived.

After all of the previous elements had been set, a marketing communications plan could be created. Having input from audience members would also be useful here in a longer study to discover if the marketing communications are being received the way that they

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are intended. As it is, it is more of a preliminary plan that provides the structure to build a more robust study on.

The conclusion of this thesis is that a traditional methods of brand development and marketing communication can be ascribed to an individual's personal brand although not all points are important or relevant. By using the methodical approach set out in the theory section and further researched with qualitative interviews, you can develop an effective solid brand that knows what it is and how that brand can effectively be communicated to the target audience. The research questions were effectively answered, but they leave room for a deeper study that could be the basis of an interesting masters thesis.

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8 APPENDIX

8.1 Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Semi-structured interview for the thesis, Making a branding/marketing communications plan for the

comedian Ray Zambino.

The aim of these interviews is to gain insight and practical advice in the building of my branding/marketing communications plan from industry professionals and individuals who have gone

through the process or can reflect on their own process and breakdown their thoughts and the process. This is best done in person, but under current circumstances, i.e. the corona-virus, a video interview via skype or some other programme will have to suffice.

I already have an established relationship with these people, so they will be relaxed and at ease. The problem with this is that, because of this, they may wander off topic and talk to me about things happening within our industry. I must try to keep them on topic during the interview. One way I can do this is by having a quick pre-chat with them, exchanging some pleasantries, and talking about any goings on within the industry.

Questions:

1. What is your experience in the comedy industry?

2. Are there any key points that a comedian should be doing to market themselves?

3. How has the industry changed in relation to marketing over the years?

4. Is there anyone example of someone who, in your opinion, has marketed themselves particularly well?

5. How do you think they achieved this?

6. How would you build an online presence?

7. Are there areas that you think are not as important? Why not?

8. What do you think a typical stand up audience member is like?

9. Do you try to specifically target this audience? How?

10. Do you feel that there is an untapped audience who currently does not attend stand

up?

11. Who are they and how could you market to them?

12. What is your opinion on a comedian's "brand"

13. How could someone hone that brand?

14. Do you feel that brand resonates with audiences?

15. What do you think is the number one factor for a comedian to advance their career?

These are some questions that are ready should the interviewee falter or my interviewing skills fail to yield any answers. Not included is possibly asking the interviewee for clarification or to go back to a previous point.