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Identifying the Brand

Case: Helsinki Comics Festival

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Abstract

Branding has been crucial for successful businesses for a long time now and during the past decade the non-profit sector has slowly started to recognize the importance of creating and maintaining a brand as well. It might be suggested that branding is even more important within the non-profit sector, due to tough competition over government grants for example. Small cultural operators form a big portion of the non-profit sector in Finland and in order to be successful in the cultural field, it is of utmost importance for the operators to differentiate themselves from the rest of the competition.

The aim of the case study was to define a brand identity for Helsinki Comics Festival (HCF). HCF is an event organized annually by the Finnish Comics Society and its goal is to promote Finnish publishers and comics as a unique art form. In order to establish a new brand identity for HCF, data on the current state of its brand was first collected. In addition, the wishes of the management regarding the state of the brand in the future were mapped out. The brand identity was also examined from the perspective of the institutional donors.

The study was conducted as a qualitative case study. Data collection was conducted by means of participant observation and document analysis. The data from these sources was analyzed by using hermeneutic method and the immersion style analysis, in order to find unifying themes and concepts from the data to be incorporated into the HCF brand.

The communication regarding the HCF brand both internally and externally was found to be unclear and inconsistent. A more defined identity was established and suggestions for further branding actions were made to the assignor.

Avainsanat (asiasanat) brand identity, branding, non-profit sector

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Tiivistelmä

Brändäys on ollut elintärkeää yrityksille jo pitkään, ja viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana kolmas sektori on myös hitaasti alkanut käsittämään brändin luomisen ja ylläpidon tärkeyden. Voidaankin sanoa, että brändäys on jopa tärkeämpää kolmannella sektorilla, johtuen esimerkiksi kovasta kilpailusta, jota valtion myöntämistä apurahoista käydään. Pienet kulttuuritoimijat muodostavat suuren osan kolmannesta sektorista Suomessa ja menestyäkseen kulttuurikentällä on ensisijaisen tärkeää, että toimijat erottuvat kilpailijoistaan.

Tapaustutkimuksen tavoite oli määrittää Helsingin sarjakuvafestivaalien brändi-identiteetti. Helsingin sarjakuvafestivaalit on Suomen sarjakuvaseura ry:n järjestämä vuosittainen tapahtuma, jonka päämäärä on tuoda esille suomalaisia kustantajia sekä edistää sarjakuvan asemaa uniikkina taidemuotona. Brändi-identiteetin nykytilasta kerättiin aineistoa ensin uuden brändi-identiteetin määrittelemiseksi. Lisäksi johdon toiveita koskien brändin tulevaisuuden tavoitetilaa kartoitettiin. Brändi-identiteettiä tutkittiin myös apurahoja myöntävien järjestöjen näkökulmasta.

Tutkimus toteuttiin kvalitatiivisena tapaustutkimuksena. Tiedonkeruu suoritettiin osallistuvan havainnoinnin sekä asiakirja-analyysin keinoin. Näistä lähteistä hankittu aineisto analysoitiin hermeneuttisella menetelmällä, sekä immersio-analyysillä. Näin pyrittiin löytämään yhdistäviä teemoja ja konsepteja aineistosta, jotka voidaan sisällyttää Sarjakuvafestivaalien brändiin.

Sarjakuvafestivaalien brändin niin ulkoinen, kuin sisäinenkin kommunikaatio oli tutkimuksen mukaan epäselvää ja epäjohdonmukaista. Määritellympi identiteetti luotiin ja ehdotuksia suoritettavista brändäys-toimenpiteistä annettiin toimeksiantajalle

Avainsanat (asiasanat)
brändäys, brändi-identiteetti, kolmas sektori, kulttuuri-ala

Miscellaneous

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Key concepts

Brand Identity	How a business or an organisation wants to be perceived by the consumer. Identity is created by the brand owner to reflect the nature of the company and what it brings to the market
Exhibitor	A publisher, artist or, for example, an art collective that displays and sells works of art at a festival
The Finnish Comics Society	An association of makers, readers, collectors and researchers of comics. The society presents comics both to the wider public as well as to the cultural establishment
Helsinki Comics Festival	Organised since 1979 by the Finnish Comics Society, Helsinki Comics Festival is the biggest comic event in Scandinavia. The festival offers events such as the comics market, panel discussions, interviews and exhibitions
Institutional donor	Organisation that gives grants to organisations and sometimes individuals within a policy framework that reflects the mandate of the organisation. The most common institutional donors are government and inter-governmental organisations, and private foundations
Non-profit organisation	An organisation whose purposes are other than making profit. A non-profit organisation uses its surplus revenues to further achieve its mission rather than distributing revenues to shareholders
Stakeholder	A person, group or organisation that has interest or concern in an organisation. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organisation's actions, objectives and policies

Introduction

Nowadays branding is everywhere; products, services, geological locations, hospitals, churches and even employees need to create brands for themselves in order to flourish in the all the more competitive markets. Although branding has traditionally been seen as a process linked to big corporations and businesses of the for-profit sector, in the past decade branding and brand management has become an increasingly important factor in the non-profit sector as well. In a study conducted in 2008 by Kylander and Stone, 94 % of non-profit professionals said that building and managing their brand had grown in importance during the past three years. Similarly, almost 94 percent rated branding as extremely important or very important to the organisation's success (Stanford Social Innovation Review). It has been suggested that brand reputation is even more important in the non-profit sector than in the for-profit world (Temporal 2012, 51). In Finland, the non-profit sector includes 23 000 cultural operators (The Ministry of Culture and Education 2010). It is, thus, obvious that in order for operators to succeed, they need to differentiate and to brand their operations from each other, as they compete over same government grants and partially also customers.

Helsinki Comics Festival (later on referred to as HCF) is the largest comic industry event in Scandinavia. The event has been organised in Helsinki since 1979 by the non-profit organisation Finnish Comics Society. Each year the event gathers circa 25 000 visitors, out of which approximately 90% attend the festival main site at the Lasipalatsi square and the remainder the various side events, such as exhibitions and clubs, organised around Helsinki. (Finnish Comics Society annual reports 2011 - 2015) HCF is a non-admittance event due to which, and to the nature of the organisation behind it, the event relies on government and project-based funding. Operating on a small budget leaves less resources for certain aspects of event production, such as branding and marketing. The event is still able to attract a relatively big audience with a minimal budget for marketing because of its extremely central location, the Lasipalatsi square, in downtown Helsinki. The location has previously enabled the

festival to attract passers-by, and thus the lack of a unified brand and resources in marketing has not affected the visitor count remarkably. However, the festival will be moving location in 2016 to a less central venue, and it cannot anymore rely on the attendance of random passers-by. Changing the venue evoked the need for mapping out a distinctive brand identity that can be utilised in marketing practises to help ensure the survival of the festival in a new, less central location.

Theoretical Framework – Creating brand identity

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. The following chapter will aim to define what a brand is, introduce key concepts of brand management theory and define what brand identity means and identify the ways in which one can be created. In addition, Helsinki Comics Festival and The Finnish Comics Society organisations will be introduced.

2.1 Defining brand

Jan Lindeman analyses the origin for the word *brand* in his essay for the The Economist*.* He states that although the word now has a commercial application, brand has always meant in its passive form "*--the object by which an impression is formed and in its active form the process of forming this impression*."(Ahmed, Clifton, Simmons 2009, 13) In a way this definition is still true. The object by which an impression is formed represents the visual distinctiveness of a brand, and the process the actual brand management strategy. These together affect the consumer's perception of a product and thus form a brand for the product. As many modern brand studies suggest, brand then actually is a perception that lives in the minds of the consumer (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 7). Brands are also a mixture of tangible and intangible elements, with the tangible side consisting of, for example, services and the intangible side of aspects such as feelings and mental associations (Temporal 2014, 7). As is apparent, the concept of brand is a multi-layered one and, therefore, it is not easy to define in a sentence or two. Jason Miletsky (2009, 68), however, offers a summarized

definition that conforms to the ideology of Franzen and Moriarty concerning brands: Brand is the sum total of all user experiences with a particular product or service, building both reputation and future expectations of benefit. More traditionally, brand could be described as "—*a unique and identifiable system, association, name, or trademark that serves to differentiate competing products or services. It is both a physical and an emotional trigger to create a relationship between consumers and the products or services being offered.*" (Smith 2009). Creating desired perceptions in a consumer's mind or a relationship with them is, however, a very complicated task. Moriarty describes brand as *"--a complex, interrelated system of management decisions and consumer reactions--".* These decisions and reactions identify the product, build awareness of it and create meaning for it. Branding then is this complex strategic management process that aims to influence how the consumers perceive the brand in their minds. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 19).

David Haigh identifies three primary functions for brands which give a wider perspective into the concept of brands. According to Haigh these primary functions are navigation, reassurance and engagement. In the vast markets with endless choices for customers, brands help them navigate and to choose between products and services i.e. brands differentiate the product and services from those of the competitors. Brands also continuously communicate the quality of the product or service and thus reassure the customer of having made the right choice. Lastly, brands engage customers by using associations that encourage customers to identify with the brand. (Haigh 2013, 2)

Similarly, Franzen and Moriarty define three symbolic functions for brands and states that these symbolic meanings can have a stronger influence on the consumer's buying behaviour than the actual meaning of the product. In practise, this means that if there are two similar products, the one with a stronger brand is chosen, or a brand that the consumers can somehow associate themselves with. According to Franzen's three symbolic brand functions, brands can have an expressive, social-adaptive and an impressive function. The expressive function of a brand allows consumers to communicate messages about themselves, such as their values and what they stand for. These brands are used as "personality extensions". For some consumers, brands

also serve as symbols that allow them to conform to the demands of a subculture or social group, to assume a certain identity and to gain acceptance of the wanted social group. This is the social-adaptive function of a brand. The third symbolic function, as recognised by Franzen, is the impressive function. This function brings self-fulfilment and self-confidence to the customer, enabling the customer to experience emotions of satisfaction by using a certain brand. Brands that are chosen based on social values are also labelled under the impressive function, as consumers who for example buy products from ecological brands, feel good and get satisfaction out of the brand choice they have made. This function is then primarily about satisfying the private self and it should not be confused with the social-adaptive function. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 85).

Claudia Fisher-Buttinger and Christine Vallaster present (2008) additional objectives for brands that also broaden the traditional definition of brands. They state that brands are more than just a sum of associations that customers have with a product and that objectives of a brand include, for example, retaining talent, increasing employee commitment and addressing corporate social responsibility. According to the study, rather than just disseminating information from company to consumer, brands are now built on interactive relationships between the company and all stakeholders and sometimes even just between the stakeholders. Companies are, thus, no longer the sole creators of brands. (ibid. 2-3.) Lastly, brands have also become productive business assets in the same way as the more traditional assets such as cash and investments and their value can be measured statistically as well. This enables the brand owner to forecast cash flows more easily, as satisfied customers return to the same brand time after time. (Ahmad, Clifton & Simmons 2009, 18.) As stated earlier, brands are built to raise awareness and consideration for the products and services that it sells. The consensus in today's branding and marketing studies is that brands are definitely not just logos slapped on a product or communication between companies and their customers, but much more complex entities. Building and managing brands is then an art of its own and many theories and principles exist on the topic. A short history of brand management is discussed next in order to be able to define the management principles of the most relevance to HCF.

2.2. Brand Management: "an old practise but a young science"

The following chapter briefly introduces the principles of brand management both generally, and later on more specifically in the non-profit sector, to determine which principles can be utilised in the process of identifying the brand of HCF. In addition, brand identity as a part of the branding process is reviewed more closely as it is most relevant for the purpose of this thesis.

Brand management is the complex practise of creating and maintaining a brand, and its overall aim is to increase the value of the brand over time (Temporal 2012, 148). Brand management requires careful strategic planning and the effort of the entire company or organisation. In the globalised, digital world, where markets are unpredictable, companies need to differentiate themselves from the competition more than ever, and branding is an absolute must. Through brand building and monitoring the elements of the brand, as well as communicating its message, brands can effectively shape markets and create loyal customers who buy purposely rather than randomly (Miletsky 2009, 7). It is recognised today that the majority of business value is actually derived from intangibles (vs. being derived from tangibles) and brand is a special intangible that in many businesses is the most important asset. Management attention to these assets has, thus, increased substantially. (Gerstman & Meyers 2002, 66.) A strong brand brings organisations and companies benefits such as higher awareness, higher consideration, more loyalists and more unpaid media and online coverage (Miletsky 2009, 102).

Three different phases can be extinguished in the brand management history, beginning from 1985. In the early stages, brand management was company focused, and companies were considered the sole brand owners. Brands were either seen as elements of the traditional marketing mix or either as part of the corporate identity. From this company and sender focused approach, brand management developed more consumer focused approaches, in which brand management adopted a "human perspective". During this period, the receiver of the information, i.e. the consumer, was also excessively studied, and consumers were considered the main owners of the

brand. In the last and latest period, the research focus has been on cultural and contextual forces behind consumption choices and brand loyalty. This latest period is very much shaped by the cultural and technological changes of the 2000's. The key elements of the current period highlight customer empowerment, and cultural and community approaches are the two identified, varying approaches to brand management. Companies play an active role in the mainstream culture, with the goal of transforming brands into icons (see Table 1).

Table 1. Role of brands during different marketing eras. (Heding, Knudtsen & Bjerre 2009, 22 - 25.)

Marketing era	Role of brands	
Classic branding	Unbranded	Commodities, packaged goods Major proportion of goods in nonindustrialized context Minor role Europe/United States Supplier has power
	Brand as reference	Brand name often name of maker Name used for identification Any advertising support focuses on rational attributes Name over time becomes guarantee of quality/consistency
	Brand as personality	Brand name may be 'stand-alone' Marketing support focuses on emotional appeal Product benefits Advertising puts brand into context
	Brand as icon	Consumer now 'owns' brand Brand taps into higher-order values of society Advertising assumes close relationship Use of symbolic brand language Often established internationally
Postmodern branding	Brand as company	Brands have complex identities Consumer assesses them all Need to focus on corporate benefits to diverse 'customers' Integrated communication strategy essential through-the-line
	Brand as policy	Company and brands aligned to social and political issues Consumers 'vote' on issues through companies Consumers now 'own' brands, companies and politics

2.3 Brand Identity

Aaker (1996) defines brand identity as a set of brand associations that an organisation or company aspires to create or maintain. According to Aaker, the associations that the brand owner wishes to create in the minds of the consumer are a representation of what the brand stands for and acts as a promise to the customer and also the organisation's members (Aaker 1996, 68). Brand identity expresses the particular vision and uniqueness of the brand and the brand identity must also be of long-lasting nature. Brand identity can then create the basis of a solid, coherent, and long-lasting brand and also act as the driver of all brand-related activities, such as, for example, brand positioning . (Heding, Knudtsen, et al. 2009, 32.)

Creating brand identity for a company or an organisation is one part of the greater whole of the actual branding process. According to Wheeler (2013, 102), clarifying the organisation's vision, goals and values, as well as, for example, researching the stakeholders' needs, are actions that need to be conducted before designing the brand identity. Researching stakeholders will give insight into the direction that the branding of the organisation should be taken towards, how the brand should be positioned and what the core brand message of the branding strategy will be (ibid. 9). Positioning is a marketing strategy that aims to make brands occupy a distinct position in the mind of the consumer. Brand positions can, for example, be built on economic benefits, such as low prices or emotional benefits that appeal to consumers' emotions. To put it more simply, brand positioning answers the question of why a brand is different from and better than the rest (Temporal 2010, 102).

Due to scarce resources in the public sector, especially brand communications are often neglected, even within an organisation itself. Establishing a brand communication strategy is, however, crucial for the organisation. The function of a brand communication strategy is communicating the brand vision, personality and brand positioning - all of which stem from the brand identity. (Clifton & Simmons 2009, 26.) As with all aspects of brand management, in brand communications the key to success is consistency. The internal communication of the brand has to be consistent as well, and the whole organisation and its staff need to have a deep

understanding of the brand (Aaker 2000, 81). Communicating brand identity clearly is extremely important for the non-profit sector, as a distinctly delivered brand message can be a key to obtaining donations, sponsorships and volunteers - all crucial for the functioning of non-profit organisations. (Clifton et al. 2009, 26.) According to Temporal (2012, 177) brand strategy, formed by brand vision, brand personality and brand positioning must be linked to, and it must direct, the actions and implementation of the brand communications strategy. Brand strategy, thus, determines advertising, public relations, promotion, direct marketing and other actions of the brand communications strategy (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Linking Brand Strategy to Communications Strategy (Temporal 2012, 177).

Kapferer designed a tool to assess and to identify aspects of a brand. For the purpose of enhancing HCF's brand, it was appropriate to assess and map out the HCF brand, as such actions have not been done before in the festival's history. HCF's Brand Identity Prism can be found on page 26 of this thesis, in the Summary of findings chapter.

According to European Institute of Brand Management (2009, 1), Kapferer (1992) has identified six aspects of brand identity: physique, personality, culture, relationship,

reflection and self-image. These different aspects are divided into two dimensions, the constructed source versus the constructed receiver, and externalisation versus internalisation, as seen in the figure below.

Figure 3. Kapferer's Brand-Identity Prism model (European Institute of Brand Management, 2009, 2)
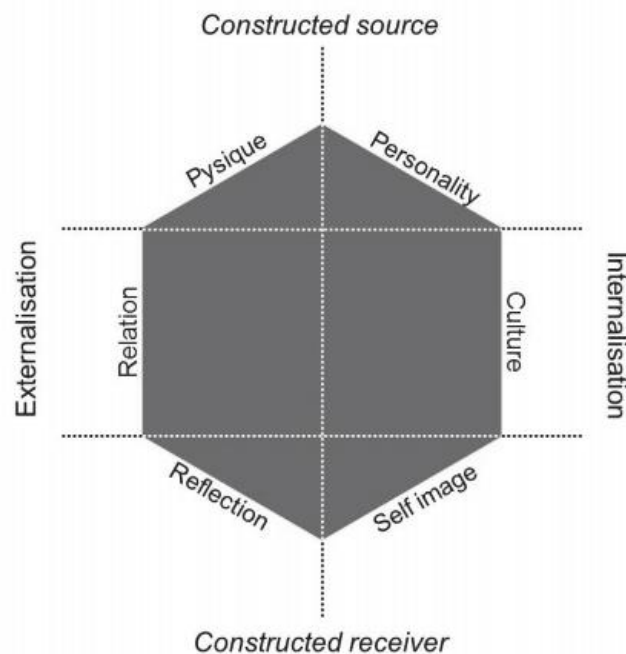
According to the European Institute of Brand Management (ibid. 1), Kapferer suggests that strong brands are capable of combining all the aspects of brands into an effective whole to form a clear and appealing brand identity. Kapferer also states that a well-defined brand has to be seen in the minds of the consumer as a person (the constructed source: physique and personality) and also as the stereotypical consumer of the brand (the constructed receiver, reflection and self-image). The externalisation dimension of Kapferer's brand prism above represents the social aspects of the brand that define its external expression, and the internalisation dimension, respectively, means the aspects that are part of the brand itself. The six different aspects of brands according to Kapferer are as follows:

Physique: A set of the physical features of brand that arise in people's minds when the brand is mentioned. This aspect defines how the brand can be recognised. This aspect can for example include the organisation's logo, colour schemes and such.

Personality: The character of a brand. Brand is communicated to customers in such way that the customers will associate a person with specific traits to the brand.

Culture: The system of values and principles on which the brand has to base its communication and product or service.

Relationship: The relationship that the brand symbolises between people.

Reflection: The reflection aspect defines the stereotypical user of the brand, but it does not necessarily (and should not) conform the characteristics of the brand's target group.

Self-image: This aspect defines how the target group sees themselves, a "mirror" to the target group.

(ibid. 2-3).

2.3 Branding and the non-profit sector

Branding in the non-profit sector has only recently started to acknowledge the importance of branding, and due to the great variation between operators within the non-profit sector, not many studies focusing on the brand management of the public sector exist. Leaders in the non-profit sector are also often sceptical towards branding models and tools that were originally built for the for-profit sector. (Kylander & Stone 2012). However, because perceptions held by stakeholders and customers are so important in achieving success for the public sector, the need to control, manage and build brand images is of fundamental importance within it as well. As the different operators are competing over funding, customers and sometimes even political support, the only way to truly differentiate within the non-profit sector is through a strong brand (Temporal 2010, 7). Public sector operators may also not rely on products in the way that the businesses in the private sector do – non-profit organisations and their causes are much more likely associated with ideas, beliefs, services and causes, which makes branding in the third sector even more crucial, as building feelings and perceptions is what branding does (Kylander &

Stone 2012).

Economy divided by ownership is categorized into three sectors, the private, public and third sector. The third sector is synonymously referred to as the non-profit sector or the voluntary sector (Kennessey 2012, 27). The non-profit sector consists mainly of organisations, foundations and cooperatives. According to a study conducted by Helander and Laaksonen (1999), the third sector emphasizes non-profitable sharing, independence from the government and the private sectors, and above all, the voluntary basis on which they operate. In Finland, the third sector covers 3.3 % out of the labour force, and of that percentage culture and recreational activities amount for approximately 50 % (ibid. 1999). The study suggests that rather than the third sector and the public sector being completely separate from each other, the third sector completes the public sector, especially in the social care and health care fields. Helander and Laaksonen state, that in the future, the third and private sectors will take even a larger role in substituting services traditionally offered by the public sector (ibid. 1999). The Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture established in its 2010 study that in Finland there are approximately 23 000 cultural organisations that vary greatly in size, scope and level of professionalism. There is especially great variation between operators on grassroots level in the amount of voluntarism, commitment, resource, networking and their need for development.

Temporal recognises for example the following types of public sector organisations in addition to the cultural segment:

- Countries or nations
- Industries or sectors
- Public service and civil service
- Ministry and government department brands
- Government-linked corporations (GLC's)
- Places, destinations and cities
- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit organisations
(ibid. 22).

For the purpose of this thesis, non-governmental organisations and cultural organisations are taken under a closer look. Temporal recognises the NGO-category as including many variety of organisations in a broad category of causes. These can include charities, such as the Red Cross, cause-specific organisations e.g. Amnesty International, different foundations and multi-national government-linked organisations such as the UNICEF. In addition to these globally known brands, the category includes thousands of other organisations that exist to pursue diverse philanthropic causes (ibid. 41). As stated earlier, in Nordic countries cultural organisations make up a big portion of these NGOs. According to the study conducted by the Ministry of Culture and Education (2010), there are six ideal types of cultural operators in Finland. These are non-profit and common good collaborators, hobbyists directed by professionals, creators of art, teachers of art, culture producers and culture-institutes (ibid. 32).

2.4 Helsinki Comics Festival

In order to better understand the factors that need to be taken into consideration when defining the brand identity of Helsinki Comics Festival, the nature of the festival and its organiser as a cultural operator, the festival status within the comic scene, as well as its organisational values, were examined more in-depth.

The Finnish Comics Society, the organiser of Helsinki Comics Festival, falls into the category "Culture-institutes" as recognised by the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education in its study of the cultural field of the third sector. However, some aspects of the "culture-producers" -category, such as the importance of volunteers, fit the festival and the Finnish Comics Society as well. Here listed are the factors that based on the author's personal experience, are relevant and describe the nature of HCF and the Finnish Comics Society truthfully. The "Culture-institutes" -category recognised in the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education study is defined as follows: a culture institute acts as a common-good organisation but alongside it e.g. limited companies can exist. The limited company can make profit, but all of the profit is spent on developing the actual organisational work. All operations are conducted by professionals.

In addition to the regular staff working in the organisation, project workers and free-lancers are also utilised. The operations of the organisation can consist of events, courses, lectures, consultations and exhibitions. One defining factor is that grants given by municipalities and the state account for approximately 40 % of the culture institutes' income. In addition, the cultural institute is also part of the international organisation of their respective field and the organisation has international co-opera-tors with whom the organisation practises exchange and joint operations (Ministry of Culture and Education 2010, 32).

In Scandinavia there are only eight major comic festivals that are being held annually, and five of these are Finnish festivals, of which HCF is the biggest (Nordicomics.info Nordic Comics Festivals). In Central and Southern Europe, the amount of comic festi-vals is, however, huge and their visitor counts are measured in hundreds of thou-sands (The Wall Street Journal: Visiting the Graphic World. 2008). Although, com-pared to the huge Central and Southern European festivals, HCF has a relatively small visitor attendance, the most notable and important international publishers attend HCF due to the quality of the content of the festival.

The HCF organiser, the Finnish Comics Society, aims to promote the awareness and critical reading of comics and to gain respect for the art form of comics. HCF is the biggest singular event organised by the Finnish Comics Society and its purpose is to mirror the values and aims of the association. The festival, thus, shares the same goals as the Finnish Comics Society and provides visibility for Finnish comic artists, brings together comic professionals and enthusiasts and most importantly provides the general audience an easy way to reach a wide selection of both mainstream, and underground comic art, from both publishing houses and independent publishers alike.

In all of its actions, the HCF aims to operate sustainably, transparently, liberally and non-profit seekingly. Comic art and publishing are at the forefront of all the actions of the festival and it operates largely on the terms of the exhibitors, out of which, the majority are Finnish publishing houses ((The Finnish Comics Society annual reports 2011 - 2015).

Methodology

This chapter presents the research problem and questions, as well as the overview of the data collection and analysis methods.

3.1. Research problem and questions

The study was assigned by the Finnish Comics Society, the organiser of the Helsinki Comics Festival. HCF has been organised since 1979 and for the past six years it has been held in a central location in Helsinki downtown at the Lasipalatsi square. Due to construction politics, the festival now has to move to a new location. One of the main reasons the festival has been able to attract a relatively big audience (20 000 - 28 000 visitors) is due to the number of passers-by visitors the extremely central location in Helsinki downtown, as well as the free entrance, has enabled. As the festival now has to move location, the event cannot anymore rely on the great amount of random visitors, but has to be able to attract audience that attends the festival purposefully. Thus, ultimately, the goal for the festival is to improve its marketing and to form an effective marketing strategy. As the core for any marketing strategy is a consistent brand identity, the thesis focused on defining it for HCF. In order to establish the brand identity for the festival, the following research questions were defined:

1. What are the actual organisational values of Helsinki Comics Festival and how to utilise them in forming the brand identity?

2. How the brand of HCF is currently being communicated internally and externally?

3. Does the non-profit nature of HCF affect the brand identity? How?

3.2 Overview of the research method

A qualitative case study method was chosen as the research method for this thesis, as the author felt it was best suited for answering the research questions that are abstract in nature and of which little or no quantitative data exist on. The data for the study was acquired by means of participant observation and by using documents as data sources. The data collection and analysis methods are discussed more in detail further on in the thesis.

According to Juha Varto (2005), in a qualitative study, the world is seen as a world of meanings, where those meanings appear as people's actions, goal-setting, plans, administrative structures, and other events that are initiated by, stem from, and are concluded by human beings. (2005, 27). Varto defines this world as the life-world, and unlike the natural world that consists of natural phenomenon, it consists of meanings. Qualitative research is, thus, best suited to study the events that occur in this life-world (ibid. 29). It is, then, favourable to study brand identity by means of qualitative research as brands are essentially relationships between human beings. According to Arch Woodside (2010), the principal objective of a case study research is achieving a deep understanding of processes and other concept variables, such as participants' self-perceptions. Woodside also describes case study research as *"-- an inquiry that focuses in describing, understanding, predicting, and/or controlling the individual (i.e., animal, person, household, organization, group, industry, culture or nationality)."* (2010, 1). Bill Gilham (2000) conforms these views and defines "case" as a unit of human activity embedded in the real world that can only be understood and studied in a context. Gilham also states that case study researches cases such as a class, industry or different institutions for example, and seeks to find answers to a specific research question. In addition, the use of different types of sources and evidence is also characteristic of case studies (Gilham 2000, 1). The case study method was, thus, a very natural choice for studying the brand identity of a specific organisation.

3.3 Collecting data

The material for the study was acquired by means of participant observation and by document analysis in order to seek corroboration through use of different data sources. According to Glenn Bowen (3, 2009), Stake (1995) suggests that document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative case studies as additional means of collecting data and, thus, it was a convenient data collection method to support the data collected by participant observation. The data collected from the sources were analysed by using editing style analysis, which focuses on categories, exploration of patterns and themes that connect them (Ereaut. 2002, 66).

Participant observation was chosen as one of the two data collection methods for the thesis as it was a convenient way of acquiring qualitative data, particularly due to the fact that the author was already part of the working community of HCF. One of the main reasons for choosing participant observation as a data collection method was that it did not require any additional effort from the festival staff, who are extremely busy with additional projects besides the Helsinki Comics festival as well. Kawulich (2005) states that according Marshall and Rossman (1989) observation is defined as the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for a study. Observations, thus, enable the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses. Participant observation then is a process that enables the researcher to learn about activities, or people under the study, in a natural setting through observing and participating in those activities (Kawulich 2005). In the participant observation method, the researcher also marks down perceptions, or aims to, without filtering the information through their own set of values. (Empiirisen aineiston keruu [Collecting empirical data] 2015.) Kawulich (2005) notes that Dewalt & Dewalt (2002) suggest that the goal for a study using participant observation is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method. According to Kawulich (2005), in recent years qualitative studies that use participant observation as a data collection method have increased. In other words, the less conventional methods are now being used more frequently in qualitative studies.

The participant observation was conducted as a systematic observation. The systematic observation approach can be used in cases where a relatively clear perception of the activities under the study are already formed and the researcher has already defined the questions that will be studied (Routio 2007). When starting the observation period, the researcher has, then, already defined what kind of actions, attributes or variables will be recorded (ibid. 2007). As the research problem and questions already existed when starting the observation for this thesis and the author already had a sense of the state of the HCF brand, the systematic approach was chosen. The author only marked down observations that were of relevance to 1. *Internal communication of the brand* and 2. *External communication of the brand* in order to find answers for research question "How the brand of HCF is currently being communicated internally and externally?". As the author worked as a producer for HCF, data and information covering all aspects of HCF's brand, and marketing in general, were accessible at all times. The daily communication with the festival team and third parties, such as exhibitors, customers and co-operators offered a fairly sufficient amount of data for analysing. The observations were marked down as the actual events occurred and then later on categorised and analysed by means of editing analysis. The results will be discussed in the Results chapter of this thesis.

Data for this thesis also collected by means of document analysis. According to Bowen (2009, 1) document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic. Bowen (ibid.) states that according Corbin & Strauss (2008) the data obtained from documents will be processed, examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. Additionally according to Bowen (ibid., 29), Merriam (1988) conforms this by pointing out that documents of all kinds can uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research problem. Documents serve various, different purposes in research. Documents can provide data on the context within which research participants operate, they can suggest questions that need to be asked, provide supplementary research data, be means for tracking change and they can be analysed as a way of verifying findings or corroborating evidence from other sources (ibid., 30). The type

of documents that may be used as a part of a study are numerous: agendas, minutes of meetings, manuals, diaries, press releases, organisational or institutional reports and event programs are just few examples of what can be used in the evaluation. Document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods, such as non-participant and participant observation for example. (ibid. 1-2).

Using documents as one of the two data sources was chosen because of the method's practicality. As the author had access to all organisational documents regarding HCF it was convenient to utilise them in the study. As previously mentioned, due to the time restrictions regarding the festival staff and the multitude of their other projects, using existing documents was the most convenient option at the time. The documents used in the study were Finnish Comics Society annual reports from 2011 until 2015, The Finnish Comics Society action plans, festival press releases and festival website (www.sarjakuvafestivaalit.fi). These documents were primary sources for establishing the organisational values of Helsinki Comics Festival, as well as finding data on how the HCF brand is being communicated both externally and internally.

In addition, the writer asked fifteen people to visit the Helsinki Comics Festival website (www.sarjakuvafestivaalit.fi) and to list five adjectives to describe the impression they got from the festival webpage, regarding content, layout and the site in general. The author chose the informants, aged between 24 – 30 years, randomly from her Facebook contacts. The author only chose informants who were within the age group of the target audience of the festival. The adjectives the informants listed were categorized and analysed and the results will be discussed in the Results chapter of this thesis.

Lastly, guidelines by government organisations that the festival has received, or could potentially receive grants from were studied. This was done in order to form an overview of the emphasis their grant and subsidiary programs have, in order to acquire a stakeholder perspective for the building of the new HCF brand identity. As suggested by the theoretical background of this thesis, grants are of utmost importance for an operator of the non-profit field and, thus, the author deemed it

necessary to take the stakeholder perspective into account as well. Decision-making guidelines and other similar documents describing the grant donating processes were accessed on the websites of the respective organisations: Arts Promotion Center Finland (www.taike.fi), Ministry of Education and Culture (www.minedu.fi), City of Helsinki Cultural Office (www.hel.fi/www/kulke), Nordic Culture Point (www.kulturkontaktnord.org), and FRAME - Visual Art Finland (www.frame-finland.fi). These organisations were chosen based on the fact that they have given the festival, or international projects related to the festival, grants on more than two subsequent years during 2013 - 2015. Words that described or defined the organisations' application guides for grants, decision-making criteria, prioritised themes and the organisations in general were picked from the previously listed websites.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the sources listed in the Data Collection chapter of this thesis were analysed by using a hermeneutic approach, and a combination of editing and immersion style analysis techniques. According to Crabtree and Miller (1999, 148), Palmer (1969) describes the central task of a hermeneutic analysis to be the process of bringing a thing or situation from unintelligibility to understanding. In other words, in its most simplistic form a hermeneutic analysis seeks to find meaning, and to understand. The editing style analysis focuses on categories, exploration of patterns and themes that connect them, whereas the immersion style involves the researchers immersing themselves in, and reflecting on the text until the meaning of the text is ultimately grasped (Ereaut 2002, 66). As suggested by Crabtree and Miller, the immersion and editing styles of organizing analysis supplement one another, and it is wise to use them in conjunction (1999, 146).

According to Ereaut (ibid. 66) the editing and immersion analysis techniques consist of four general activities: 1. revisiting (the data), 2. selecting for relevance, 3. sorting and categorising and 4. comparing and/or contrasting sub-samples. During the "revisiting" phase the researcher immerses herself in the data, seeks to overcome memory problems and to re-experience the events. When selecting for relevance, the data volume is reduced and the focus is on the client's issue while still being alert

to any other problems that might arise. Explicit and implicit material is also selected. As defined by Ereaut, sorting and categorising is the process of developing pre-set and emergent categories. Pre-set and emergent groups are then finally separated by comparing and contrasting sub-groups. Generalisations, dynamics, patterns and clusters, models and such are also "recycled" into the analysis (ibid. 66 - 67.)

According to Crabtree and Miller, editing can be thought of as an organising style analysis that helps to bring forth greater understanding of or meaning from the text or data (1999, 146). Crabtree and Miller also emphasise that analysis is not just one part of a linear progression that comes after data collection and "sometime before writing up results", but rather that qualitative research is more of a circular process. Thus, analysis is also part of a larger interpretive process that occurs throughout the research process. The circular or spiralling form of interpretation is one of the central features of the hermeneutic approach and the author used this so called circular approach throughout the whole thesis process (ibid. 146 - 148).

The findings from the participant observation and document analysis were categorised under themes of internal communication of the HCF brand, external communication of the HCF brand and the stakeholders' perspective. The results are presented in the Results section of this thesis and the findings are summarised and concluded in the Discussion section. By categorising and organising the results, it was possible to find central themes and meanings in these data sources. This is as, for example, Crabtree and Miller have suggested, is the aim of the editing and immersion style analysis (1999, 146).

Results

This chapter presents the findings from the participant observation and document analysis, as categorised under themes of internal communication of the HCF brand, external communication of the HCF brand and the stakeholders' perspective.

The internal communication perspective of the HCF brand was measured by using participant observation as the author worked as a production assistant and producer for the festival, and by examining the ways in which the brand, or the festival in general, is presented in the internal documents (action plans, annual reports) of the Finnish Comics Society organisation. In the internal documents of the festival or the Finnish Comics Society organisation, the topic of branding was not presented in any way. For example, there were no separate sections in the annual reports or the action plans of the organisation that described the brand identity of the festival. This was in line with the hypothesis that already rose from the theoretical background of this thesis: non-profit sector operators do not either have time, resources or the know-how to conduct branding. Moreover, the management might not even consider it important.

The values and mission of HCF and the Finnish Comics Society were, however, presented in the internal documents and they could be utilised in creating the brand identity by using them as a foundation on which to base the brand identity. In addition, the action plan of the Finnish Comics Society listed objectives and aims for the Helsinki Comics Festival, but as already stated before, they mirrored the objectives of the Finnish Comics Society and lacked specific goals for the actual event. Having at least partially separated goals would help to strengthen the image and brand of the actual event.

Taking into consideration the fact that an organisation and an event are two totally different concepts that need to be branded and marketed with distinctively separated emphasis, distinguishing separate goals also in the external communication is important. The objectives and goals listed for the festival were also very abstract in nature, such as "increasing audience awareness of the event", or "enhancing the status of comics as a respected art form". Having more practical and measurable goals would also help in defining the whole festival's purpose for each year, which in turn would give a direction for branding the festival. However, this works both ways, as a distinguished brand identity would also be the foundation for these goals each year.

In the discussions with the festival team the goals and image of the festival were, in the author's opinion, communicated more clearly than through the official documents. During the observation period, the author marked down expressions, adjectives and phrases that were used to describe the festival, its purpose and goals. The central finding from these discussions was, that the festival wants to be recognised more as an urban city festival that offers additional content besides comics as well. The aim is to include for example music and related themes increasingly in the festival programme. Including food vendors as part of the festival to create the feeling of a "city festival" was also frequently brought up. This particular vision was voiced multiple times during the festival meetings when discussing areas for development and ways to compete with the numerous other festivals in Helsinki. Within the festival team, the direction and future of the festival was evidently more obvious for everyone. The vision of an urban city festival that would attract audience besides comic enthusiasts was, however, not necessarily communicated to the rest of the staff as strongly, as none of the above mentioned visions and goals were actually written down anywhere. As was suggested by the theoretical background of this thesis it is, however, important for the whole organisation to have a *deep* understanding of the organisation's brand (Aaker 2000, 81).

The external communication perspective of the HCF brand was examined through the festival website, social media and press releases. All of these communication channels are involved in the forming of a brand identity, but for HCF they were not sufficiently uniform and, additionally, they did not communicate the brand, or the hoped-for brand, sufficiently enough.

The writer asked fifteen people to list five adjectives that first came to mind when visiting the HCF website (www.sarjakuvafestivaalit.fi). Ten of these informants replied during the given deadline. They were told to list the adjectives based on their first impression and they were allowed to take into account everything on the site, including content, structure, colours, layout etc. As branding essentially is creating associations in consumers' minds, this method was used in order to map out the

associations and first impressions that the festival website creates. The adjectives that the informants listed had similarities in them with a few adjectives being listed three times. The adjective *clear* was listed four times. Adjectives that were listed three times were *lukewarm* and *full*. Adjectives that were listed two times were *commercial, random*, *monotonous*, *unorganised*, *clean* and *colourless*. Adjectives that were listed only once, but were similar to the adjectives listed multiple times were *fresh, empty, professional, neutral, clinical, unclear, difficult* and *intermittent*. Other words and adjectives that did not correlate thematically with the rest were *modern, forbidding, spineless, informative, nice, empty, easy* and *hipster*.

It could be concluded that the informants found the website to be packed (full, unclear, unorganised) and that overall the website also brought forth associations and feelings of cleanliness (clear, clean, fresh) and dullness (monotonous, lukewarm). It has to be, of course, noted that the number of replies was small and as such this survey could not offer a complete picture of the associations that the website created. However, it could arguably be stated that the associations were not all favourable and that none of them were, actually, positive by definition. For example, cleanliness and dullness are not associations that an urban city festival would necessarily want to create. A festival website is, of course, only one element among many that form the external communication of the festival. However, given the fact that HCF has a only few other major external communication channels, the website has a relatively big impact on forming the brand identity, and ,thus, the message that it conveys should be given sufficient attention.

The Helsinki Comics festival has Facebook (Helsingin sarjakuvafestivaalit), Twitter (HKI Comics Festival) and YouTube (Helsingin sarjakuvafestivaalit - Helsinki Comics Festival) accounts. The social media accounts have all varying content and the special nuances and the characteristics of each platform are utilised quite well. On Twitter, in addition to original tweets, the majority of the content are retweets from the Finnish Comics Society and Comics Center, and other accounts related to the comics scene, such as publishers and other comic festivals. During the event, the HCF Twitter is naturally filled with pictures, reports, and information about the festival. The information shared on Facebook is similar in nature to the information shared on Twitter but, as is

the medium's function, the posts on Facebook are naturally more detailed and comprehensive. The YouTube account is filled with videos from the festival, interviews and other short clips as well as videos related to the comic scene.

The social media accounts of Helsinki Comics Festival communicate a message of an international and diverse festival, that is thoroughly dedicated to comics. This message is more in line with the brand identity that the festival team expressed that they wished to create and to aim for. The social media channels are also uniform and they do communicate a message of a youthful, evocative and vibrant festival when examined together. One notable issue is the fact that HCF does not have an Instagram account. However, the hashtag #sarjakuvafestivaalit on Instagram does bring 600 + results of images of the festival that also communicate a message of a youthful and alternative festival. Thus, having an Instagram account would most likely work in favour of creating the desired brand identity. Other marketing channels besides social media were not examined, due to time restrictions and the fact that the other marketing channels mainly included posters and banners and advertisement exchange with other events and local companies in Helsinki.

Press releases by nature are not the most versatile medium for external communication, but, nonetheless extremely important. The ways in which the brand identity can be communicated in the press release -medium are more subtle than in, for example, the social media, as press releases have to maintain a certain level of information and formality. However, for starters, the HCF press releases (accessible on the festival website, in the "Press" -section) do not include any graphics in them. Obviously, the press releases cannot have over the top graphics included, but a banner with the festival's annual theme visuals would highlight the yearly themes and, thus, also the brand of the festival more distinguishably. In addition, the tone of the press releases for 2015 was very declarative in nature, without much of self-congratulations on, for example, the diversity of the programme. Words used to describe the festival in the press release were *international*, *national* and *diverse*.

As was suggested by the theoretical background of this thesis, especially within the

non-profit sector, the stakeholders' goals and organisational values should be taken into account when designing branding and other objectives for an organisation. As HCF is a non-profit festival that operates on grants, the institutional donors are the most important stakeholder group of the festival. Organisations that had given the festival grants in more than two subsequent years between 2013 and 2015 were chosen for examination. Words that described or defined the organisations' application guides for grants, decision-making criteria, prioritised themes and the organisations in general were selected from the Ministry of Culture and Education's art and culture events application guide for 2016, Arts Promotion Center Finland's criteria to be used in decision-making, City of Helsinki Cultural Office's decision-making agendas, Frame Visual Art Finland's "About us" -section and Nordic Culture Point's prioritised themes. These organisations had their own individual points of emphasis but also multiple similarities. *Internationality*, *co-operation*, *development*, *innovativeness* and *accessibility* were mentioned as desired qualities in every organisation's guidelines, and they should form the foundation for the branding of HCF as well.

It has to be noted that HCF already possesses these traits, they just are not necessarily communicated efficiently externally, internally nor incorporated into the brand of HCF. Other emphasised points were *quality*, *professionalism*, *sociability* and *diversity*. In addition to these, the individual criteria of each organisation included different areas of emphasis such as digitality, improving quality of life, preventing social exclusion, creating a sustainable Nordic region, and promoting cultural events that are on par with their European equivalents.

5 Discussion

This chapter summarises the findings of the study and also discusses the reliability and the limitations of the research.

5.1. Summary of findings

This summary of the findings aims to conclude the research findings from the previous chapter into a comprehensive answer to the research questions. Limitations to the study will be discussed after the summary.

As the aim of this thesis was to define the Helsinki Comics Festival brand identity, the presumption naturally is, that the festival does not have an existing, distinct brand identity. However, in its operations and actions there are already many elements that can be incorporated and utilised in the forming of a brand identity. The festival team does have a vision for the brand of the festival, as is obvious from the festival team meetings and other internal communication regarding the brand. The brand vision is not, however, communicated to the rest of the organisation and it might not even be fully realised, as the brand identity or branding objectives are not listed in any of the internal documents of the Finnish Comics Society and the Helsinki Comics Festival. The fact that the festival brand has not previously been fully fleshed-out is also evident from the external communication regarding HCF, which lacks direction and also distinct character. The wishes and aims of the stakeholders are acknowledged within the organisation and festival team already, as during the grant application process, the decision-making criteria and guidelines of the institutional donors are naturally taken into account. Although internationality, which is one of the emphasis points of all of the main institutional donors of the festival, is deeply-rooted into the actions of HCF, the stakeholder perspective could still be incorporated into the festival brand identity in a much greater volume and also more persistently.

In the figure below, the findings regarding the external and internal communication, as well as the stakeholder perspective are summarised. The words and phrases listed are either words the festival uses to describe itself (internal, external), descriptions given by the informants regarding the festival website (external), descriptions the author used in defining the external communication regarding social media and press releases, and words describing the decision-making criteria and emphasis of grant-donating organisations. The function of the figure is to make the identification of

unifying themes easier. Words and phrases that appear in all, or two of the columns, are bolded.

Table 2. Building blocks for the HCF brand

PERSPECTIVE	BUILDING BLOCKS FOR HCF BRAND
Internal communication (Annual reports, action plans, discussions)	**international**, national, **diverse**, urban, **youthful**, **city festival**
External communication (Website)	clear, **modern**, clinical, unorganised, fresh, commercial, lukewarm, spineless, informative, random, intermittent, nice, empty, colourless, easy, spineless, forbidding, unclear, uncomfortable, monotonous, colourless, **hipster**, professional, neutral, full, difficult
External communication (Social media, press releases)	**international**, **youthful**, rich in content, colourful, smart, neutral
Stakeholders (Institutional donors)	development, **international**, cultural co-operation, creativity, **diversity**, participation, sustainable, quality, equality, parity, artistic, interesting, activating, experience, social, professional, strong, innovative, accessible, skills, new ideas, **well-being of Helsinki citizens,** prevention of social exclusion, creative, **young people**, **digital**

The figure indicates that traits such as internationality, diversity and youthfulness are already somewhat communicated through the HCF channels. They are, among others, also traits that the institutional donors emphasise, indicating that these are the traits that should be incorporated into the branding strategy for HCF. In addition, other traits to base the brand on are required, since as such, internationality, diversity and youthfulness are traits that practically every event, organisation and business needs to possess in order to thrive. Based on the author's knowledge of the festival and its strengths, a brand prism for the festival was formed. The purpose of the brand prism is to help in assessing and identifying aspects of the (HCF) brand. Theory regarding the brand prism can be found on page 11 of this thesis.

Figure 5. HCF Brand Prism
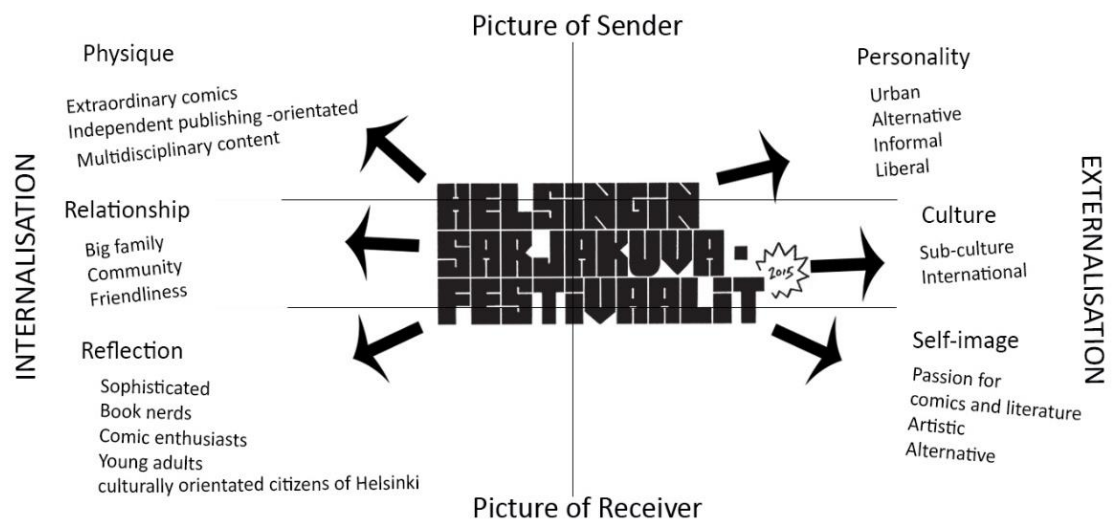
The Kapferer brand prism takes into account dimensions of brands that are not given sufficient attention when execution of brand management is done superficially. The brand prism aims to identify the "person" behind the brand, as well as the stereotypical user of it. According to Kapferer, a good brand should be able to incorporate all of the dimensions of the prism into one whole. When designing the prism for HCF, the main principle was taking into account the existing, unique qualities of HCF and to add elements that support those qualities and that could realistically be incorporated into the brand of HCF. The brand prism, thus, functions as a suggestion to what the HCF brand could be.

In summary, based on the research conducted for this thesis, the HCF brand identity could include these following elements: Helsinki Comics Festival is an event that offers its visitors extraordinary and multidisciplinary content that is orientated towards the independent publishing field. The festival presents sub- and alternative cultures for comic enthusiasts, young adults and culturally-orientated residents of Helsinki. The visitors of the festival identify themselves as artistic and as representatives of varying, alternative sub-cultures. The festival itself is urban, alternative and liberal, and in its communication towards its customers, the aim is to make them feel as part of a big community.

5.2. Limitations and reliability of the research

The validity of this research was ensured by establishing a comprehensive theoretical framework for the study. Acquiring a comprehensive theoretical background was important, as it enabled the writer to focus on issues and aspects regarding branding that are of most relevance for the purposes of this thesis, while conducting data collection. There was great amount of literature to be found on branding, however, not as much on the branding practises within the non-profit sector. In an attempt to ensure the reliability of the study, two different data collection methods and different types of sources were used. As suggested by Woodside (2010, 6), achieving a deep understanding in a case study research usually involves the use of multiple research methods across multiple time periods, i.e triangulation. These often include direct observation, asking for case participants for interpretations of operational data and analyses of written documents. Using participant observation and document analysis as data collection methods was a sufficient combination and it was conducted somewhat successfully. However, acquiring a customer perspective of the HCF brand by conducting visitor survey during the Helsinki Comics festival in August 2015 would have had been crucial in establishing the current state of the HCF brand with as much precision as possible. As the topic for the thesis was chosen after the festival in August, conducting a visitor survey was not possible. As the customer perspective on the external communication of the brand was now conducted by taking only the website into consideration, the role of the website in the external communication of the HCF brand is somewhat overly emphasised. The amount of informants was also small. Still, given that besides social media and the website, HCF does not literally have other marketing channels, the author felt that it was justifiable to use the website as a tool in the analysis of the external communication of the festival.

In addition, based on the findings from both the participant observation and document analysis, it would have been reasonable to interview the Helsinki Comics Festival and Finnish Comics Society staff on how they perceive the current state of the HCF brand. Due to time restrictions, on both the author's and the staff's behalf,

an interview was not conducted. However, during the observation period it was possible to acquire genuine information on how the brand is being perceived within the staff as information is not filtered, or being communicated in a superficial set up. As the author was already part of the working community of the festival, it can be assumed that the presence of the writer did not affect the communication between the staff significantly. Still, conducting both an interview and the observation would have provided more reliable results. As the research was a qualitative research, the data analysis is perhaps more bound on the values and views of the researcher than in a quantitative research. The data was, however, analysed as critically as possible. Since the author was already familiar with the festival before starting the thesis process, some presumptions regarding the results naturally existed, and they could have had an effect on the research, especially regarding the data marked down during the observation period.

The hermeneutic approach to data analysis and using the combination of editing and immersion style analysis techniques were, in the author's opinion, the right choices for this thesis, as the process of analysing data was already started during the observation period. As suggested by Ereaut, especially in a commercial research, capturing ideas happens concurrently with analysis operations but is not the process of analysis in the functional sense, but rather catching seemingly random thoughts as they occur at any time (2002, 66). This method of analysis served the purposes of the thesis well. Finally, as the thesis is a case study research, the research data does not necessarily represent the rest of the non-profit sector and cannot, thus, be generalised. However, the analysis did, in the author's opinion, give a comprehensive picture of the situation of the Helsinki Comics Festival.

6. Conclusions and future suggestions

For Helsinki Comics Festival, the specification of its brand identity requires actions from the organisation itself. As brand is something that is communicated through all

actions and operations of an organisation, the brand identity naturally cannot exist without input from the organisation. The Helsinki Comics Festival has strong values and it operates on the terms of comic art and publishers. These core values need to be communicated more clearly both internally and externally. In addition, the needs and wants of HCF's most important stakeholders, the grand donating organisations, need to be taken into account in all of the branding, and other actions of the festival.

 Through answering the research questions, the thesis aimed to find different elements, aspects and perspectives to be incorporated into the HCF brand identity, as HCF did not previously have a defined, consistently communicated brand. The research questions of this thesis were 1. What are the actual organisational values of Helsinki Comics Festival and how to utilise them in forming the brand identity? 2. How the brand of HCF is currently being communicated internally and externally? 3. Does the the non-profit nature of HCF affect the brand identity? How? In the writer's opinion the thesis answered research questions 1 and 3 well. For research question 2 different data collection methods would have been advisable, as now the role of the website in the external communication is overly emphasised. However, the thesis was able to establish a suggestion for the brand identity of the festival by combining already existing traits, qualities and personality of the festival with elements suggested by the research.

The actual realisation of the brand identity requires actions throughout the whole organisation and the role of internal communication in it should not be underestimated. To support it, branding also requires a marketing strategy that is consistent with the brand identity. Creating a marketing strategy would require additional research on the part of the organisation. It would be advisable to first enhance the brand identity according to the suggestions of this thesis, then conduct a comprehensive visitor survey during the next festival after which, the branding and marketing strategies could be readjusted accordingly. The author would also like to add, that even though logo is just a small part of the complex process of branding, it would be wise to create one for the festival, as currently the logo changes each year to match the annual visual look of the festival.

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